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**ENCOUNTERING MEMORY AND TRAUMA:
TRANSGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF TRAUMA IN
CAMBODIAN AMERICANS**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

SOCIOLOGY

by

Yvonne Y. Kwan

June 2015

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Abstract

Encountering Memory and Trauma:

Transgenerational Transmission of Trauma in Cambodian Americans

Yvonne Y. Kwan

This dissertation addresses the ways in which trauma and violent histories may be transmitted from one generation to the next, particularly via the older generation's use of narrative fragments, caesuras, and/or silences. It widens the sociological understanding of subjecthood and affect—not just via theoretical interventions but through a mixed methods, data driven analysis of 27 interviews and 69 surveys with Cambodian American college students and graduates from California.

First, this study explicates how refugee subjecthood (i.e., the quality of being a refugee subject) does not require discursive utterance or identity naming but instead revolves around an affect of trauma—the positive, negative, and neutral feelings, emotions, and sensations that are elicited in the daily lives of refugee subjects. Instead of just theorizing that trauma reaches beyond the individual who has suffered some sort of catastrophic event, this research provides evidence that better informs individual-based medical and psychological research. Second, by making claims about how trauma is a formation, this research shows how trauma is neither stable nor discrete and is always subject to discursive and affective rearticulation. Trauma is therefore inherently social and collective because it references structures and people at the macro- (e.g., laws, policies, and war), meso- (e.g., community and groups), and

micro- (e.g., families and individuals) levels. Third, this study speaks to a specificity of the Southeast Asian diaspora/refugee experience, one that is both raced and classed.

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It is difficult for me to succinctly acknowledge all who have been central to the completion of my dissertation. But first and foremost, I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to my department and dissertation committee: Dana Takagi, Hiroshi Fukurai, and Kim Lau. As I get ready to embark on my postdoctoral work, I already feel the tremendous sadness that I will have when I will no longer have immediate access to you all. I appreciate how each and everyone of you have always been so supportive, even when you are critiquing my work and pushing me to develop my theoretical analyses. Dana, I will miss our meetings—talking about theory, control variables, doggie digestive issues, and so on. Hiroshi, I hope to one day be able to become a fraction of the inspirational and dedicated mentor you are to me and your legion of mentees. Kim, I truly relish the invaluable mental health support and intellectual insight you have given me throughout these past few years. I would like to also thank my wonderful cohort (Alexis, Christie, and Kirsten) and my intellectual mujeres (Lluliana and Paulina) for being so A-M-A-Z-I-N-G. I was so privileged to be surrounded and supported by such smart, loving, and caring women. You all pushed me to be a better person and a more critical scholar.

As for my non-academic friends and family, you are the ones who ground me. I would like to congratulate myself for having the most patient and understanding husband in the world. This dissertation was not an easy task, but Ryan was there to support me every step of the way. And of course, this dissertation stems from all of the craziness he and I have experienced together—so you can say that this is kind of

like our baby. It only took me six years to carry it to term. And of course, there are my parents and sisters Cathy and Carmen. I thank you for being so encouraging when I decided to venture off and pursue a PhD. Even though my parents would have loved for me to become a medical doctor and even though they still do not really know what I do, they have always been there to offer kind words and unconditional support.

Twenty-four years of back-to-back schooling later, I want to say that I am done accumulating degrees (but no promises!). As for my other cheerleaders, I have to give a shoutout to my Bay Area support network (Ruthie and the Dominguezes, Amanda, the Chins, and Sala Khmer) and to my childhood friends (Michelle, Monique, and Samantha) for their everlasting love and encouragement.

Lastly, I would like to thank those who were critical to this project: my research participants and my funders. My interviewees and respondents are the ones who inspire this work and inspire me to work hard within academia, the community, and the legislative branch to advocate for Cambodian and other Southeast Asian refugees. I also have great gratitude for the generosity of UC/ACCORD, UC Center for New Racial Studies, and ASA MFP. It takes a community to raise a scholar, so I want to send a heartfelt thank you to each and every person who has helped me in this long and tortuous but extremely rewarding process.

Chapter 1: Introduction

When we pull up to my husband's parents' donut shop, it is midday, so the morning rush of patrons are gone. My mother-in-law, whom I call "Maht," unlocks the door that leads us to the kitchen. I am taken aback by the humidity and heat. My husband Ryan, his mother, and I catch up, using broken English and bits and pieces of Khmer thrown into the mix. When Ryan and his mother start speaking solely in Khmer, I can no longer keep up, so I start to zone out. I wonder where Ryan's father is, but then I remember that since it is the middle of the day, Ryan's father, whom I call "Pah," must be taking a nap in the back room.

Actually, "the back room" is a euphemism. It is actually a small closet (approximately 4 feet by 3 feet), dimly lit with a half-broken fluorescent shop light that perpetually flickers. A small cot is jammed in there, at a precarious angle. Pa sleeps there during the day, amongst the piles of clothes and other daily necessities, because he stays up every night to prepare the dough and bake the pastries for the next day. When he finishes his preparations at about three in the morning, he clears his station and takes another nap on the hard counter. During the night, Maht usually helps Pah for a few hours, but then she takes her turn sleeping in the small closet when her work is done. She needs to be well-rested when the morning rush of patrons come in.

This cycle repeats everyday, unless it is Sunday. On Sundays, they close the store early and head to Costco to restock anything they might need for the week. Then they usually drive to their small apartment located about twenty miles from the store. Several years ago, Ryan's parents decided to sell their house to buy the donut store. Trying their best to save, they rented the cheapest apartment they could find, even if it was quite far from their store. They rarely go home during the middle of the week. They simply eat, bathe, and sleep at the donut store. This situation always makes me uneasy because I know it is a violation of numerous health codes. However, they take the risk and try to make do.

...

After some more small talk, I make sure to ask Maht for Ryan's birth certificate. We are planning a trip to Cambodia, so we need Ryan's proof of citizenship in order to apply for a passport—Ryan has never traveled out of the country. Mat retrieves an old, dusty, and faded Tommy Hilfiger backpack that was laying next to the broken industrial refrigerator. She pulls out a folder with various official-

looking documents. At a quick glance, I see his parents' naturalization documents and Ryan and his brother Ronald's birth certificates.

Ryan's birth certificate is an old brown parchment. The document looks too old to be real, but on the flip side, there is the County of Los Angeles official stamp, so it must be real. Ryan's little brother's birth certificate is there too. Even though Ronald is only six years younger, his birth certificate looks much more modern. When I take a quick skim of both, I realize something is off. The name of the father listed on each of the birth certificates is different. I think to myself, "Are they not full brothers? No wonder they are so different."

Having known my husband's family for almost 15 years, I knew that his parents kept many secrets, especially about their experiences prior to coming to the United States. I was not sure if these discrepancies I had found on the birth certificates were associated with those shadowy pasts. Family names in Ryan's family have always been an enigma to me. Neither Ryan's, his brother's, mother's, nor father's last names were the same. Ryan was a Kear. His brother was a So. His mom was a Troeung. And his father was a Vorng. When I previously asked why this was the case, Pah just said that it did not matter that their names were different—as long as they were safe. Without an explanation, it was difficult for me to understand what he meant. I wanted to ask Maht about the person listed as Ryan's father, but as the daughter-in-law, I did not want to overstep my boundaries. Ultimately, Ryan and I decided to just take the birth certificate without clarifying the discrepancies.

That strange name on Ryan's birth certificate would come back to haunt us. When I was filling out the passport application, I had simply put Pah's name and country of birth on the form without thinking too much about it. But then, I looked at the fine print, and it said that all information in the application must match the

supporting documents. Unable to complete the application, Ryan asked Pah about the identity of this person. I heard a wave of guilt overpower Pah's voice. He said, "Son, I am sorry." I wondered, "Was Pa not Ryan's biological father?"

Well, actually he is. However, because Pa had stolen someone's identity at the refugee camp to seek relocation, he was deathly afraid to put his stolen name on any official government document, not even on his sons' birth certificates. Pa confessed that the persons on both Ryan's and Ronald's birth certificate do not exist. He simply made up the names.

So abiding by the instructions, I wrote the name listed as Ryan's father on the passport application. During our appointment at the passport services, however, the lady assisting us asked why we left the field for father's country of birth blank. We told her that we were "unsure." She simply scribbled in "N/A," not applicable, to fill the blank. To me, that N/A signified another erasure of Ryan's family history. The silences of the tragedies were again safely concealed within this document. For most Cambodians, official narratives rarely fully document their lived realities.

Perhaps we also had so many questions because Ryan, like many other Cambodian Americans, have trouble connecting to their parents. Ryan's parents merely provided the essentials: food, clothing, and a home. They were never really involved in Ryan's life, and Ryan never asked about their lives. Because of this, we do not have the full stories about his parents' experience. Whenever I ask, they always change the subject. All I know is that Mat was orphaned because all of her family

either starved or were executed. And as a teenager, Pa suffered through the work camps and barely survived starvation.

I hope this vignette offers you some context into why I am doing this type of research. Whether you call this a recounting of a memory, an autoethnography, or simply living, I want to show how something as mundane as a family name does not just convey family legacy but an attempt to erase that legacy. This also gives an example of how the discursive sometimes fails to capture the nuances and latency of trauma traces. Throughout the years, as I have tried to grapple with these silences and discrepancies that pop up in my personal life, I began forming more intellectual and theoretical inquiries around the genocide and trauma.

BACKGROUND

With interests in war, memory, and trauma, I first started to review literature about Southeast Asian refugees, particularly about Cambodians and their experience with the Khmer Rouge genocide. While I was able to locate research on the effects of the Khmer Rouge and resettlement on the first-generation Cambodian refugees (see Ehntholt and Yule 2006; Haines 1989; Hein 2006; Hollifield et al. 2002; Kiang 1996; Kinzie et al. 1986, 1989; Mollica 2008; Rumbaut 1996; Sack et al. 1986; Sack, Clarke, and Seeley 1995, 1996; Sack, Him, and Dickason 1999), there were few studies on the subsequent generations of Cambodian Americans who were either born or primarily raised in the United States (see Chan 2003, Chhuon 2013; Chhuon et al. 2010; Ong 2003; Wright 2004). While the younger generations' experiences are related to those of the first generation, the two groups have drastically different frames

of reference. For example, the first generation experienced massive civil war and political unrest followed by refugee relocation to Thailand and eventually to the United States. The second generation, however, was born in the United States and did not have first-hand knowledge about their parents' home countries. Therefore, there needs to be more research that considers the relationship between the subsequent generations and historical trauma.

In terms of the ways in which trauma is conceptualized, I have found that popular research tends to primarily revolve around individualized manifestations of trauma—and usually as psychopathologies or negative manifestations (see Choi, He, Harachi 2007; Lev-Wiesel 2007; Turner and Lloyd 1995; Young 1997). Such individual-based frameworks stem from biological (Cassidy and Mohr 2001; Dubovsky 2010; Franklin et al. 2010; Kira 2001; Nestler 2012; Yehuda et al. 2001) and psychological studies of trauma (Kellerman 2001b; Rousseau, Drapeau, and Platt 1999; Rousseau, Drapeau, and Rahimi 2003; Sack et al. 1995, 1996) that privilege the source of the trauma (i.e., the original wounding) and individually embodied and experienced trauma. Some collective frameworks not only acknowledge the individualized conceptualizations of trauma but also consider the ability for trauma to become a collective phenomenon. Cultural approaches privilege narrative circulations of trauma—in the forms of cultural artifacts such as literature, poetry, memorials, and other media (Alexander 2004; Bal 1999; Brison 1999; Caruth 1995; Van Alphen 1999). Affective approaches give insight to both recognition and (individual and group) feelings associated with trauma (Cvetkovich 2003, 2012; Deleuze and Guattari

1987; Hirsch 2008; Massumi 2002). Unlike cultural approaches, affective approaches recognize the ability of trauma to be felt but not necessarily narrated.¹

Transgenerational trauma transcends the narratable into the realm of the ineffable, felt, and social. Contrary to the Cartesian mind/body divide, the mind, body, and “social” are intricately intertwined and non-unidirectional. Through a sociological lens, traumatic memory is indeed cultural, collective, and social, especially in the context of transgenerational transmission of trauma. According to Abraham and Torok (1994), transgenerational trauma is the phenomenon in which unspeakable traumas are passed unconsciously from one generation to the next. Transgenerational ghosts, phantoms, and specters inhabit “the depths of the unconscious, [dwelling] as the living-dead of knowledge of someone else’s secret” (Abraham and Torok 1994:188). Lipsitz asserts (1990:269), the mixture of sensations, images, and stories in the social world affect people not because “they are fundamentally new, but because they remind us of something familiar but threatened by forgetting.” This process of remembering and forgetting occurs within the context of the sociality.

In addition to theoretical plurality regarding trauma studies, the field is also marked by a lack of consensus about the methods and measures, appropriate treatment, and definition of trauma. In spite of the comprehensive study of trauma among different cases throughout history, there remains a certain muddiness and uncertainty about the measurement and effect of trauma on individuals and groups in

¹ Many studies of affect and trauma also study culture but not necessarily so. The opposite is also true. Many studies of culture include a keen analysis of affect but not necessarily so.

which those individuals belong. In a comprehensive review, Hollifield et al. (2002) analyzed 125 different instruments that were used to measure refugee trauma and/or health status. The plurality of the tests and inventories show that there is great looseness in the theory and method of studying trauma. This study proposes to bridge some of the psychological, medical, and social implications to better explain how trauma can linger in bodies, families, and communities across spaces and generations. In spite of cultural or collective trauma's painful consequences, there is potential for trauma to act as a force of social becoming (Sztompka 2000). The trauma of war or genocide does not disappear with the death of survivors; instead the trauma remains in the narratives of capitalism and modernity for larger collectives (Olick 1999).

Rather than overmedicalizing, overpsychologizing, and overpathologizing trauma as a disease or a lack (see Beiser and Hou 2001; Hinton, Nickerson and Bryant 2012; Miller and Rasmussen 2010; Silove et al. 1997), there needs to be a more comprehensive and nuanced discussion of trauma beyond that of a "fix" or a "cure." I recognize the need to address traumatic bodily and mental injuries from a medical and psychological perspective for soldiers and refugees who suffer from psychic and physical symptoms of traumatic injuries, but because these original "woundings" are lacking in the second generation, there may be no medical "cure." "Healing" may be possible, but studies have yet to fully explain what that means or to recognize social healing and whether it may or may not be synonymous with a "cure". And perhaps a pill or a procedure is not the ideal method of treatment of transgenerational trauma because transgenerational trauma may not be some

pathology that needs to be treated. In short, this study identifies both positive, negative, and mundane manifestations of trauma within subsequent generations of Cambodian Americans. As illustrated above, past literature and studies often relegate trauma to the confines of the individual body, if not mind/brain altogether. This study, however, develops more collective and nuanced conceptualizations of trauma.

Hypotheses

The trauma experienced by the younger generation is qualitatively different from the trauma experienced by the older generation, but the source of the second generation's pain can be traced forwards and backwards in time. Trauma may not be verbalized or articulated, but children, nonetheless, develop the capacity to both identify with and experience the pain of previous generations. In terms of transgenerational trauma, the bodies of the second or subsequent generations become carriers of potential of transgenerational wounds. The second generation bears witness to the pain of trauma, genocide, and relocation, whether consciously or not. Transgenerational traumatic memory then mediates the present with the past and the future, creating bodily intensities and tendencies in the second generation that open possibilities for social justice action and coalition building beyond the realm of conscious recognition and narrativity.

A corollary hypothesis concerns how transmission does not have to occur neatly or actively. This process of transmission may be evaluated with both neuroscience, in terms of biochemical stressors that affect fetuses and excitement phases that trigger autonomic responses in people, and socioaffective discourse, in

terms of socialization and transmission of felt silences and pain. The cognition of this transmission may lay dormant until triggered by existing social discourses around trauma. I also hypothesize that trauma and social haunting are not debilitating but instead productive, particularly in pushing our understandings of how trauma feels and manifests in different social groups.

My research largely supported these hypotheses but also provided specific empirical evidence as to how non-verbal and verbal trauma can be transmitted through time and space. Rather than just hypothesizing about or theoretically discussing affect, bodily intensities, and incipience, the data and discussions provided in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 bespeak the ability of quantitative and qualitative methods to capture affect.

Research Questions

Given the existing research on Cambodian Americans and trauma and my hypotheses, I came up with the following research questions that guide this study:

1. Given that much of trauma literature focuses on individuals as the carriers of trauma, how do such models converge with notions of trauma as collective, cultural, and affective experience?
2. What are the mechanisms in which trauma is transmitted from one generation to another?
3. What are the implications of collective memory for mental health and education?

Before I provide data to answer these research questions, I believe that it is necessary to give more background on the boarder theoretical approaches and historical background for this research. This chapter first begins with a discussion about Critical Race Theory (CRT), AsianCrit, and Critical Refugee Studies to provide a lens to

identify how the model minority myth and the culture of poverty (or culturally deficit frameworks) have limited critical analyses of Cambodian American refugee experiences. I then give some historical and contextual background information about Cambodians—how they ended up in the United States and some of the characteristics and challenges the community faces. Lastly, I will provide an overview of my methodology and outline for this dissertation.

CRITICAL INTERSECTIONS: CRT, ASIANCRIT, AND CRITICAL REFUGEE STUDIES

The work of Du Bois (1903/1989), still relevant today, is suggestive of the durability of the global “color line” and its relation to trauma. Often, aggressors stem from so-called “developed” colonial powers of white European nations. This is evidenced in cases of American imperialism and aggression toward Native peoples, African slaves, and Japanese Issei and Nisei during World War II. In a more global context, there have been countless documented and undocumented violences against individuals, groups of people, and entire nations predicated upon race, skin color, and/or nationality. While these domestic and global cases of pain and violence are not comprehensive, there has been extensive psychological and medical research on such populations of “traumatized” people. Most cases that I have mentioned above are intricately intertwined with American international and domestic policies. Although the experiences and manifestations among various traumatized groups may be qualitatively and quantitatively different, the prevalence of social trauma among

such groups informs sociologists about the complex interplay between history, war, and militarism.

To investigate both the commonality of war trauma across various groups and intricacy of Cambodian-specific experiences, this study uses the intersection between Critical Race Theory (CRT), AsianCrit, and Critical Refugee Studies to analyze trauma formations. In educational research, CRT is applied as a “framework that can be used to theorize, examine and challenge the way race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact social structures, practices, and discourses” (Yosso 2005:70; see also Brown 2003; DeCuir and Dixon 2004, Solorzano 1998, Solorzano and Yosso 2002). More than just an analytical tool, CRT grounds the real-life experiences of silenced peoples within education theory, policy, and praxis (Villalpando 2003: 625). By engaging in this dialogue, we can begin to see not only the multiple sources of racism but also the possibilities for resistance against inequality and injustice. To address the intersections between immigration, history, class, trauma, and education for Cambodian Americans students, I specifically employ critical counter-storytelling and AsianCrit, a subset of CRT. Counter-storytelling privileges the experiential knowledge of silenced and subordinated communities. It allows research to speak against the majoritarian narratives of the model minority myth and the culture of poverty that have dominated discourse on Asian Americans.

Model Minority Myth and the Culture of Poverty

Because the Cambodian American community has faced challenges associated with poverty, low educational attainment, and gang violence, they are often perceived

as “failed model minorities,” people who cannot live up to certain expectations about Asian American immigrants. Rather than assume a “culture of poverty” explanation that claims that Cambodian culture somehow breeds underachievement and gang violence, it is important to investigate ways in which institutions produce and reproduce systemic inequalities—especially ones based on race and ethnicity (Um 2003). The culture of poverty discourse assumes that certain people do not excel or assimilate because they have a cultural pathology that is deeply rooted within familial history (Lewis 1966:xliv-xlv). However, in several studies with refugee students, Lee (2002) found that public schools were actually not prepared to educate and counsel Southeast Asian students. Many teachers assumed that since Cambodian students were Asian, the students should be “model minorities.” The model minority myth is “a glowing image of a population that, despite past discrimination, had succeeded in becoming a hardworking, uncomplaining minority deserving to serve as a model for other minorities” (Chen in Nakanishi 1993:11). As such, students were merely expected to do well, without any regard to sociohistorical context and without additional assistance.

Park and Park (2005) find that Asians who do not follow the model minority myth are deemed less deserving because they do not have the desired qualities that are essential for Asian minorities to gain acceptance in American society. Zia (2000:117) writes, “...mass media often blend the wildly diverse traits from distinct Asian cultures into an unimaginative, one-size-fits-all Asian stereotype.” If other Asian Americans can succeed, then Cambodian Americans should be able to succeed as well. The

American system is presumed a meritocracy, so if someone does not succeed, it is not because the system failed, but because the individual failed. Furthermore, the myth claims there is no problem with the racial state, but instead there are problems within each community. Ong (2003:85) argues, "...cultural typification clearly marked Cambodians as less successful exemplars of the Asian 'race,' less model-minority material, and more underclass in orientation." The model minority myth is an important ploy manipulated by dominant society to supposedly "reward" industrious Asian immigrants and punish "bad ethnics," especially "lazy and worthless" Asian immigrants. Ong (2003:13) asserts, "The assigning of racialized labels—model minority, refugee, underclass, welfare mother, [gang banger]—is part of the racial classificatory process." These types of disciplining discourses have significant consequences for non-compliance. Youth are denied opportunities of equal access to education and employment; they are racially profiled; and they are deemed deviant and undeserving of social, civil, and political citizenship.

Cambodians are constantly lumped into the category of the "underclass" without an explication of their circumstances or situations. Blandin writes (1994:29), "The enemy is not a foreign foe, but the legions of despair: poverty, racial discrimination, illiteracy, family breakdown, unemployment, welfare dependency, crime, drug abuse, and teen pregnancy." All of these woes are overrepresented in the Cambodian community because of the environments in which they were subjected. According to Pho (in Higgins and Ross 1997:09), "Poverty, poor schooling, dysfunctional homes, and peer pressure may form a breeding ground for self-

destruction, substance abuse, anti-social behaviors, or sometimes criminal activities.”

A disproportionate number of poor families are entrapped in underclass urban neighborhoods because of economic and social institutions that perpetuate poverty (Surgue 1999). Raley writes,

Due to a mutually reinforcing cycle of discrimination and economic inequality, people of color are not only more likely to be poorer than whites, but also more likely to reside in areas of particularly concentrated poverty. Residents face substandard housing, ill-funded schools, and social isolation, though they do get more than their share of liquor stores and hazardous waste-dump sites. (1999:262)

Popular and dominant discourses, however, refuse to acknowledge these patterns of poverty and discrimination because the inequalities faced by minorities like Cambodian Americans are outside of mainstream consciousness. Their marginality places them in a position where they are contradictorily ignored yet over-policed.

Because parents are not able to fully engage themselves due to their own traumas from war, genocide and autogenocide, and relocation, care for children often suffers. In a study by Hinton et al. (2009), first generation survivors often directed their anger toward children. This anger was quite severe because “71% of the anger episodes met panic-attack criteria on the basis of somatic arousal, and the anger episodes often resulted in trauma recall and catastrophic cognitions” (Hinton et al. 2009:1392). Intergenerational conflicts also frequently occur when youth and older generations experience differential rates of acculturation and generational dissonance (Hinton et al. 2009). Because adults have difficulties acquiring English and handling everyday errands due to their mental health and marginality in American society,

Cambodian children need to help their parents communicate with American society—paying bills, answering phone calls, filling out forms, translating medical visits, helping at the family business and more. Park (2005:42) asserts, “Children of immigrants must take on multiple roles to fulfill the daily needs of not only the family, but also the family business.” Since the parent now relies on the children for information, a role reversal occurs in which children acquire much more power than usually allowed in Cambodian culture. It is not that parents do not care about the well-being of their children or grandchildren. Many times, the older generations do not have the ability and resources to understand what their youth endure. As a result, in the 1990s and 2000s, many Cambodian American youth joined gangs as a form of secondary family and protection (Ong 2003; Rumbaut and Ewing 2007). Chhim, executive director of the Cambodian Association of America in Long Beach, elaborates, “Cambodian gangs started out with good intentions—to protect their bike or something like that. Some protection is needed. Later on...they [got] involved in all kinds of violent activities” (in Chan 2003:219).

But despite the presence of gang violence and incarceration, census data show that educational attainment has increased among Cambodians living in the United States. In 2005, the United States Census reported that only 6.9% of Cambodian Americans had a bachelor’s degree, but in 2012, the number of people holding bachelor’s degrees increased to 13.1%. These rates, which are still much lower than the those for the aggregated Asian American group (50.5% in 2012), demonstrate not only that the model minority masks challenges among the disaggregated Asian

American groups but also that not all Southeast Asian students are culturally impoverished and underachieving. An AsianCrit perspective reveals that the primarily negative representations of Cambodian youth as failed model minorities and gang members are too limited and overshadow the educational challenges and successes of Cambodian students, particularly those pursuing higher education (Sue et al. 2007).

According to Chang (1993:1247), “Asian Americans suffer from discrimination, much of which is quantitatively and qualitatively different from that suffered by other disempowered groups.” By addressing the systemic silences around violence and discrimination against Asian Americans, including anti-immigration laws, nativist racism, and the model minority myth, AsianCrit helps combat the exclusion of Asian Americans from civil rights discourse and research (Chang 1993:1250). This critical framework gives us the potential to reconstruct the present and future by taking a critical look at the legal, political, and social pasts of Cambodian Americans. Instead of concealing the past, AsianCrit allows open engagement with history, particularly with laws and legal statutes, so that counternarratives may be generated.

In addition to CRT and AsianCrit, I find that it is also imperative that this research employ a Critical Refugee Studies lens. Yen Espiritu (2014:10) asserts that the majority of “scholarship on refugee resettlement and on refugee policies construct the refugees as out-of-place victims and the nation-state as the ultimate provider of human welfare.” Rather than treat refugees merely as individuals who are displaced from certain territorial boundaries, it is crucial to consider how refugees can act as a

paradigm that can reveal larger legal, economic, and social problems. Refugees are not only a critical idea but also intentional, feeling, and social beings who can “enact their *own* politics as they emerge out of the ruins of war and its aftermath” (Espiritu 2014:11). Although war and conflict seem to be over and done with, Critical Refugee Studies allows us to see how refugees reveal that there are continued effects (including affects) about “endings that are not over” (see Espiritu 2014).

In Chapter 3, I provide interview data to bolster critical accounts of United States military involvement in Southeast Asia, particularly Cambodia. This is necessary because United States military aggression (e.g., support of the Lon Nol Khmer Republic coup, secret bombing campaign, support of the Khmer Rouge against the Vietnamese) created the conditions that produced the need for Cambodian people to seek refuge. Espiritu’s (2014:176) concept of “militarized refuge(es)” calls for us to “hold the United States accountable for the epistemic or symbolic violence of its wars *and* for the actual physical violence...” In the following section, I will provide some background information about the Khmer Rouge’s rise to power, the United States military involvement in Cambodia, and the horrors that the Cambodian people experienced.

THE CAMBODIAN (AUTO)GENOCIDE

Even though the Khmer Rouge was only in power for three years and nine months, the United Nations found that between April 1975 and January 1979, the Khmer Rouge committed “some of the most horrific violations of human rights seen

in the world since the end of the Second World War” (United Nations 1999). Nearly a fifth of Cambodia’s population was decimated, but those who were responsible for planning and implementing such crimes against humanity did not face any immediate legal repercussions (United Nations 1999). Despite long-time Prime Minister Hun Sen’s initial requests to the United Nations for assistance in creating a court system to respond to the Khmer Rouge charges against genocide and autogenocide and crimes against humanity—as the United Nations did in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia—the Cambodian government has consistently and outwardly opposed and interfered with the international court proceedings (Cambodia Tribunal Monitor 2011). Because the Khmer Rouge tortured, starved, and executed people from ethnic groups such as the Cham and Chinese as well as Cambodians themselves, the leaders could not be simply charged with crimes of “genocide.” The killings of Cambodians were categorized as autogenocide, which meant that the Genocide Convention could not be singularly invoked (United Nations 1999). For more discussion about such terminologies, see Chapter 3.

It took numerous negotiations and deliberations for the United Nations and the Cambodian government to come to an agreement for a hybrid court system, later named the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) (“Law”). But even so, the tribunals have continued to face multiple challenges, primarily ones associated with funding, judge resignation, corruption, and inefficiency.

How did the Khmer Rouge come to power?

During the Cold War Era, fear of communism spread not only throughout the United States via McCarthyism but also to the farther reaches of American influence, particularly Southeast Asia. Even though the United States government was at war with Vietnam, American military aggression did not cease at geopolitical borders of Vietnam. Although Congress never declared war on Cambodia, the Nixon administration orchestrated widespread political and social turmoil throughout the neutral country (Owen and Kiernan 2006). Without United States' interference in the politics in Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge would not have been able to gain sole power of Cambodia so swiftly and forcefully (Cambodian Tribunal Monitor 2011:52). American military aggression and failed political interventions established a foundation for the Khmer Rouge to rise to power (Chan 2003:13).

In 1970, several years after the United States started secretly bombing Cambodia, the American government supported a coup engineered by General Lon Nol and Prime Minister Sirik Matak to oust King Norodom Sihanouk who regained power after Cambodia gained sovereignty from the French (Etcheson 1987:190). The United States was invested in the Lon Nol regime because it wanted the newly formed Khmer Republic to help fight against the communist Vietnamese (Etcheson 1987:190). Lon Nol's government, however, did not gain the favor of the public and quickly was overthrown by the Khmer Rouge after only five years of rule (United Nations 1999). This was made possible because ironically, King Sihanouk, who was respected and regarded as a deity of the Cambodian kingdom, joined forces with the

Khmer Rouge, his former political challengers, to fight against the American-backed Khmer Republic (Etcheson 1987:191).

The Khmer Rouge also capitalized on the Cambodian people's hatred for Americans. The American military dropped approximately 2.7 million tons of ordnance onto this neutral state between 1965 and 1973 (Owen and Kiernan 2006:63). According to Owen and Kiernan (2006:63), "Just over 10 percent of this bombing was indiscriminate, with 3,580 of the sites listed as having 'unknown' targets and another 8,238 sites having no target listed at all." Many peasants joined the Khmer Rouge because they were afraid of and angry with the death and destruction. In an interview with Bruce Palling, Chhit Do, a former Khmer Rouge officer, said,

The ordinary people sometimes literally shit in their pants when the big bombs and shells came. Their minds just froze up and they would wander around mute for three or four days. Terrified and half crazy, the people were ready to believe what they were told. It was because of their dissatisfaction with the bombing that they kept on co-operating with the Khmer Rouge, joining up with the Khmer Rouge, sending their children off to go with them... Sometimes the bombs fell and hit little children, and their fathers would be all for the Khmer Rouge. (Owen and Kiernan 2006:67-68)

By the time that Congress halted the destructive secret campaign, there was so much political unrest caused by American intervention that the Khmer Rouge was able to use people's resentment toward the United States and the Khmer Republic as propaganda to increase recruitment. According to Chan (2003:8), "The Khmer Rouge successfully used the rural population's growing distress to persuade more and more recruits to join their fighting units as the massive tonnage of American bombs destroyed crops, work animals, and homes of the peasants and killed an increasing

number of civilians.” King Sihanouk even accused Nixon and Kissinger, Nixon’s then secretary of state, of serving the interests of the Khmer Rouge during their military activities in Cambodia (DC-Cam 2012).

The Reign of the Khmer Rouge

On April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. This signified the beginning of the reign of Pol Pot and his communist regime. According to Duch, defendant in Case 001, Pol Pot “evacuated all the people from Phnom Penh city, smashed the former regime officials, smashed the capitalists, [and] smashed the intellectuals” (Cambodian Trial Monitor 2011:55). Up until September 1977, Pol Pot and his cadre hid behind the name of the “Angkar Padevat” or “revolutionary organization” (United Nations 1999, para. 6). Pol Pot even told his followers that he had no power to release any people because Angkar was in charge (Cambodian Trial Monitor 2011:55).

In April 1976, the former “Khmer Republic” was officially replaced by “Democratic Kampuchea,” a euphemism for the ruthless communist government run by Pol Pot (Cambodian Trial Monitor 2011:55). In order to achieve the party’s goals of attaining an ethnically homogenous country that was devoid of colonial influence, the Khmer Rouge formulated a “revolution whereby all pre-existing economic, social and cultural institutions were abolished, all foreign influences were expunged and the entire population was transformed into a collective workforce, required to work at breakneck speed to build up the country's economic strength” (Cambodian Trial Monitor 2011:55). Men, women, and children were forced into work camps where

they farmed from dawn until dusk and were given little to no food; families were separated; urban centers were laid barren after forced evacuations; and people of all ages were tortured and executed for not worshipping “Angkar.” In this state-imposed violent agricultural peasant society, people perished in the “killing fields” from starvation, overwork, torture, and execution. The United Nations found four categories of individual and group human rights abuse instigated by Khmer Rouge cadre: 1) forced population movements, 2) forced labor and inhumane living conditions, 3) attacks on enemies of the revolution (including former Khmer Republic leaders, ethnic minorities, all educated persons, and religious leaders), and 4) purges within the Community Party of Kampuchea (including Khmer Rouge soldiers suspected of being foreign agents) (United Nations 1999, para. 18-35).

According to Chan (2003:13), “In the three years and eight months that the Khmer Rouge regime lasted, from April 1975 to January 1979, at least 1.5 million people (some estimates are higher [at about 2.2 million]) perished.” People died from overwork, starvation, and execution. After the Vietnamese captured Phnom Penh, Cambodia’s capital in January 1979, many Cambodian civilians who survived the work camps and Khmer Rouge persecution risked their lives to secretly cross Cambodia and the Mekong River into Thai refugee camps at the border. Chan (2003:11) details, “During these journeys, tens of thousands of people died from hunger, thirst, exposure to the elements, illness, and executions.” Those who survived the journey entered Thailand as illegal immigrants and faced many challenges before they were able to apply for refuge in host countries such as the United States, France,

and Australia. These refugees had well-founded fears that made repatriation too dangerous (McBrien 2005; Park and Park 2005).

DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

To answer the initial research questions that I posed in the beginning of this introduction, I conducted a concurrent mixed methods study (see Figure 1.1) that employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis (see Table 1.1). You will find an in-depth discussion about methods in Chapter 2.

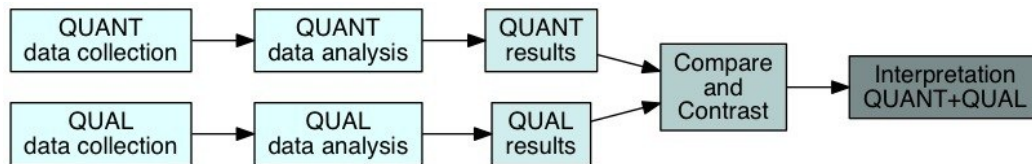


Figure 1.1 Concurrent Mixed Methods²

Table 1.1 Methodology

	Survey Questionnaires	Ethnography
Methods	Closed-ended survey & free response	Participant Observations at Sala Khmer & In-depth Interviews
Sampling	Purposive & Convenient	Purposive & Snowball
Location	2013 Khmer Student Coalition Conference	Southern California & Bay Area
Target Population	1.5 & 2nd generation Cambodian American college students or college graduates	1.5 & 2nd generation Cambodian American college students or college graduates
Sample Size	69	27

² Image is excerpted from Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:63).

Table 1.2 Participant Characteristics

Pseudonym	Generation	Age	Schooling
Chhourn	1	50s	less than elementary
Kiri	1	70s	high school
Samphy	1	70s	high school
Sann	1	50s	PhD
Chann	1.5	mid-20s	current undergraduate
Sokha	1.5	mid-20s	college graduate
Samboun	1.5	late-20s	college graduate
Veata	1.5	mid-20s	college graduate
Sophie	1.5	early 30s	college graduate
Chenda	2	early 20s	current undergraduate
Ken	2	early 20s	current undergraduate
Chanvatey	2	early 20s	current undergraduate
Daphne	2	mid-20s	current graduate student
Eddie	2	early 20s	current undergraduate
Jay	2	early 20s	current undergraduate
Leia	2	early 20s	current undergraduate
Katrina	2	early 20s	current undergraduate
Nisay	2	early 20s	current undergraduate
Vanna	2	early 20s	current undergraduate
Alyssa	2	early 20s	current undergraduate
Mark	2	early 20s	current undergraduate
Sok	2	early 20s	current undergraduate
Peter	2	early 20s	current undergraduate
Vincent	2	early 20s	current undergraduate
Seatha	2	early 20s	current undergraduate
Susan	2	early 20s	current undergraduate
Jane	2	late-20s	current graduate student
Lisa	2	late-20s	current undergraduate
Diana	2	mid-20s	current graduate student
Cathy	2	early 30s	current graduate student
Melanie	2	mid-20s	college graduate

Sociological Cohorts

As you can see from Table 1.1 and 1.2, I focused primarily on 1.5 and second generation Cambodian American college students or college graduates. The 1.5 generation includes persons who “emigrate before twelve years of age,” but in terms of this study, the cut-off is quite arbitrary and only functions as an identifier because it does not reflect the “subjective nature of ethnic identification,” in which the 1.5 and second generation often share (Maira 2002:212 n.6). I argue that my 1.5 generation participants belong to the same “sociological cohort” as my second generation participants because my 1.5-generation participants were primarily born in the refugee camps and did not have first-hand experience with the Khmer Rouge genocide (Shinagawa and Pang 1996). The second generation that I interviewed were at least 20 years of age and born to parents who had experienced the war. While children of the 1.5 generation are also considered the second generation, they did not qualify for participation in this study. I wanted to focus on the subset of children of Cambodian refugees who did not have direct experience of the genocide but have parents who did. I also decided to interview students and graduates because I wanted to show that Cambodian Americans, like other Asian Americans, cannot be singularly seen as model minorities but neither are they simple outcomes of the culture of poverty.

Chapter Overviews

By using an analytical framework based upon the intersection between CRT, AsianCrit, and Critical Refugee Studies, I offer an *Affective Approach to Trauma Studies* in

Chapter 2. I first describe current individual-based and collective trauma frameworks and their associated methods and approaches. I then describe how a critical affective approach opens up the possibility for social science scholars to understand how trauma can be passed from one generation to the next—via verbal communication and affective attachment and exchange. Because of the various terminologies used to describe medical, psychological, and historical trauma, I define the terminologies and explain why I choose to use the term “transgenerational trauma.” Based upon these foundations, I propose to use a theoretical analytic called *latent articulations*, which denotes the ability of trauma to both convey/express and connect to multiple forms of trauma and to different bodies. Lastly, in Chapter 2, I engage in an in-depth discussion about methodology and the scope of this study.

In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I provide survey and interview data to address the aforementioned research questions. Chapter 3 shows how stories of trauma from prisoners, civilians, and the subsequent generations can function as *time-image episodes* that demonstrate the ability for trauma to expand various temporalities and connect multiple generations to the original sources of wounding. I also argue that it is the feelings and affects associated with being “traumatized” that create the refugee subject. Furthermore, an affect of trauma expands our current conceptualizes of refugee subjecthood—the quality of being a Southeast Asian (particularly Cambodian American) refugee living in the United States. While Chapter 3 focuses primarily on the stories and the silences of verbal trauma transmission, Chapter 4 highlights the ability of trauma to be passed on via anger, neglect, overprotectiveness, and mistrust.

Also, Chapter 3 explicates how trauma is inherently a social rather than solely individual phenomenon. A discussion about trauma formation demonstrates how trauma is discursively produced and affectively felt. Furthermore, trauma is productive because it has the ability to make and remake the realities for refugee subjects. Chapter 4 provides a socioeconomic description of my sample, showing that my participants are representative of other Cambodian Americans living in California. In the last substantive chapter, Chapter 5, I discuss Cambodian American cultural identity development and a positive affect of trauma. While identity development is often conceptualized as an individualized phenomenon within a socio-cultural context, I argue that Cambodian American identities are unique because they bespeak a larger phenomenon of trauma formation. Also, contrary to pathological and heavily negative representations of trauma, Chapter 5 addresses the positive affects that can be evoked by trauma. Successive generation Cambodian Americans work with and through trauma to creatively produce something that is quantitative and qualitatively different from the trauma that their parents carry.

Trauma and pain are not binary or isolated to “those who suffer” and “those who do not.” It is necessary to understand the social and political ramifications of pain and trauma, especially those that are exacerbated or caused by military aggression. Since the United States is amidst ending a more than a-decade-long war, there is and will continue to be long term effects of trauma on those who have a direct experience and those who share an indirect familial or public connection with the

pain, memory, and trauma. This study will allow researchers and policymakers better understand the varieties of trauma, particularly social and cultural trauma.

In this dissertation, I evaluate the reliability and validity of two popular refugee trauma indexes: the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma's Version of the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ) (see Mollica et al. 2004). The HTQ offers "insights into the psychiatric distress of those highly traumatized." While this index are noted as the most valid and reliable of the 125 instruments evaluated by Hollifield et al. (2002), it cannot account for the intersection between trauma and generations. For example, questions include whether or not subjects have experienced combat, lack of shelter, forced evacuation, and more. Because those from the 1.5 or second generation largely have not experienced such traumas, such questionnaires are largely irrelevant. By triangulating ethnography with the survey data, I also evaluated the validity of the "Modified Secondary Trauma Scale-MSTS" (Motta et al. 1991, 2001), which attempts to measure secondary trauma. My multi-method approach tests the existing indexes in order to increase validity and reliability for measuring and conceptualizing transgenerational trauma.

Overall, this dissertation finds that trauma is not solely debilitating but instead *productive*, productive in a way that creates potentials to produce or reproduce every life—from the significant to the mundane. Being productive does not automatically refer to something positive. The data from this dissertation show that trauma can generate positive, negative, and flat affects. What is produced includes not only identity development, daily encounters, and realities such as racism, mental health, education,

and poverty, but also the mundane which includes discrepancies in names or even just getting through the day. So as you can see, potential does not necessary have a positive connotation. It merely means that there is a capacity for cultural trauma to develop into something in else. The goal is not to heal but to open up discussion regarding the pain and trauma that seems so relevant and prominent in so many people's lives.

Chapter 2: An Affect of Trauma

“...haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with (such as with transatlantic slavery, for instance) or when their oppressive nature is continuously denied (such as with free labor or national security).”
— Avery Gordon (2011:2)

It is often difficult for people to believe that latent memories or trauma may be transmitted from one person to another. For example, it is like asking someone to believe that your backache is caused by the fact that your mother hurt her back as a child, or that you are afraid of loud noises because your father heard bombs and gunfire when he was a young man. However, let us recall some common sayings: “an apple does not fall far from the tree,” “a chip off the old block,” and “like father, like son.” These classical adages often hold some sort of truth. In terms of non-visible transmission, it is easy to accept that one can pass a common cold or flu to another person or that wireless signals and radio waves pass through the air to give us access to the internet and radio. Why is it so difficult then to believe that trauma may be passed from one generation to another? We may not be able to see germs, viruses, or wifi waves with the naked eye, but we somehow know that they exist. Although the same could be said for trauma [there must be more], there is an emerging body of cross-disciplinary research confirming trauma transmission, and, it seeks to inform researchers, clinical practitioners, policymakers, and advocates about the experiences

associated with people who encounter the intangible and ineffable nature of trauma.³

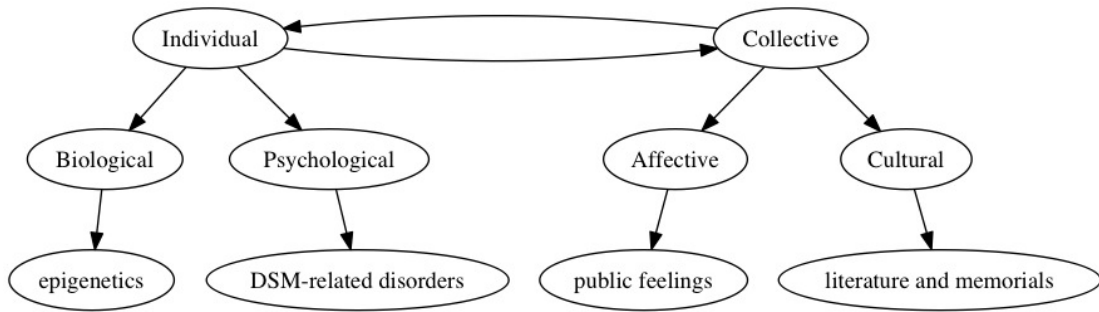


Figure 2.1. Traditional Trauma Frameworks and Approaches

In this chapter, I review the literature on trauma and suggest that there is limited cross-disciplinary engagement across the five main genres of research on trauma: genetics, psychology, literature, cultural studies, and sociology. Figure 2.1 outlines the traditional frameworks (i.e., individual and collective) and approaches (i.e., psychological, biological, narrative, affective, and cultural) that I have identified as central to the process of conceptualizing, theorizing, and studying trauma. Although not identified in the model, social sciences and humanities disciplines such as literature, history, sociology, anthropology, ethnic studies, and literature tend to fall under the collective framework. I define “framework” as an overall guide that allows researchers to classify and categorize phenomena; it is flexible enough to expand and constrict when new “approaches” are considered. “Approaches” are grounded in

³ See Cvetkovich (2003), Kellerman (2001b), and Yehuda, Halligan, and Grossman (2001). Cvetkovich, Kellerman, and Yehuda span the disciplinary boundaries of humanities, social sciences, and medical science, but all trace and study the mechanisms and effects of trauma, particularly intergenerational trauma.

methodology—they are the ways in which certain abstract constructs are conceptualized, measured, and evaluated. As demonstrated in Figure 2.1, trauma literature and research are often conceptualized in a way that neatly fits into two major categories (i.e., individual and collective). Through my study on the transgenerational transmission of trauma among Cambodian Americans, however, I have identified many areas of cross-disciplinary engagement that disrupt the simplicity of such binaries.

I enhance and build on the seemingly incommensurate nature of the epigenetics of trauma; the somatic and psychological manifestations of trauma-related “disorders;” and the analysis of trauma as a cultural artifact in literature, memorials, and other media, I use affect and sociological methods as a way of bridging these disparate conceptualizations. Affect is a promising and compelling bridge-way for mending the divides in the literature and explains the ways in which trauma can be experienced and felt both individually and collectively, across space and time. In doing so, the theoretical body of work on affect offers an embodied structural framework for understanding trauma.

WHAT IS AFFECT?

There are many varied definitions of affect,⁴ but in this study, I define affect as encompassing emotion, sensation, and feeling. Massumi’s model of affect (as

⁴ The following are some key essays on affect: Bennett 2009; Berlant 1997, 2008; Brennan 2004; Connolly 2011a, 2011b; Cvetkovich 2003; Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Eng and Kazanjian 2002; Gomez-Barris and Gray 2010; Gregg and Seigworth 2010; Leys 2011; Massumi 2002; Ngai 2007; Sedgwick 2003; Stewart 2007; Terada 2001.

sensation) versus emotion (as language), however, would distinguish affect and emotion as separate phenomena. While emotion requires a cognitive recognition of a sensation, feeling is intentionally more ambiguous. Feelings are embodied sensations that may or may not be cognitive. Cvetkovich (2010:4) defines feeling as something that acknowledges the somatic or sensory nature of experience; feelings are not just “cognitive concepts or constructions.” Feeling(s) reference both the verb form (i.e., to feel) and the noun form (i.e., an emotional state or reaction). Because of the confluence between emotion, feeling, sensation, and affect, it is difficult to identify when one ends and the other begins. Ahmed (2004b:40) contends, “Certainly, the experience of ‘having’ an emotion may be distinct from sensations and impressions, which may burn the skin before any conscious moment of recognition.” However, “if the contact with an object generates feeling, then emotion and sensation cannot be easily separated” (Ahmed 2004b:6). Although we may not always recognize how or what we feel, the ability to feel is always already structured by the typologies of feeling to which our bodies become accustomed (whether consciously or not).

Because feeling, and affect more broadly, does not necessarily have to reference a specific object, it is useful in investigating the non-conscious (sometimes never-to-be-conscious) yet deeply felt attachments, impressions, and excess we have in relation to other bodies (human or otherwise). Affect is central to our relationships between different bodies⁵ because it provides the potential for us to develop feelings

⁵ Such bodies included but are not limited to other human bodies, animals, the environment, material objects, and other bodies that we encounter as sentient beings.

and emotions that reference other bodies (Spinoza 1997). Shouse (2005) elaborates, “The importance of affect rests upon the fact that in many cases the message consciously received may be of less import to the receiver of that message than his or her non-conscious affective resonance with the source of the message.” As such, we can arrive at a conceptual refinement: affects are sensate experiences that are located and embedded in individual bodies, but the origin and meaning of such sensations do not solely come from a single body, but instead, the body of a collective. As such, a purely sociology of emotions approach would be unable to capture the unconscious and pre-conscious potentials of embodied sensation that may or may not be linguistically conceptualized.⁶ Furthermore, the fields of social psychology and sociology of emotions would not postulate that emotion or affect can exist as autonomous from individuals. Affect, however, is intensity, which creates the potential for the exchange of feelings and emotions between and amongst certain bodies, including nature, people, and animals (Ahmed 2004a, 2004b); therefore, affect *can* be autonomous from individuals.

Although contested, some theorists have argued that the “turn to affect” was initiated as a response from critical and cultural theorists to addressing the limitations of structuralism, post-structuralism, and deconstruction (see Clough 2008; Leys 2011). For example, when asked by Gregg and Seigworth about how his story intersected with affect, Lawrence Grossberg explained how he largely felt unsatisfied with the

⁶ See Ahmed (2004a, 2004b); Cheng (2000); Gould (2009); Massumi (2002); Ngai (2007); Sedgwick (2003).

limitations of the “Althusserian notion of ideology and extant theories of experience” (Grossberg 2010:310). Grossberg wanted to argue that Richard Hoggart’s definition of cultural studies (i.e., “what it feels to be alive’ at a certain conjuncture) and Raymond Williams concept of “the structure of feeling” (i.e., common set of perceptions and values of a particular group, class, or society—in other words, how people live everyday life) could not be adequately captured by existing theories in cultural studies. Because of these limitations, Grossberg (2010:337) found that affect was able to better conceptualize how everyday life is not just made up of material relationships but also affects that are always structured in ways that “cannot be separated from the articulations together of reality and power.” Although this “turn to affect” seems to have taken root in many disciplines in the past five to ten years, Cvetkovich (2012:4) says that she is reluctant to use the term “affective turn” because she finds that affect has always been of interest to scholars. She cites Deleuze’s preconscious sensory experience and Freud’s hydraulic model of psychic energy as a few early theoretical sources of affect studies.

In terms of studies of inequality, affect does not replace disciplinary insights, such as the sociological approaches, in analyzing the structure and the processes of inequality (consider the inequalities based upon race, class, gender, sexuality, immigration status, language ability, etc.). However, affect does enlarge sociological perspectives in its ability to understand the complex relationships and intersections between feeling bodies and trauma, especially in regards to war, imperialism, and international crimes (Chapter 3); racism and class inequality (Chapter 4); educational

disparities and identity development (Chapter 5). After describing the theories and methods that define such approaches, I examine how affective approaches to studying individual, but especially collective trauma, mend divides that produce and reproduce boundaries that confine scholarly engagement to specific disciplines. See Figure 2.2.

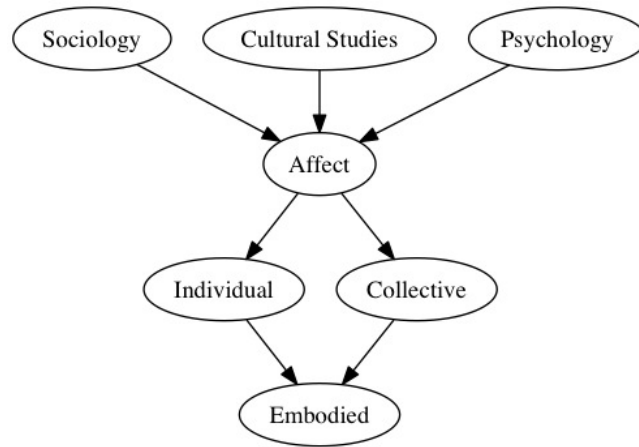


Figure 2.2 An Affective Study of Trauma

THEORIES OF TRAUMA

I have identified two major frameworks of trauma and trauma transmission research: individual and collective. The first framework is based on the theorizations of individualized trauma. Its main focus is based upon a psychological wounding, in which the manifestations of trauma are mapped primarily on an individual (see Choi et al. 2007; Knutson et al. 2013; Leen-Feldner et al. 2013; Lev-Wiesel 2007; Rousseau et al. 1999; Sack et al. 1995; Turner and Lloyd 1995; Young 1997). I have identified two main approaches to this framework of individualized orientation of trauma: biological and psychological. The second framework, which is always tethered to and related to the first (i.e., individual), acknowledges the ways in which trauma (especially

shared trauma) can transcend beyond the individual “sufferers.” Current research on collective trauma revolve primarily around cultural studies (see Alexander 2004; Brison 1999; Caruth 1996; Cvetkovich 2003, 2012; Nagata and Cheng 2003; Parr 2008; Schwab 2010; Van Alphen 1999, 2006), but I find that affective approaches allow us to better understand the circulation of personal (and embodied) trauma and cultural (and collective) trauma.⁷ An affective analysis of trauma that does not discount the medical, psychological, or narrative forms of trauma, but instead interweaves them with a critical framework of affective and social discursive formation (see Ahmed 2000, 2004a, 2004b; Cheng 2000; Cvetkovich 2003; Gordon 1997/2008, 2011; Kawachi and Berkman 2001; Massumi 2002; Olick 1999; Pupavac 2001; Sztompka 2000).

These two frameworks of trauma are also relevant to a more specific investigation of transgenerational trauma. A transgenerational perspective is important when considering social haunting and trauma transmission because it addresses how trauma can play a role in formulating and reproducing family values, psychological patterns, and other possibilities or outcomes. Kellerman (2001b:260), one of the leading psychology-based theorists of transgenerational trauma, has identified four main models of transmission: biological, psychodynamic, sociocultural, and family system. The first two fall under the “individual trauma” framework, and the latter two fall under the “collective trauma” framework.

⁷ Note that some narrative and cultural studies research on trauma take an affective approach, but not all necessarily do so.

The biological model of transmission hinders upon genetic expression and genetic predispositions. The psychodynamic model highlights interpersonal relations, which shape an unconscious “matrix of unhealthy relationships with [the subsequent generations’] parents with who[m] they struggle to maintain their ties and from who[m] they try to differentiate themselves at the same time” (Kellerman 2001b:261). This psychodynamic model was supported by Lambert, Holzer, and Hasbun's (2014) study on paternal and maternal PTSD symptoms and child distress. Although there were higher effects sizes among parent-child dyads with parents that had interpersonal traumatic events rather than war or combat trauma, Lambert et al.'s (2014:14) findings underscore “the importance of considering family relationships of traumatized individuals.”

Such studies that use the sociocultural model explicate how child socialization is mediated via parenting and modeling. This model involves conscious and direct communication between the parent and child. The family systems model may be both conscious and non-conscious and results in an overprotection of the parent for the child and the child for the parent. As demonstrated by Kellerman's (2001b) description of the four models, transgenerational trauma is highly dynamic, but it is most often regarded as a transmission of negative encounters and affects between the parents and the children. This type of trauma, and I posit that Kellerman and many other psychologists would state that all traumas, is harmful to the psychosocial development of children of trauma survivors.

To further highlight the ways in which transgenerational transmission of trauma has been rooted in familial relationships and individual expressions of post-traumatic symptoms, Danieli has identified three components of transgenerational trauma:

1. the parents' trauma, its parameters, and the offspring's own relationship to it;
2. the nature and extent of the conspiracy of silence surrounding the trauma and its aftermath; and
3. their parents' post-trauma adaptational styles. (2007:69)

Among these three components, there is one main commonality: the role of the family. But, there is no distinct linear relationship between a parent's childrearing behavior and a child's psychological outcome. Instead, there are many parental and individual factors that influence the process of transmission of trauma, and such processes of transmission are more likely to occur under certain circumstances. For example, transgenerational transmission of trauma is exacerbated and transformed when there is also extensive disenfranchisement (beyond war trauma) within a family. This is particularly salient in regards to Cambodian Americans who have had to not only deal with the aftermath of the horrors of the Khmer Rouge but also the pervasiveness of ethnic and racial discrimination, socioeconomic disenfranchisement, and non-citizen immigrant status.

While transgenerational trauma has been greatly studied and conceptualized via psychiatric and psychological approaches that predominantly focus on the negative outcomes of trauma transmissions (see Kellerman 2001a, 2001b; Danieli 2007; Mollica 2008), cultural studies and literary scholars have provided theoretical insight

into other (i.e., non-clinical and more collective) approaches to understanding transgenerational trauma. When your “memory” is not your personal memory, but is instead the traumatic memory of relatives or affiliated members in your community, Hirsch (2001, 2008), in discussing Holocaust survivors, calls this phenomenon of transgenerational transmission of trauma, “postmemory.” Familial postmemory is both inter- and intragenerational. Similar to Kellerman (2001a, 2001b) and Danieli (2007), Hirsch (2008) identifies *intergenerational* postmemory as characterized by the vertical identification of child and parent occurring within the same immediate family. *Intragenerational* postmemory is characterized by the horizontal identification among others. This affiliative postmemory does not require a direct familial connection—it may occur between cousins or between a patient and his/her doctor. Affiliative postmemory happens contemporaneously through a empathetic⁸ connection that is compelling enough to encompass a larger collective in an organic web of transmission (Hirsch 2008). In this sense, I understand affiliative postmemory to be a form of public feelings and affect. Public feelings encompass a form of sociality that allows us to consider negative affects (e.g., depression, fear, anxiety, and trauma) as cultural and social phenomena. Cvetkovich (2003, 2012), in describing public feelings, sees trauma as central to examining intersections between emotional and social processes as they relate to the intersection of memory and history. Hence, trauma gives rise to “cultural memory” or as Hirsch would call it, “affiliative postmemory.” Familial postmemory facilitates affiliative postmemory.

⁸ See Mollica (2008:116) and Kruks (2001)

Now that I have given a general overview of the trauma frameworks and how transgenerational trauma may fall into those respective categories, I will provide a review of the various approaches that researchers and scholars have used to better understand the complexities of trauma.

Individual-Based Trauma Framework

The earliest studies on trauma relied heavily upon a medical model, in which bodily trauma (e.g., a physical wound or injury) would require biomedical treatment. Although psychological approaches to trauma have been heavily influenced by the medical model, contemporary psychologists identify this model as biased toward viewing and treating trauma primarily as a “physical injury to the nervous system” (Wastell 2005:xvi). As a result, psychologists have conceptualized psychological trauma in a way that considers both the body and the mind (especially via an analysis of emotions and outcomes). According to the American Psychological Association (2015), “Psychology is the study of the mind and behavior.” While the discipline embraces applied and basic research on many aspects of the human experience—from child development to motherhood to gerontology—the focus is on individuals’ minds and behaviors. A subset of psychology, social psychology considers a more collective approach to studying the human mind and behaviors by examining how people think about, influence, and relate to one another. According to Riezler, (1944:490), “[Because] everybody, however egocentric, refers him [or her]self and his [or her] phenomenal field to...the world of the others,” the social field is always related to the context and situation. In terms of the field of psychology, each

individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are shaped by *situational variables* (APA 2015). Such "*situations*," however, do not necessarily consider the collective or structural nature of people's experiences (e.g., institutions or culture⁹).

Psychology of Fear

Now, let us consider the concept of fear, which is closely related to psychological trauma, traumatic recall, and other post-trauma experiences. Fear is an affect (i.e., feelings and emotions) that is associated with one's perception of a threat. As an autonomic and affective response associated with trauma and suffering, fear is known to connect the physiological body (including autonomic flight/fight responses) to the psychic or the psychological mind (recollection of a negative outcome or harm) (Wastell 2004). Fear is constituted by an evolutionary impulse (instinct), a bodily state (tension), and a memory (mental processing) that helps increase one's chance of survival when threatened (Ohman 2009). Wastell (2004:44) finds that the protective actions of the emotion system (e.g., fear) "leave a biological residue that becomes associated with the fragmentary memory trace." The nexus between harm and fear exists because of people's desire and instinct for self-preservation: perceptions associated with certain triggers of pain (which may lead to death). According to Scarry (1985:17), "[In] order to express pain one must *both* objectify its felt-characteristics *and* hold steadily visible the referent for those characteristics" (emphasis in original). An image of a weapon or a reference to something (which does not

⁹ Although related, a social analysis of how individuals are shaped by institutions and/or culture is more within the purview of sociology than psychology.

necessarily have to be weapon) that has instilled pain upon us enables us to distinguish between what is the cause or the source of the pain and how we conceptualize the pain in our minds. In psychological terms, the reference to pain is a stimulus that evokes fear (Ohman 2009). While the stimulus has a close proximity to the body (because it is what the body can attribute the pain and fear towards), it is this spatial separation between the stimulus and the pain that produces an individualized (or psychological) conception of a person's experience of trauma.

For survivors of traumatic experiences, fear is known to colonize and degrade sufferers' lives rather than help survivors cope or adapt. Take for example, women survivors of the atomic bomb (also known as hibakusha) in Japan. In addition to the more immediate losses of educational and professional opportunities that the hibakusha had to deal with, they often feared the long-term effects of radiation exposure on their abilities to bear healthy children. This was the ultimate fear that dictated the lives of many Japanese women who survived the atomic bomb (Todeschini 1999). These fears were not unwarranted because shortly after the bombings, many women gave birth to stillborns and babies with congenital defects or were unable to conceive altogether (Todeschini 1999). For the hibakusha, the causes of their conditions and the lack of Japanese and American government responses shaped the ways in which they experienced the pains and fears associated with the physiological and psychological long-term effects of the atomic bomb. However, when doctors and hospitals treated these women, the main focus revolved around *individualized pathology*: a woman's personal inability to cope explains both the causes

and effects of her symptoms and conditions. The suffering related to the atomic bomb and its aftermath was individualized as pathology within the survivors.

Even when the United States government dispatched the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC) to study the long-term effects of radiation on hibakusha, the ABCC's purpose was to study the "science" of radiation exposure (e.g., through blood work, urinalysis, X-rays, and postmortem examinations) (Todeschini 1999).¹⁰ Not only did the ABCC not medically treat the hibakusha whom they used as study subjects, but it also did not consider the psychological effects of "Atomic Bomb Stress." Out of the purview of the medical doctors who focused only on the physiological injuries, patients' stresses and fears associated with living through the atomic bomb were not even considered to be of interest to the ABCC researchers. However, patients lived in fear because they were deathly afraid that they were tainted. Also, they suffered negative treatment by those who were "normal" and not affected by the bomb. At that time, the psychological trauma among the hibakusha women remained unrecognized. Today, however, emotions that are related to ineffable and unexplainable psychic pain are recognized as a "central feature of trauma" (Wastell 2004:xvii).

PTSD

¹⁰ The ABCC doctors and researchers only studied the victims and did not provide any treatment. Local physicians were expected to treat the women. Because of these dynamics, many hibakusha felt like research subjects that were not unlike lab rats or guinea pigs. See Todeschini (1999) for further discussion.

The hibakushas' overwhelming fear associated with "Atomic Bomb Stress" manifested as what the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.; *DSM-5*; APA 2013) would now identify as a form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a "psychiatric disability" that involves "reliving the event," "avoiding situations that remind [a person] of the event," "[having] negative changes in beliefs and feelings," and "feeling keyed up (also called hyperarousal)" (Marshall et al. 2005; "What is PTSD" 2014). The National Center for PTSD states that PTSD can occur after a person has experienced a traumatic event; this includes combat exposure, radiation exposure, child sexual or physical abuse, terrorist attack, sexual or physical assault, serious accidents, and natural disasters. The diagnosis and identification of PTSD as a "mental disorder" first appeared in the third edition of the DSM in 1980 (Friedman 2014). Even though the symptoms of PTSD had been prevalent among people for hundreds of years before it was officially recognized by the American Psychiatric Association, this was the first time that it was recognized as a mental disorder. This addition was controversial because the inclusion of PTSD in the DSM-3 violated the APA's previous assumptions about the internal nature of mental disorders, which assumed that one's own unique mental capacities created the mental psychopathology (Friedman 2014; Wastell 2004).

In addition to the plethora of PTSD research on trauma survivors such as Jews, veterans, Native Americans, Japanese hibakusha, and African Americans, PTSD symptoms and processes have also been well-documented in psychological and psychiatric studies on first and 1.5 generation Cambodian refugees, individuals who

experienced persecution, starvation, and relocation first-hand (see Carlson and Rosser-Hogan 1994; Rousseau et al. 2003; Sack et al. 1999). In line with the National Center for PTSD's definition of the disorder, Carlson and Rosser-Hogan (1994) attributed the prevalence of post-traumatic symptoms in Cambodian refugees to their experiences of war and suffering during the Khmer Rouge regime and during the refugee relocation processes. In comparing the prevalence of PTSD among veterans and others who have had traumatic experiences, they also concluded that even though Cambodian refugees living in the United States came from a different cultural background and may have displayed "individual and cultural differences in the response to trauma," the "basic symptom picture" for Cambodians was similar to that observed in trauma survivors in the United States (Carlson and Rosser-Hogan 1994:53, 56). This finding demonstrates how manifestations of PTSD and experiences with post-traumatic symptoms speak to commonalities in the human condition—holding culture, race, and other experiences constant. However, Carlson and Rosser-Hogan (1994:54) did find that the stresses of resettlement, "undoubtedly worsened the symptoms" of PTSD and related somatic symptoms (e.g., insomnia, worry, and poor appetite) of Cambodian refugees.

When considering culture and resettlement patterns, Mollica (2008), a clinical psychiatrist who has worked with many Southeast Asian and other refugees, has found that it is of utmost importance for clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, and researchers to understand the unique cultural interpretations and manifestations of trauma. For example, in his book, Mollica (2008) discusses his interactions and sessions with a

relocated Cambodian refugee named Leakana. Leakana expressed that she was possessed by the sun god who caused her to faint. She also shared that building a Buddhist temple would bring her relief. Conventional psychiatric approaches would have compelled psychiatrists to diagnose Leakana with a psychotic illness and prescribe her psychotherapeutics, but Mollica realized that a western approach to Leakana's manifestation of PTSD would be culturally inappropriate and not efficacious. Instead of employing traditional methods, Mollica realized that it would be best if he helped Leakana fulfill her wishes. Ultimately, she did not build a temple, but Mollica reached out to find ways for Leakana to become a nun and devote her life to Buddhism. So even within individualized frameworks of trauma, there are many subcategories of approaches within medical and psychological models.

Understandably, many traditional psychological and psychiatric/medical studies focus on the primarily negative manifestations of trauma on the psychological health of survivors because people who have post-traumatic symptoms often display trouble coping with trauma (see Lev-Wiesel 2007; Turner and Lloyd 1995; Vaage et al. 2011). The main focus in psychology and even more so in psychiatry is the study of disorders that are related to the mind and the body (see for example, the DSM-5). In a primarily western framework of healing and coping, traumatic experiences require mourning and adaptation (Freud 1917; Mollica 2008; Wastell 2004). Without this, trauma can linger and become a melancholic contagion or pathology (Freud 1917; Lev-Wiesel 2007). Unlike mourning (the more or less expected and regular reaction to a loss of a loved, person, place, or ideal), melancholia involves "a profoundly painful

dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-reviling, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment” (Freud 1917:244). Because of this deficit-based and pathologically constructed framework, Mollica (2008:13) has argued that western medicine and psychiatry has a deep belief that “patients who [have] experienced horrific atrocities...could not be rehabilitated.” Traumatized patients are understood to be mentally deficient and therefore lack the capacity to resolve their trauma-related patterns.

Because many patients are unable to find relief, the symptoms of trauma disorders may linger or even have a delayed onset (Sack et al. 1999). For example, in a sample of bereaved survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime, Stammel et al. (2013) found that a substantial number of participants had symptoms of prolonged grief disorder even three decades after their loss. This grief disorder is a “prolonged maladaptive grief reaction following bereavement and is characterized by intense longing and yearning for the deceased person over a period of at least 6 months” (Stammel et al. 2013:87). As demonstrated by these findings, psychological effects of trauma can linger for decades after the onset of the original trauma.

Because individual trauma may not be resolved for long periods of time, that trauma may be transmitted, albeit in a different form (not the original trauma), to survivors’ children. First, I will review some leadings studies on the biological transmission of trauma via a discussion of epigenetics. Second, I will address how

biological risk factors coupled with child socialization coalesce under certain situations to create contexts that allow for a psychological transmission of trauma across generations.

Biological Transmission of Trauma

Beyond a purely psychological response to traumatic experiences, PTSD can also be understood as a psycho-physiological reaction. Leading researchers in the field of trauma and intergenerational biological transmission of trauma (and associated psychosocial behaviors) include Kira (2001), Yehuda et al. (2001), and Weingarten (2004). Kira (2001:74) has argued that if persons are “biosocial organisms who possess unique genes, unique personal values, and self-structures,” then they can use these biological and social characteristics to help “mediate the psycho-physiological reactions to environmental stressors and traumas.” It is for these reasons why each person who is exposed to trauma may respond differently. The lingering trauma (both as a reference to the initial pain and as the affects or feelings associated with pain and fear) causes physiological changes in the central and peripheral nervous system, which affect the overall processes of physiological (e.g., endocrinological) and psychological regulation and body functioning (Kira 2001; Cassidy and Mohr 2001). Even though people who are “well-adjusted” may have certain physiological (and even genetic) characteristics that protect them from or prevent them from developing psychopathologies, trauma can change a physiological or biological makeup to be more susceptible to mental health illnesses such as PTSD, general anxiety, and depression.

Nestler's study (2012) with mice shows that epigenetics can possibly explain why some individuals are less resilient and more prone to developing psychological and physiological problems associated with stress than others. According to Holliday's (2006) historical overview of epigenetics, epigenetics is the sum of all the mechanisms (e.g., DNA and RNA sequencing) necessary for the programming of genetic development.¹¹ By investigating the gene expression and structural organization of DNA between what Nestler calls the "resilient" mice and the "susceptible" mice, Nestler (2012:172) found that his laboratory could make the resilient mice more susceptible to stress "by blocking or inducing epigenetic modifications to certain genes or by altering the expression patterns of those genes to mimic the epigenetic tweaks."

Additional evidence that connects trauma and epigenetics was given by an intergenerational study of rat pups by Franklin et al. (2010), which found that male rats that were removed from their mothers when they were pups or were exposed to aggressive mice as adults tended to produce offspring that were more vulnerable to stress. Also, in their study of primate infants (i.e., squirrel monkeys), Schneider and Coe (1993) concluded that repeated periods of psychological disturbance throughout the mother's pregnancy could negatively affect offsprings' early neuromotor development. As compared to control subjects, the infants that were exposed to chronic stress displayed less developed motor abilities. As for the subjects in Nestler's, Franklin's, and Schneider's studies, the exact mechanism(s) of this intergenerational transmission is still undetermined. It could be that epigenetic tweaks and genetic

¹¹ See also Yehuda and Bierer (2009).

markers could be passed from one generation to the next, or it could be that socialization and rearing behaviors are linked to coping mechanisms.

In a social parenting context, Cassidy and Mohr (2001:284) found that infants who are “facing frightening or challenging circumstances with no apparent solution” can develop psychopathological behaviors and non-normal attachment development. For example, Caldji et al. (2011) have found that rat pups that are well-groomed and cared for by mothers are less susceptible to stress than are pups that are reared by less diligent mothers. The pups with less attentive mothers tended to grow up to be less adventurous and also less assiduous mothers when they have young of their own. In humans, Weingarten (2004:49) has found that “[c]hildren may develop vulnerability to PTSD if they grow up in a home in which they are subject to emotional abuse, as those children who grew up with parents who had PTSD related to the Holocaust often did.” Like found in the studies on mice and rats used by Nestler (2012) and Franklin et al. (2010), the actual disorder cannot be passed down, but children of parents who have PTSD are likely to be genetically predisposed by certain biological markers. Yehuda et al. (2001) has found that like Holocaust survivors and Vietnam war veterans, adult children of Holocaust survivors also all had lowered cortisol levels, which are associated with PTSD. In a study on children who had recently been exposed to trauma, Delahanty et al. (2005) identified that urinary cortisol levels significantly distinguished which child trauma patients were at risk for PTSD, even when considering participants with prior traumatic experiences.

Although most research emphasizes the negative effects of low cortisol levels,

research in evolutionary biology indicates that this fear and sensitivity toward violence and trauma may be recognized as a type of adaptation for increased survival: protection against trauma through a keener understanding of violence and fear (Weingarten 2004). How and when this evolutionary and hereditary marker becomes a pathology or resiliency, however, is still unclear. Yehuda and Bierer's (2009:432) study on epigenetics and PTSD concluded that while certain genes (or "risk alleles") are likely to be associated with vulnerability to trauma exposure, researchers understand that it is not likely that these genes will identify a "prominent role for genotype in vulnerability to PTSD." But nonetheless, it is important to integrate epigenetics into PTSD models that consider not only prior experience but also preexisting risk factors and post-traumatic biological adaptations.

Beyond PTSD but related to physiological trauma, this idea of genetic adaptation to extreme conditions has also been identified in Cambodians who survived starvation during the reign of the Khmer Rouge. Silberner (2014) reported that fetuses that developed in the wombs of Khmer Rouge survivors did not get enough nutrients through the placenta, so they had to adapt in a way that made them biologically predisposed to diabetes as adults. According to Dr. Rebecca Painter, "There's a good likelihood that the starvation that Cambodia saw in the late 1970s can contribute to their current rise in diabetes" (in Silberner 2014). So not only did Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge systematically kill millions of Cambodians, but the physiological aftermaths and effects of the war continue on.

Psychological Transmission of Trauma

In terms of the psychological transmission of trauma, there is less of a focus on genetics and biology and more of focus on psychopathology and familial socialization. For example, a leading researcher, Kellerman (2001b:259) identifies four content types of such intergenerational trauma pathology: impaired self esteem, preoccupation with death and the inner world of trauma, affective disorders (i.e., frequent dysphoric moods connected to a feeling of loss and mourning), and pathological interpersonal functioning (e.g., exaggerated family attachments and difficulty handling interpersonal conflicts). These four types of transmission are related to the types of parent-child relationships formed between trauma survivors and their children.

Because traumatized parents tend to provide less stable caregiving environments, children are likely to develop abnormal or disorganized attachment. Such disorganization, as related to trauma, stems from the parents and can be organized into two lapses: 1) lapses in the monitoring of reasoning (i.e., temporary lack of conventional logic or reality) and 2) lapses in the monitoring of discourse (i.e., identifiable shifts or irregularities in the narrative styles) (Cassidy and Mohr 2001:281). In studies of mother-child dyads, it has been found that parents' inability to resolve their trauma often leads to infant disorganization, which then strongly increases the children's "risk for psychopathology" (Cassidy and Mohr 2001:286). In terms of Cambodian refugees, Daley (2005:2392) found that parents of Cambodian children "expressed frustration and hopelessness about their own ability (as parents) to help a child." Because Cambodian parents who lived through the Khmer Rouge era

as adolescents may lack effective or culturally appropriate parenting skills (in the American context) as a result of traumatic loss of family and other social networks during the war, their socialization of their children can produce the maladaptive behaviors (Dekel and Goldblatt 2008; Field et al. 2011; Yehuda et al. 2001). This parent-child socialization can be a source of transgenerational transmission of trauma.

In relation to such trauma, the most recent Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) states that a person can in fact experience a stressor indirectly, “by learning that a close relative or close friend was exposed to trauma” (National Center for PTSD 2014a). This experience is enough for that person to exhibit PTSD symptoms. For example, Lev-Wiesel’s (2007) research on second generation Jews finds when trauma is perpetuated by a lack of closure or successful mourning, it may be passed down as family legacy. Lev-Wiesel identifies this as secondary traumatic stress disorder (STSD). With STSD, multigenerational “debts” are paid on behalf of the older generation by the younger generation through sacrifice of autonomy and selfhood.

While there was extensive research on the effects of war, suffering, and relocation on the first generation Cambodian refugees, research on the long-term effects of the aftermath of war trauma on children and adolescents is more sparse. Despite a prevalence of intergenerational associations of PTSD between first generation Cambodian refugee parents and their 1.5 and second generation children, Sack et al. (1995) found that many parents had difficulty recognizing how their war

trauma affected their children. The reason is that parents tend to underestimate the symptomatology of themselves and their children. Because of the conspiracy of silence discussed by Danieli (2007),¹² parents are often not aware that they may be transmitting trauma to their children via non-discursive channels.

Additional research continues to show that children of trauma survivors can be affected by family trauma, including war trauma, even if the subsequent generation did not personally experience the trauma. In their study on intergenerational transmission of trauma between war veterans and their children, Dekel and Goldblatt (2008:285) reported that trauma is transmitted via “functioning and involvement in the family unit,” “family atmosphere,” and “patterns of communication.” So even though “[i]t would seem that conscious memories of past war trauma are a necessary component of PTSD” (Sack et al. 1999:1178), the original wounding and the conscious memories of the traumatic event are not the only “causes” of post-traumatic stress symptoms. We must be cautious in making a causal relation between direct memory and PTSD. Because traumatic memories are not “fixed or indelible, but rather inconsistent,” Sack et al. (1999) find that PTSD symptoms could also shape memories. This is particularly important when considering intergenerational trauma because not only can actual memories trigger post-traumatic stress-like symptoms, but exposure to parental PTSD can also shape children’s understanding and relationship with the Khmer Rouge genocide.

¹² Also see chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion about the “conspiracy of silence.”

As you can see, the body of literature on psychological approaches to transgenerational trauma hinders primarily on psychological disorders and other negative outcomes. Pupavac (2001:360), however, directly critiques such approaches that primarily emphasize the negative social or psychological outcomes of trauma: “Conceiving the self as insecure, social policy as social risk management views the individual as susceptible to psychological and social dysfunctionism.” Emphasis on dysfunction has led to the exponential growth of therapeutic, often solely pharmacological and individualist, services. Alternative studies on transgenerational trauma show how dysfunction is only one outcome out of many. In Giladi and Bell’s (2012) study of the protective factors of transgenerational trauma among children of Holocaust survivors, they concluded that the second and third generation had more intergenerational traumatic stress than the majority of the control participants. But contrary to studies that report the prevalence of greater psychological problems among third generation survivors, Giladi and Bell (2012) found that the majority of the third generation scored within the secondary trauma normal range—but still higher than the control. These findings show that while the third generation is still affected by the Holocaust trauma, the effects of that trauma does not manifest as “symptoms of psychopathology” (Giladi and Bell 2012:6).

Several studies by Mollica et al. (1997:1104, 2008) and Sack et al. (1995, 1999) also conclude that there is a “lack of association between cumulative trauma and social functioning,” meaning that adults and adolescents may have “positive social

functioning in the presence of high [post-traumatic stress] symptom levels.” Rousseau et al. (2003) also found that Cambodian teens who have family that sustained trauma prior to their birth (which means that the teen experienced trauma indirectly), display positive self-esteem. This could possibly be related to how children would perceive their parents’ sacrifice and dedication as something that gives them feeling of purpose in life. Such findings, however, should not be generalized to all subsequent generation survivors because they may obfuscate the lingering mental health struggles and challenges in the community. Also, these studies, which analyze the psychosocial behavioral adaptation patterns of youth, may not be sensitive in identifying the other ways in which youth are affected by transgenerational trauma. For example, Rousseau et al. (1999) recognizes that Cambodian children may have a feeling of purpose in their lives, but this purpose may also manifest as a great burden, as discussed by Kidron (2004) and Kellerman (2001b).

Rather than focus mainly on “individual” memories, Kidron (2004), Olick (1999), and Pupavac (2001) call for researchers, sociologists in particular, to acknowledge the ways social frameworks affect individual and collective constructions of memory. While research that emphasizes the neurological and biological is necessary, such approaches often cannot fully explicate contextual, institutional, and social factors that might create or perpetuate collective or cultural traumas. Perhaps, this is why the problems associated with widespread mental health disparities among Cambodian refugees remain prevalent forty years after the original wounding.

“Problems” associated with PTSD and perpetual fear often become synonymous with the body of the sufferer without critical analysis of social, economic, and racial disparities.

As demonstrated in this review of literature and research on the individual-based trauma framework, most medical (psychiatric) and psychological studies tend to pathologize trauma as social problems, psychological troubles, and/or communicative disorders.¹³ Because of the nature of medicine (i.e., individualized treatment of trauma via medicine or medical procedures) and psychology (i.e., study of the body and mind—sometimes but not necessarily in relation to specific social situations), trauma is understood to primarily affect specific individuals. While groups of people may be traumatized, there is little to no focus on the collective exchange of trauma across time (e.g., generations) and space (e.g., cultures and institutions).

Collective Trauma Framework

Having explicated the relationships between pain, fear, and trauma in a physiological and psychological sense, I turn now to discuss how the social and collective nature of affect enlarges individualized conceptions of fear and trauma and places individualized experiences in a sociological context. As explained above, pain and fear are intimately connected but not wholly the same. Pain, particularly intense pain, defies and even destroys language (Scarry 1985). The source of pain, and I would also say fear, is rooted in its relationship to death. While pain has a felt presence

¹³ For additional studies that ground their approaches with this framework, see Beiser and Hou (2001), Gelkopf et al. (2013), Hinton et al. (2012), Lombardo and Motta (2008), Miller and Rasmussen (2010), Silove et al. (1997); and Swick et al. (2012).

and an overload of sensation, death is understood as the absence of feeling and sensation. Death is when feeling bodies are no longer sentient. Scarry argues, “[P]hysical pain always mimes death and the infliction of physical pain is always a mock execution.” Although a source of one’s pain can be attributed to a sign (e.g., a weapon or a hurtful event), the cognitive register of that pain and the subsequent evocation of fear and avoidance cannot be solely contained in that original sign. According to Terada (2001:45), “Unrepresentable by any individual sign, emotion is represented by *traces* in a *differential network*.” Terada then discusses the story of “the giant.” We cannot locate fear within that sign, “giant,” because the fear cannot be attributed to the word giant or the giant itself because the man is not a giant. As soon as you try to locate the emotion, a network of traces opens up. Entwined within fear are feelings of being overwhelmed and being in pain; these affects are “intensified by the impossibility of containment” (Ahmed 2004a:124). Because fear cannot be fully contained by a sign (or object of reference), it is the circulation of fears and not one’s attachment of an object of fear that create “signs of threat” (Ahmed 2004a:125). Hence, fear does not originate from one individual’s experience of pain but the collective exchange of fear and pain.

Narrative and Cultural (Non-Affective) Theories of Trauma

Not reliant on statistical, experimental, or survey methods, literary scholars find that the “failed experience” creates a dysphoric effect on individual and collective memory (Van Alphen 1999:26). Although recognizing the collective exchange of

trauma, some scholars within this field primarily categorize failed narration as a “pathology” or something that causes harm and must be overcome. Caruth (1996) finds that those who experience trauma can never fully come to terms with their experience. As a result of their never being able to fully experience the traumatic event at the time it happens, individuals develop a pathology akin to PTSD. Caruth explains how this pathology may not arise for all those who experience a certain event, but when something is recognized as traumatic, it has haunting power. She writes,

[The] pathology cannot be defined by the event itself—which may or may not be catastrophic, and may not traumatize everyone equally—nor can it be defined in terms of a distortion of the event, achieving its haunting power as a result of distorting personal significance attached to it. (1996:4)

Caruth’s cultural humanities framework treats a traumatic event to be “self-evident both in its autopoiesis” and “in its denial of self-mastery” (Berlant 2011:80). As a result, only those who experience the traumatic event can understand what it feels like. They are also the ones who become possessed by the event and reproduce that trauma because they are temporally stuck in the past. This temporal “stuckness” happens because trauma does not bind the person to what cannot be forgotten or forgiven but instead binds the person to the repression of the experience (Gordon 2011). As such, trauma is deeply repressive and regressive.

Because of this phenomenon of being “stuck,” Bal (1999) claims that the term “traumatic memory” is actually a misnomer that is used to describe trauma. Because there is a vividness to trauma that resists total integration into narration, traumatic

memory cannot be mastered by the subject and therefore remains outside the subject. By this definition, memory is something that must originate from within a subject. Therefore, a traumatic and painful resurfacing of events should be understood as “traumatic recall,” not traumatic memory. For Bal (1999:x), “To enter memory, the traumatic event of the past needs to be ‘narratable.’” Because of this, “sufferers” who are unable to narrate their traumas remain unable to heal unless their trauma can be contained in a more or less coherent story (Brison 1999).

Even though this pathology-based model is shared among medical, psychological, and narrative-based approaches to trauma, theorists of narrative trauma are different from those who fall under the individual-based trauma framework because they recognize that the processes of utterance make trauma an inherently collective phenomenon. Coming from a cultural sociological standpoint, Alexander (2004) would agree with Caruth (1996) that an experience can never be self-evidently traumatic; it is the power that people give to an experience that make it a significant source of trauma. While such narrative and cultural approaches to trauma acknowledge the collective nature of the phenomenon, they largely fail to consider a wider social analysis (both material and immaterial) on the effects of “unresolved trauma.” Schwab, a literary scholar, offers a productive compromise. She notes the importance of narratives in studying cultural trauma among groups of different people:

Narratives can also describe the process of traumatic encryption and its impact of psychic and social life, thus bringing a social recognition to histories of violence not by revealing the silent violent act but by giving testimony to its

lingering toxic effects and its transmission to those forced to suffer the silence.
(Schwab 2010:56)

The silence and the associated negative affects are, therefore, not a solitary but instead a social process. Literary scholar, Cvetkovich (2007:10) finds that affect, including trauma, “serves as the foundation for the formation of public cultures.” Based upon this understanding of trauma, silence, as defined as the non-narratives or even broken or disjointed narratives, is what is communicated from one generation to the next. Rather than consider silence as an absence of communication based upon some individual inability to narrate a trauma, it is important to understand how silence is the both the content and mechanism of communication and affective exchange (Danieli 2007; Schwab 2010; Weingarten 2004). Some silences have layered and multiple meanings: both revealing and concealing the hidden truths of the past. These “failed narratives” or mediated memories are often fractured, invisible, multiple, and volatile. Also, the relationship between memory and silence is difficult to identify because shards of memory may be scattered in “place, spaces, and acts” that may be present in “public commemoration or private mourning, in family narratives, in cultural practice and habits, in the *here* and the *there*” (Um 2012:835). Instead of viewing and conceptualizing such memories (which cannot be enveloped and anchored) as pathologies or failures, it is necessary to understand how the social nature of memory (particularly traumatic memory) can allow us to better track the affective relationships between physical and psychological displacement from a land, a history, a culture, and an identity (Um 2006, 2012).

Individual trauma becomes cultural trauma when members of a collectivity, who have suffered a common traumatic event, form a group consciousness that revolves around that pain. Even if those members come to terms with that trauma, those memories will forever shape the identity of those individuals in that collectivity in “fundamental” and “irrevocable ways” (Alexander 2004:1). This is demonstrated by people who have been subjected to national traumas that come to define the group as a whole—take for example Jews and the Holocaust and hibakusha and the dropping of the atomic bomb. For cultural theorists such as Alexander (2004), Smelser (2004), and Eyerman (2004), the focus on the trauma is less so about the experience and more so about the representation of the experience: “Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity” (Alexander 2004:10). This identity hinders upon the collective actors’ “decision” to represent their “social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go” (Alexander 2004:10).

This has been very successful for Jews because the Holocaust is not only taught as an event that defines World War II and Jews but also functions as an universal evil in the western world. There are also many groups that have also experienced traumatic social pains, but their experiences have not come to be defined as cultural or national trauma. Alexander (2004:27) claims that such “carrier groups” do not have the “resources, authority, or interpretive competence to powerfully disseminate

these trauma claims.” By focusing purely on the dissemination and circulation of “cultural” trauma narratives, cultural theorists such as Alexander fail to consider the racial and transnational relationships that place certain “traumas” and experiences as more likely to evoke empathy and compassion and are therefore also more likely to be elevated to the status of “cultural trauma.” Such definitions of cultural trauma are limited because of their singular engagement with narratives. An affective approach to trauma not only considers the circulation of national and cultural trauma narratives but also engages with the unconscious potentialities that can generate collective affect or public feelings around trauma.

This process may or may not require discursive utterance or purposeful representation.¹⁴ Kidron (2004:519) states that even though offspring of Holocaust survivors can have “embodied memories” that allow them to “earn the legitimate status of authentic survivor,” these offspring are not always cognizant or aware of how their parents’ pasts and embodied memories make their identity unique. There must be a “reevaluation of language as the privileged frame through which both history and identity are largely mobilized” (Eng 2010:190). As you can see, the process of assigning language to an affect oftentimes impossible, but it does not mean that the feelings and sensations do not exist or even that one cannot share those collective feelings with others. Ordinary affects or the affects of everyday life can “permeate the

¹⁴ In her study of public feelings and depression, Cvetkovich (2012) identifies everyday feelings as potentials for disparate groups of people to generate new ways to think about political engagement. This process does not necessarily happen on purpose.

politics of all kinds,” bringing strangers together in a “space of shared impact,” even if it is only for a moment (Stewart 2007:39).

Affect and Trauma

The emergence of affect as a concept of interest among a wide array of scholars in the humanities and social sciences is noteworthy enough that many now speak of affect studies [see Clough’s (2007) edited book *The Affective Turn*]. However, many scholars—though they employ affect and emotion in their work—would not necessarily locate their scholarly commitments as part of affect studies. Such scholars come from various fields (e.g., literature, psychology, anthropology, and sociology). My approach does not refute or deny the importance of individual-based psychological or narrative approaches to trauma, but instead offers productive debates between different social theorists, opening up the possibilities to research public feelings on an individual and social level. Some theorists such as Massumi (2002) define affect not as emotion but the potentials and capacities that escape a linguistic and discursive containment of some qualified sensation or feeling. This speaks directly to Puar’s (2009:162) definition of affect: “a capacity, emblematic of a futurity that speaks to the body’s tendency to be affected or affecting, its capacity for change, evolution, transformation, and movement.” I am greatly influenced by the such non-cognitive and non-intentional possibilities that are central to studies of affect. Although there remains a certain muddiness in even attempting to define affect, I conceptualize affect as including both cognitive and embodied forms: emotion, sensation, and feelings. It is this more general (and purposely imprecise) definition that allows for a more

complicated analysis of social phenomena such as “public feelings,” which “generate the affective foundation of hope that is necessary for political action” (Cvetkovich 2012:2). By definition, affect (even individual experiences of emotion and sensation) is social and opens up the possibilities for political engagement. As such, I define trauma as an affect (including the feelings, sensations, and emotions) that is most often mediated by *memory*—individual and collective memory.

Haunting

Unlike Alexander’s conceptualization of cultural trauma, the concept of haunting, which also speaks to cultural and collective trauma, allows us to investigate the often unobserved (or unable to be observed) nature of traumatic memory. “Haunting” provides an opening and a space to discuss trauma. Although it is similar to “cultural trauma” and can arise from individual traumatic experiences, haunting is different from such conceptions of trauma because haunting refers to “repressed or unresolved *social* violence” that makes itself known and produces a “something-to-be-done” feeling (Gordon 2011:2, emphasis added). Haunting, unlike trauma, is not the actual violence itself but the effects of the trauma that arise surreptitiously yet forcefully. There need not be a conscious decision for a collectivity to choose to represent itself as traumatized. Haunting is based upon not only the affects of individuals but also the affects of the collectivity and the social context. Gordon argues, “To write ghost stories implies that ghosts are real, that is to say, that they produce material effects” (1997/2008:17). Although ghosts produce material effects

and affects, ghosts are also products of material effects. Gordon suggests that the affective effects of haunting produce a public feeling regarding injustices among those who may or may not have physically or emotionally experienced a specific wound or injury.

Haunting, which purposely addresses the collective and social impacts of trauma on memory and memory on trauma, allows us to locate the social conditions of those who have been traumatized and exiled. For example, “*I look for her shape and his hand*” is a project that identifies how the history of a female slave is described by the haunting of her absence amongst the presence of her master (see Gordon 1997/2008 Chapter 1). The presence of the master, which produces the conditions and possibility of our recognition of the female slave itself, captures this paradox of visibility and invisibility of social injustice by tracking the presence and absence of “her shape” and “his hand” through time and space. This haunting makes a mark by being there and not being there at the same time. In addition to slavery, exile resulting from social violence, including military bombings, genocide, and autogenocide, create conditions for survivors (or those who are in exile) to suffer from “one of the saddest fates” (Said 1996:47). Exile is a “dreadful punishment” not only because it means that people experience “years of aimless wandering away from family and familiar places,” but particularly in the refugee context, it means that refugees and their children may feel like a “permanent outcast, someone who never felt at home, and was always at odds with the environment, inconsolable about the past, bitter about the present and

the future” (Said 1996:47). The state of exile may stem from trauma but may also become a source of trauma, producing the potentials for the social exchange of trauma between parents and children.

Haunting, which manifests in the forms of specters and ghosts, alters linear time, altering the way we usually place events in chronologies and sequences of past, present, and future (Gordon 2011:2). Cvetkovich (2003:38) writes, “Avery Gordon’s concept of haunting...offers a compelling account of how the past remains simultaneously hidden and present in both material practices and the psyche, in both visible and invisible places.” Using Gordon’s definition and analysis of haunting, I argue that transgenerational transmissions of trauma are the ghosts that appear as a result of social violence. These ghosts do not disappear within one generation, but instead linger as a social force that manifests time and time again as social injustice and inequalities.

While Gordon (2011) and Smelser (2004) claim that trauma is inherently repressive and regressive, I find that traumatic memory does not neatly fit those dichotomies. Trauma is more nuanced and complex. Trauma need not be “endowed with negative affect” in order for it to “qualify as being traumatic” (Smelser 2004:40). Trauma can lead to repressive and regressive melancholic attachments, but it does not necessarily lead to hopelessness. This project is not new. Cvetkovich (2012) and Stewart (2007) has called for a depathologization of negative feelings (e.g., shame, guilt, failure, melancholy, and depression). Affect and public feelings based upon negative affects can provide a foundation for generating and building hope. The goal

is not to replace negative affects with positive ones but to work through them. As the source of many hauntings, traumatic memory is productive. It is productive not in the sense that it is positive, but in a way that allows trauma to produce and reproduce the social realities of those who experience it. For example, Clough (2007:15) writes, “Memory intervenes and intensifies, opening up new paths.” Memory and the “imaginary,” open up communication between time and layers of reality, allowing for traumatic memories to swerve into the future. Affect allows us to move away from solely cognitive and medical approaches to transgenerational transmission of trauma that perceive trauma as individual, regressive, and/or pathological. Instead affective and cultural theories allow us to see how trauma has been embodied not only within carriers of family trauma but also within social bodies (e.g., communities) that circulate cultural trauma.

Memory and Trauma

Traditionally, people with post-traumatic symptoms are understood to possess mental or psychic pathologies that are related to their inability to cope with certain pasts. It is problematic when traumas are not properly mourned and therefore linger in the present. By definition, memories always reference something from the past. But because memories or that process of recall happens in the present, the past contemporary to the present in terms of one’s perception and sensation (Massumi 2002). Memories are assemblages of feeling, emotions, and sensation that allow not only people to recall and feel the past but also to relate that to certain affects of the present. In addition to being always tethered to the past, traumas also speak to a

futurity, which I posit refer to the potentials for healing and the potentials for trauma to transform into different forms (i.e., different affects, including sensations and feelings). Affect studies and theories allow such ephemeral and ineffable social phenomena to be traced at certain conjunctures.

Traumatic memory has the capacity and potential to become what Hirsch defines as postmemory. Postmemory is the “intersubjective transgenerational space of remembrance, linked specifically to cultural or collective trauma” (Hirsch 2001:10). Postmemory has no direct “history” or connection to the past; it is personal yet removed from the actual traumatic event by one or more generations. It is also based on displacement, vicariousness, and belatedness. Even though there is no reference to ground the postmemory, it is not an “absent memory” because postmemory need not be absent or evacuated; it can be as full as it is empty (Hirsch 1997). Postmemories are not connected to object or source but are instead recollected or mediated through representation, projection, and creation—often based on silences rather than speech (Hirsch 2001). This memory is “post,” not time terms of linear time and space, but because postmemories of the second and subsequent generations are different from the actual memories of the first generation. Postmemory, however, “approximates memory in its affective force” (Hirsch 2008:109). Like memory, postmemory is not simply individual or subjective because “[p]ostmemorial work strives to *reactivate* and *reembody* more distant social/national and archival/cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression” (Hirsch 2008:111). It does so without subscribing to the

boundaries of identity as “subjects of a collectively-held history” (Berlant 1991:20). Postmemorial work is both conscious and non-conscious; it comes in the form of incorporated memory, body memory, or cellular memory. Memories are not neutral or value-free because they are often enmeshed with certain political implications.

Affect theories destabilize the modern concepts of the body as stable, unified, and bounded in homeostasis. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), bodies as assemblages are based on multiplicities: the function or meaning of the body does not depend on an interior truth or identity. As an assemblage, the body has connections with other assemblages, which include other bodies of matter, human, or otherwise. Thus, the body itself has no interior truth or meaning; it exists through its external connections mediated by affective responses. Memory is like a machinic assemblage in which it is understood as the process of remembering of something of the past, but it also has attributes of a body without organs that is continually dismantling the signification system of the memory itself. This causes the “asignifying particles or pure intensities [of the memory] to pass or circulate,” “attributing to itself subjects that it leaves with nothing more than a name as the trace of an intensity” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:4). Affect in the Massumi sense is preindividual, but it is not presocial. Past social action and cultural contexts are key to emotional and affective responses to memory and postmemory.

Cultural and Affective Transmission of Trauma

It is difficult to cleanly differentiate cultural and affective transmissions of trauma because both are considered vehicles for collective and social aspects of

trauma transmission. However, I distinguish affective approaches from cultural ones (akin to Alexander and Smelser's conceptualizations) by noting that affective exchanges do not require intention, power, or official narratives while purely cultural ones do. In this section, I give some examples that demonstrate an intersection between cultural and affective exchange.

According to Abraham and Torok (1994), transgenerational trauma is the phenomenon in which unspeakable traumas are passed unconsciously from one generation to the next. Transgenerational ghosts, phantoms, and specters inhabit "the depths of the unconscious, [dwell] as the living-dead of knowledge of someone else's secret" (Abraham and Torok 1994:188). Summarizing Hirsch's work on second and third generation Holocaust survivors, Schwab writes the following about transgenerational transmission of trauma:

While victims of trauma live with the scars of memory so to speak—gaps, amnesia, distortion, revision, or even fugue states or intrusive flashbacks—the recipients of transgenerational trauma live with a "postmemory" that comes to them secondhand. Like the memory of the parental generation, it is fragmentary and shot through with holes and gaps, but in different ways. These children need to patch a history together they have never lived by using whatever props they can find—photographs and stories or letters but also, I would add, silences, grief, rage, despair, or sudden unexplainable shifts in moods handed down to them by those who bring them up. (2010:14)

So while the younger generations may not experience the same traumas as their parents, they formulate a postmemory that articulates the fragments and silences to make sense of their parents' histories and their cultural pasts. In short, postmemory is the "intersubjective transgenerational space of remembrance linked specifically to cultural or collective trauma" (Hirsch 2001:10), in which second generation survivors

of powerful and traumatic violences—particularly social violences—experience a form of trauma that preceded their births.

Studies that emphasize alternative modes of coping, adapting, and healing show that through support groups, second generation survivors of the Holocaust can come to accept their identities as carriers of Holocaust memory (Kidron 2004). By adapting a trauma descendent identity, the second generation not only learns to accept their violent pasts but will also likely come to terms with how they will transmit those memories to their children (Kidron 2004). Contrary to Smelser’s (2004) claim, the language of negative affect is *not* a necessary condition for cultural trauma. In Kidron’s (2004) study, the purpose of the Holocaust-Jew dyadic identity construction, which requires the completing of the story of Holocaust trauma, is not primarily for personal healing or therapy, although that may result from the practice. Among Holocaust descendants, the transmission of memory has more cultural purposes. Applying the Jewish metaphor of the tree of life, Kidron (2004:527) states, “...if the past is like a tree then the preservation of memory and the creation of a lineage of carriers of memory would be consistent with the final metaphor of saving the uprooted tree.” Thus, if trauma survivors are irrevocably uprooted, then it is up to the next generations to “[replant] the past and [transmit] that past to [their] children and to the collective” (Kidron 2004:527). The emphasis shifts away from the psychological and psychiatric realm of individual coping and adaptation and into a cultural one that encourages the subsequent generations to share not only “personal-

familial trauma and loss but to tell the collective story of ‘*all those* who died’” (Kidron 2004:532, emphasis in original).

While some forms of transgenerational trauma are discursive and can be shared in terms of stories, trauma can also transcend the narratable into the realm of the ineffable, felt, and social. Contrary to the Cartesian mind/body divide, the mind, body, and “social” are intricately intertwined. Through a sociological lens, traumatic memory or even “traumatic (non)memory” is indeed cultural, collective, and social, especially in the context of transgenerational transmission of trauma. There exists a discursivity in the ineffable and affective remnants and potentialities of trauma. In relation to Derrida’s theory of “différance,” transgenerational transmission of trauma is memory that is both different and deferred (Beardsworth 1994; Derrida 1968). Just as there is an unstable relationship between the linguistic sign and utterance, there is an unstable relationship among postmemory, the actual trauma, and the stories or often the silences used to understand transgenerational trauma. Ghosts are not hidden or unknowable; instead they demand attention and are often disruptive. That means that ghosts are real and take on material presence in people’s lives. For Gordon (2011:2), hauntings and the presence of ghosts and other specters denote how “what’s been suppressed or concealed is very much alive and present, messing or interfering precisely with those always incomplete forms of containment and repression ceaselessly directed towards us.”

Theoretically, haunting and transgenerational trauma is made possible through what Bhabha (1992:59) calls a “time-lag,” “an iterative, interrogative space produced in the interruptive overlap between symbol and sign, between synchronicity and caesura or seizure (not diachronicity).” This time-lag allows for a “crack” in time where there is “potential for [trauma to swerve] in terms of inheritance...[into] the future” (Clough 2007:13). Unlike hereditary diseases that are “passed down” from parents to their offspring, trauma creates potentials and tendencies in the subsequent generations. This affective approach would recognize epigenetics as a embodied (neuroscientific) potential for trauma. In terms of transgenerational trauma, the bodies of the second or subsequent generations become the site for the potential of transgenerational haunting. The paradox of trauma is that survivors experience a certain belated encounter with the source of traumas. Because the successive generations may never fully “see” or understand that wounding, the witnessing of that trauma is passed along to another as trauma’s legacy (Cho 2007:157). The legacy is transmitted or passed down through images, words, affects, silences, and performances, which are attached to bodies and infolded with their contexts. For Ahmed (2004b:31), “Even in instances of pain that is lived without an external injury (such as psychic pain), pain ‘surfaces’ in relationships to others, who bear witness to pain, and authenticate its experience.” The subsequent generations bear witness to the pain of trauma, genocide and autogenocide, and relocation, whether consciously or not.

Although they are removed from the original trauma, affect and memory circulate and generate intensities (i.e., sensations and feelings) among the subsequent generations. For those who are impacted by transgenerational trauma, others' lack or displaced losses become incorporated, actualized, and sticks to the haunted as if the person who never physically experienced the trauma understands and experiences that same trauma. Such haunted bodies, therefore, disrupt the linearity of time. In terms of Southeast Asians, Um (2012:844) believes that this process always takes on a transnational dimension, "for the gaze forward is forever drawn back to a past that refuses to relinquish its grip." This refusal, which is not necessarily conscious, creates a tether in which younger generations become connected to their parents' homeland and to the socio-historical processes that led to their parents' relocation to the United States.

Furthermore, in evaluating the non-linearity of time for understanding theory and methods, I ask, "What constitutes the future? How do we understand and research about the past, present, and future, separately but also all at once?" I find Massumi's concept of *tendency* helpful in reconciling this seemingly anachronistic problem. Tendency is "pastness opening directly onto a future but with no present to speak of" (Massumi 2002:30). In relation to racialized and exiled bodies and spaces, there is no present because their marginal positions in history always projects their past (i.e., their invisibility) into their futures. In terms of cognition, Massumi (2002:30) argues, the "present is lost with the missing half second [between autonomic sensation and cognitive recognition], passing too quickly to be perceived, too quickly, actually, to

have happened.” This missing half-second is perhaps the opening of the time-lag or the crack where there is potential to combine futurity with pastness. Because this happens in the time-lag of the missing half second, the second generation cannot consciously identify the transmission, but are instead able to recognize this transmission through their bodily sensations that are triggered by certain stories, silences, or images. Affective writing and affect as an approach to method, therefore, allow new articulations of theory and method to coexist, coalesce, and connect with individual and collective bodies.

Unlike clinical or medicalized treatment of trauma, affect studies does not perceive the imaginary and/or the displacement of time and space as pathological. Instead, affect theorists such as Clough (2007:13) believe that “[t]he past in general is ontologically present.” The distinctions between past and present are blurred creating a fold-in-time which creates a haunting in time, a haunting of time (Clough 2007:14). This haunting of the imaginary, however, is not regressive, but instead, creative.¹⁵ This creativity and productivity speaks to the fact that trauma is never a wholly individual predicament but instead a psychical and social condition that produces “an intersubjective and intergenerational struggle” (Eng 2010:167). Eng (2010:167) demonstrates that unresolved grief may manifest as a negotiation of “vexed feelings of kinship” (between parents and children), but that process is both a product of and a catalyst for the transformation of our relation to history and to structures of family and kinship.

¹⁵ For an example of this phenomenon, see Spiegelman (1986).

Because the causes of trauma are diffuse and difficult to locate, so too are the cures for trauma (Cvetkovich 2003). The sources of healing may not necessarily come from psychotherapeutics or traditional medicine. As such, it is necessary to address established procedures in social structure more broadly instead of just trying to fix individual people (Cvetkovich 2003, 2012). Although the process of working through one's emotions and trauma seems rather private and individual, there are opportunities for creating catalysts of change not only in individuals but also larger social structures (e.g., via medical facilities, schools, and politics). This holistic approach to trauma is supported by studies on resilience that have shown that children of people who have experienced grave traumas may develop a resilience that helps them form positive psychosocial experiences (Denham 2008; Sack et al. 1999). For example, Rousseau et al. (1999) have found that there are protective aspects of war trauma that challenge traditional psychological (or dysfunctional) understandings of transgenerational trauma: "...it would no longer be a matter of simply eliminating symptoms, but just as important, of acknowledging and fostering the resilience that is born of suffering, however extreme." This demonstrates that responses to trauma should be considered to not only be pathology but also a constellation of behaviors (Denham 2008).

Race and Trauma

As Gordon (2009:3) posited, “That life is complicated may seem a banal expression of the obvious, but it is nonetheless a profound theoretical statement...”¹⁶ This idea allows us to not only consider how power relations are historically embedded in society but also understand the complex nature of living and being. So while complex personhood may mean many things, “[a]t the very least, complex personhood is about conferring the respect on others that comes from presuming that life and people’s lives are simultaneously straightforward and full of enormously subtle meaning” (Gordon 2009:5). Categories such as man, woman, Asian, queer or refugee allow for coalitions to be built across individuals, but it can also be extremely limiting because people’s lives are more complicated, dense, and contradictory than those individual categorical terms imply. However, most of the trauma research and literature I have referenced do not overtly acknowledge the ways in which race and racism (intentional and not intentional) may produce or reproduce collective trauma. Because racial injury is often ineffable, silence (or neglect) is prevalent, but that silence is never absolute. The ghosts of that grief can never be fully concealed in that way—because affect leaks. While there is a materiality to racism (e.g., lack of access to healthcare, education, employment, housing, and more), that materiality cannot fully explain the cycles of injury.

Traditional studies often privilege the material effects of trauma without a discussion about the ways trauma may manifest as affect or public feelings (e.g.,

¹⁶ Gordon (2009:3) uses an epigraph from Patricia Williams as an entry point to discuss how “life is complicated is a fact of great analytic importance.”

feelings of shame, pain, uncertainty, and so on). However, in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas*, Dr. Kenneth Clark used the classic doll test to identify an “invisible but tenacious aspect of racism” that creates a form of racial grief that cannot be definitively captured by the language of material grievance (Cheng 2000:4). But throughout the years, instead of sincerely recognizing this racial grief and racial trauma, so that certain steps can be taken to personally and structurally address racism, we have come to see this injury as natural to bodies of color. That focus on the grief and trauma fuels narratives and theories that essentialize pathology (e.g., “culture of poverty”). This is very troubling because this process overshadows the ways in which “there are still deep-seated, intangible, psychical complications for people living within a ruling episteme that privileges that which they can never be” (Cheng 2000:7).

Furthermore Cheng (2000:29) elaborates, “If we are willing to listen, the history of disarticulated grief[, especially as related to race,] is still speaking through the living...” This is why it is crucial to understand the ways in which collective trauma is articulated across time and space—the “past” is intimately linked to the present and future. It is the imperial and colonial past that created certain realities and subordinated positions of people of color, but it is the current politics that maintains and reproduces certain inequalities. The fractured temporalities mapped onto subjects inform us of the ways in which race has been temporally and spatially mapped onto bodies and structures. Because certain racialized bodies are marked,

they are understood as belonging to qualitatively different spaces wherein time is somehow frozen, not progressing.

As a discipline, sociology is haunted by reductive biological, historical materialist, and classical constructions of race. But instead of ignoring or erasing such singular approaches, I find that there needs to be more critical and intellectual engagement with past systems of inequality. For example, in their discussion on racial melancholia, Eng and Han (2003) advocate that Asian American mental health issues cannot and should not only be ascribed to internal cultural differences. Instead, they call for an investigation of how institutionalized racism, economic exploitation, and discursive reproduction of the Asian American stereotypes produce and reproduce the prevalence of mental health issues in Asian communities (see also Lee et al. 2009; Tackeuchi and Kramer 2002).

Also, in examining race and trauma, Eng and Han (2003) have highlighted some intergenerational qualities of loss and recuperation. For example, if losses to “homeland, family, language, identity, property, [or] status in the community” are suffered and experienced by the first generation but are not resolved or properly mourned by the first generation’s investment in new communities, ideals, and attachments, then the subsequent melancholia “can be transferred to the second generation” Eng and Han 2003:352-353). The parents’ inability to mourn their losses during the process of assimilation creates a transgenerational melancholic attachment in their children. As for the children of Asian immigrants, the process involves not just mourning or melancholia but “the intergenerational negotiation between mourning

and melancholia”—children are then tasked to strive to recuperate the American Dream (Eng and Han 2003:353). Therefore, unlike Freud’s individual-based theory of melancholia, intergenerational immigrant melancholia is shared among members in a racial and ethnic group. As such, the theory of racial melancholia is “a psychic state focused on bonds among people—an intersubjective psychology—that might be addressed and resolved across generations” (Eng and Han 2003:354). I contend that racial melancholia should not only consider how such bonds may be “addressed” and “resolved,” but also *reproduced* across generations. Eng and Han’s arguments for healing relies on assumptions about the intergenerational need to reconcile past losses. As for refugee trauma, however, I argue that conscious goals towards healing, resolution, or reinstating a lost object into the “psychic life of the individual in order to rebuild an internal world” may not always be possible or present.

TERMINOLOGIES

At this juncture, I will provide a brief summary of terms that I have referenced or used to speak about the affect of trauma, particularly in regards to the ability for trauma to 1) move beyond the individual and 2) move through time and space.

Secondary Trauma. In psychological studies, researchers have found that therapists and mental health personnel are susceptible to *secondary trauma stress disorder* (STSD) and *vicarious trauma* (VT). STSD happens when a therapist who works with a traumatized person (or persons) develops adverse reactions related to the trauma. The

symptoms of STSD are very similar to those for PTSD (Cieslak et al. 2013; Jenkin and Baird 2002; Lev-Wiesel 2007). Prior to the DSM-5, which states that PSTD may be brought on by a person's exposure to another person's trauma, STSD was not recognized as a subset of PTSD. VT, closely related to STSD, is the *cognitive* experience that therapists have as a result of empathetic engagement with their clients' trauma; the cognitive schema of those who have vicarious trauma changes because of the verbal trauma exposure (Jenkin and Baird 2002). STSD and vicarious trauma, however, differ on the basis of "their relative emphasis on emotional/social versus cognitive symptomatology" (Jenkin and Baird 2002).

Postmemory. Discussed in detail above, postmemory was conceptualized by Hirsch (1997, 2001, 2008) to describe a cross-generation and cross-group trauma that has an affective force to approximate first-hand memories. Hirsch (1997:22) explains, "Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation." Postmemory generates an intensity, a potential for feelings and sensations, among those who experience it. The "post" in postmemory does not mean that we are beyond memory or that memory no longer exists. Instead, the memory that is created has a haunting effect that always references some sort of past trauma.

Intergenerational Trauma. The concept of intergenerational transmission of trauma can be understood as the cross-generational effects of trauma. According to

Lev-Wiesel (2007:77), “The impact of a trauma, therefore, its contagion, such as behaviour patterns, symptoms and values that appeared in one generation, will affect not only the generation that was victimized but also the next one.” This phenomenon has been well-documented in regards to survivors and children of survivors of not only the Holocaust (see Danieli 1998; Halik, Rosenthal, and Pattison 1990; Kidron 2004; Lev-Wiesel 2007; Schwab 2010) but also traumatic experiences such as spousal abuse (see Stith et al. 2000).

Transgenerational Trauma. Although all of the aforementioned terms are very similar, and it may almost be like “splitting hairs” to distinguish one from the other, I propose to use the term transgenerational trauma to encompass secondary trauma, postmemory, and intergenerational trauma. The root “trans” refers to “across, beyond, through, and changing thoroughly” while the root “inter” refers to “between, among, in the midst of, and reciprocally.” While *intergenerational* trauma captures the reciprocal and mutual process of trauma interaction, etymologically, it necessarily deals only with one generation at a time. *Transgenerational* trauma, however, considers the relationships across multiple generations and considers not only familial trauma but also intragenerational trauma and public feelings. I also argue that transgenerational trauma is an affect because it necessarily evokes feelings, sensations, and emotions. The cognitive recognition of a source of wounding may exist, but it is neither necessarily nor central to the affective experience of trauma. Also, I prefer transgenerational trauma to postmemory (even though the two are closely connected and I am greatly influenced by work on postmemory) because postmemory privileges

the “object” or “source” of the wounding. As “trauma without origin,”¹⁷ transgenerational trauma, or rather latent articulations of transgenerational trauma, allow for a cross-generation and cross-group engagement with trauma that does not privilege one source but instead that of a circulation of affects.

Latent Articulations. Through my research I have identified the phenomenon of latent articulations. This analytic of latent articulations, which is informed by Hall’s theory and method of articulation (1986/2008), describes how personal (individual), social (including familial and other social networks), and cultural (narrative) trauma are always articulated (read: connected) but their presence or interaction may remain hidden until certain circumstances or encounters allow for ghosts¹⁸ of the past, present, and future to swerve into a moment or moments of affective attachment. The latent trauma may or may not be articulated (read: expressed) cognitively. It can be ineffable yet felt. Because of the multiple points of articulation, latent articulations are necessarily social, historical, and political. It is the context (not just specific traumatic events, but also affective intensities generated by racism, economic struggle, and other exclusionary acts) that allow for moments of articulation (i.e., expression and coalescing). I purposely use the gerund “coalescing” because the process of coming together and blending together is always in motion.

¹⁷ Anne Cheng (2000:88).

¹⁸ By ghosts of the past, I am referring the postmemories that the subsequent generations create and develop. Ghosts of the present include demands or stressors of the present, including finances, schooling, and family relations. Ghosts of the future may refer to the fears about the unknowable, including job prospects, cultural maintenance, familial obligations, and more.

Even though Gordon refers to trauma as repressive and regressive, I suggest, following Cheng (2000) and Eng (2010) who argue otherwise. Melancholic attachments to disarticulated grief and loss often seem to dwell on the past and therefore may create repressive or regressive outcomes, but the very process of latent articulations show that there is always an impulse towards the future. This futurity, however, is potentiality—not something that is necessarily positive or negative. While Gordon’s concept of haunting necessarily has a “something-to-be-done” feeling, I believe that my conceptualization of the (re)productive nature of trauma, includes that “something-to-be-done” feeling as one of the many potentials and possibilities of trauma, but it also considers the complex everydayness of latent trauma, which does not always result in repression, regression, or the something-to-done feeling. Multiple layers of traumas, in terms of transgenerational war histories, domestic violence, multigenerational poverty, and neglect are articulated, meaning that they are joined together and interconnected in ways that affect the lives of the subsequent generations in a multitude of different manners. Latent articulations speak to the futurity of affect (i.e., feelings, sensations, and emotions) and how those affects and latent traumas may be articulated. This futurity and potentiality may manifest as gang participation and development of mental health challenges, but also community engagement. I am suggesting then, that these alternative manifestations of cultural trauma refute Alexander’s claims that cultural trauma *must* be consciously expressed as collective identity.

LATENT ARTICULATIONS AND THE AFFECTIVE FORCE OF TRANSGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

Cheng (2000:44) has posited that if people are willing to listen and be open about how “disarticulated grief is still speaking through the living,” then “future of social transformation depends on how open we are to facing the intricacies and paradoxes of that grief and the passions that it bequeaths.” The affect of trauma (including but not limited to the emotions and sensations associated with grief, pain, and depression) captures the intensities and potentialities that result from the failures of language. Just because something cannot be coherently articulated does not mean that certain sensations are not present or important. It is the sensations that are circulated among “traumatized bodies” that speak to the collective nature of trauma.

In discussing the nature of trauma and the two traditional trauma frameworks that scholars from various fields have used, I explained the ways in which biological and psychological approaches primarily elevate the importance of the individual body or psyche. Even though trauma may be transmitted from one person to another, the focus is either on locating a specific gene or on determining the social situations that create the conditions for trauma transmission. I argue that all of these approaches are valid and necessary, but the discourse around individual trauma is primarily negative, emphasizing the pathologies associated with trauma. The language of pathology, as related to disease, reproduces narratives about diseased bodies in need of medical or psychological treatment. There are often assumptions about how historical trauma

makes “sufferers” prone to some dysfunction or psychological distress (see Denham 2008). However, as discussed by Cvetkovich (2003, 2012), Eisenbruch (1991), Mollica (2008), and Takeuchi and Kramer (2002), western medicine and psychiatry cannot fully understand or capture the complexities or dynamism of collective social trauma. Furthermore, individual frameworks fail to understand the ways in which unresolved (or marginalized) historical inequalities can shape individual experiences of trauma and pain. Narrative and cultural approaches to trauma recognize the collective nature of trauma, especially the circulation of trauma narratives and identities, but many studies still revolve around the negative personal or social manifestations of trauma.

Acknowledging and recognizing the importance of trauma frameworks that privilege the understanding of 1) individual experiences of trauma, 2) the negative effects of trauma, and 3) the circulation of trauma narratives, I propose to use an affective approach that encompasses both the individual and collective frameworks. Although the exact definition of affect is contested, I find that scholars who use an affective framework are able to better capture the collective and not necessarily-pathological nature of trauma. Instead of merely acknowledging the situational context of trauma transmission, affective approaches allow for a more nuanced investigation of socio-historical context and of the mundane affects of everyday life. I believe that one cannot be separated from the other—context and everyday life are intimately connected by the sensations and feelings we experience as sentient and mindful individuals. But although this recognition of socio-historical context is possible, much of the transgenerational trauma literature available still privileges the

Holocaust as the main subject of investigation. As a result, there is a lack of research on affect and transgenerational trauma that purposely and clearly addresses the racial component of trauma.

Lastly, many of the affect theorists whom I have cited, stem from a humanities-based disciplinary tradition. Although they do not necessarily privilege language or the narrative form, their main objects of investigation include cultural artifacts such as literary texts and films, and most of their analysis occurs post-hoc. My mixed-methods sociological study of the transgenerational transmission of trauma among Cambodian Americans, however, employs interviews and surveys to empirically document the presence of affect and latent articulations. I do not think that one methodology is better than the other, but I do advocate for multidisciplinary and multi-method approaches to studying affect and trauma.

METHODOLOGY

While affect is a rich and fluid theoretical field with many historical and case study accounts, the methodology of measuring affect, in advance, (as opposed to ex-post facto) is not firmly established. This research will propose an empirical mixed methods approach for measuring and assessing the affect of transgenerational transmission of trauma. My methodology for the work features a mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative approach for data collection, and, a theoretically driven but empirically grounded proposal for an empirical set of measurements.

In this study, I have found that even though second generation Cambodian Americans never experience the physical traumas of war and genocide and autogenocide, they still *feel* the aftermath of these horrors through their parents and family. But in terms of research methods, how can we measure how the trauma of war, genocide and autogenocide, and relocation is transmitted from parents to children? How exactly do we study and empiricize trauma and memory? In the past, psychologists and medical sociologists have relied heavily on mental health symptoms, experiments, and psychological personality tests. Those in the humanities have studied trauma narratives. But what if the trauma that exists is transgenerational, and there are no “actual” woundings? What if the narrative is incomplete? How do we, as sociologists, quantify silences and failed narrative accounts?

Contemporary sociology influenced and informed by interdisciplinary theories and approaches that help study and understand social groups and structures. As a discipline in this seemingly interdisciplinary world, research methods often come to define the differences between sociology and other social and humanist sciences. Sociological methods, however, are constantly modified and developed in order to accommodate the changing social world, striking an ever-shifting balance between the standards of “scientific rigor” (MacIver 1967; Motwani 1967; Neurath 1973; Willer and Willer 1973) and the “reflexive turn” (Behar and Gordon, eds. 1995; Burawoy 2003, 2009; Clifford and Marcus, eds. 1986; Mauthner and Doucet 2003; and

others).¹⁹ Nonetheless, certain disciplinary traditions are still informative in thinking through issues about research design. The study of social activity, social groups, and social structures require not only a rigorous set of methods, but also a touch of flexibility and creativity.

While quantitative and qualitative methods can capture the material components of trauma, they cannot fully account for the ways *affect* (as individual and public feelings) manifest non-consciously and non-materially. This is why *affect as a critical approach to method and theory* not only pushes the theoretical understanding of traumas, but also creates methods that seek to complicate the “ability to affect and be affected” (Massumi 2002:15). Forming distinctions between the inside (individual), as the realm of psychology, and the outside (society), as the realm of sociology, is not very productive in understanding how certain phenomena like memory and trauma leak into both realms.

Why Mixed Methods?

Payne (2007:902) argues that sociological specialization in specific theories and methods tend to “become strained within a uni-dimensional perspective that formulates research questions and presents explanations primarily in terms of one’s

¹⁹ Although the reflexive turn is primarily associated with anthropology, sociologists have also adopted this critical approach to ethnography and “writing culture” (Clifford and Marcus, eds. 1986). Clifford and Marcus (1986) were among the first anthropologists who started questioning the “objectivity” of ethnographic studies and writing. They found that no matter how objective anthropologists claimed to be, researchers were clearly implicated and affected by their own biases and frameworks. In understanding others’ culture(s), researchers and scholars must understand how their methods and interactions affect and are affected by the community(ies) they study. Objectivity and impartiality are not possible. This realization laid the foundation for the reflexive turn.

own topic of interest, rather than recognizing the multi-dimensional complexity of social life.” As a result, it is imperative that researchers consider methodological plurality. People and their relationships with one another and with large social structures are not static, so our empirical approaches to understanding those relationships should not be rooted purely in a limited view of disciplinary tradition. According to Motwani (1967:xvii), “Sociology deals with subjective social relations that are understood as not amendable to measurement because it deals with ‘the mentality of man’ and it also deals with ‘variable, intangible, indeterminate concepts’.” Because many topics in sociology are variable, intangible, and indeterminate, traditional “scientific” methods may fail to address all parts of such topics.

The field of literature known as affect studies is stunningly qualitative and not specific about measurement, and the field of public health and trauma studies tends toward quantitative measurements. As I have noted above, both have limitations. For the social sciences, including the discipline of sociology, measurement is crucial to understanding the social world. However, social phenomena are often understood as abstract concepts wherein strict assignments of numbers as measurements fail to address the abstract nature of social life. Methodologically, how can we understand and, more importantly, measure concepts and phenomena like transgenerational trauma and pain when the artifacts of interest are not quantifiable in traditional ways? There is a lack of materiality that social scientists are familiar with observing and collecting as empirical data.

In addressing the measurement of pain, Scarry (1985) emphasizes the inexpressibility of physical pain—the failure of language in conveying deeply felt pain. Scarry (1985:5) asserts, “[Pain’s] resistance to language is not simply one of its incidental or accidental attributes but is essential to what it is.” Because pain has the “ability to destroy language,” there is no referential content for one to clearly express or convey this ineffable pain (Scarry 1985:54). Although the tools researchers have are not fail-proof and are constantly redeveloped, the tools that we do have allow us to gain insight on seemingly immeasurable phenomena like pain. For example, Melzack and Torgerson developed the “McGill Pain Questionnaire” to categorize words that are commonly used to describe pain (“throbbing,” “searing,” “pulsing,” “beating”, etc.) into coherent groups. For example, in addition to words such as “flickering,” “quivering,” “pulsing,” “throbbing,” and “beating” (Scarry 1985:7), which express the varying degrees of intensity of a rhythmic on-off (temporal) sensation of pain, there are also thermal and constrictive dimensions that express the “*sensory* content of pain” (Scarry 1985:8). There are other groups of words that express the affective and cognitive content of pain as well. In relation to Cambodian refugees, Palmieri, Marshall, and Schell (2007) used confirmatory factor analysis to examine the factor structure of the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire in Cambodian refugees residing in the United States. The best model they found had four correlated symptoms that reflected “reexperiencing, avoidance, emotional numbing, and hyperarousal” (Palmieri, Marshall, and Schell 2007:207). Their analysis also showed

that the four factor post-traumatic stress symptom model had distinct associations with depression symptoms, demonstrating evidence of construct-validity.

Measuring and tracing pain in this way may be critiqued as reductive. For example, Hartwig and Dearing (1979:9) find that it is unfortunate that “data analysis in the social sciences frequently proceeds without openness, but instead with a marked unawareness of alternative patterns that might characterize the data; and it often proceeds without sufficient skepticism, placing too much trust in numerical summaries of the data.” However, as long as researchers are clear and explicit about the limitations of their methods and are flexible about their theoretical constructs, there is more to be gained from doing both quantitative and qualitative research, despite their shortcomings, than not doing the research at all.

Research Methods

Challenging the notion of the purely objective researcher, I took an affective approach to the method of narrative inquiry, allowing her to learn “how to hear what is impossible” (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 35). Perceiving the nature of research as a coalitional project between researchers and participants, I used an “enlarged sympathy” approach to not identify with what participants shared but to “imaginatively reproduce the other’s experience as fully as possible in one’s own mind” (Lyshaug 2006:90). This “genuine fellow-feeling involves imagining how the sufferer feels” (Lyshaug 2006:90) and requires a “directly physiological and affective response” (Kruks 2001:167) in which the researcher uses bodily recall to be reflexive and try to feel what her participants feel—while recognizing that this feeling will never

be the same. As a second generation Chinese American woman, who met her second generation Cambodian American husband at a young age, I can never claim to know how it feels like to be one of my Cambodian participants, but my positionality and reflexivity allow me to connect with them beyond a level of imagined objectivity. For the last fourteen years, I have witnessed a proliferation of silences and fragments within my husband's family. I am also cognizant of how intersections of rupture and healing are incipient, but their potentials are often not actualized to allow for the discussions that may (or may not) clarify the confusions and conflicts between parents and their children.

Aware of the history of colonizing and orientalist research, I frequently reflected on my ethics, methods, and theories to ensure that I would continue goals of decolonization and healing (Smith 1999:115).²⁰ While this “feeling-with” framework allows the researcher to be reflexive during the interview and data analysis process, I do not use these “feelings” to analyze the data. Instead, the affective approach forces researchers to acknowledge their positionality while “construct[ing] modes of political cultural agency that are commensurate with historical conjunctures where populations are culturally diverse, racially and ethnically divided—the objects of social, racial, and sexual discrimination” (Bhabha 1992:57). The researcher is no longer that invisible “voice of authority” but is instead a social and feeling body with certain “desires and

²⁰ Smith's (1999) decolonizing methodology is a complex research framework rooted in indigenous knowledges. It uses cultural knowledge, practices, and identity to challenge traditional research and scholarship production. Working alone, the researcher cannot implement Smith's rigorous requirements; however, the researcher is deeply informed by Smith and other feminist methodologists (see Harding 1989; Sprague 2005).

interests” (Harding 1989:9). All researchers need to be reflexive about how narratives are constructed to represent subjects.

After receiving Institutional Review Board approval, data collection for this research project began. In January 2012, I started ethnographic data collection at the San Jose Cambodian School (also known as “Sala Khmer”) to note interactions among elders, the teachers, volunteers, and students. Observations lasted two to three hours every Saturday morning. Detailed fieldnotes about both mundane daily activities and stories about war and relocation were taken and analyzed. Instead of asking overt questions about people’s experiences with the war, I observed and noted the context when discussions about Cambodia and diaspora arise.

In addition to local community activities, I also attended and participated in the national 2012 and 2013 Khmer Student Coalition Conferences (KSCC). I took detailed fieldnotes on not only the panels, but also the interactions between attendees. I has also attended annual “culture shows” hosted by Cambodian student organizations. In commemoration of the Khmer Rouge genocide and autogenocide, Cambodian New Year, and general Cambodian culture, such shows take place almost every weekend from March to April. I took notes on the themes and topics of such performances. Some past themes include “revive and flourish,” “if you could see me now,” and “unheard voices.” These are distinct one-day sites, but there is a pattern in the hosting of certain themes and workshops. Rarely do young Khmer people have an opportunity to collectively talk about their trials and tribulations not only as Cambodians, but also as college students and young people in general. Many

commented that they had never discussed their family histories or pasts (even with family members) before attending this event.

Lastly, to acquire a more contextual understanding of the Khmer Rouge genocide and autogenocide, I conducted observations at Tuol Sleng Prison and the Killing Field Memorial at Cheoung Ek. Fieldnotes from observations were analyzed and coded for themes and patterns. In addition to ethnography and participant observations, I conducted 27 semi-structured in-depth interviews with 18 to 32 year old Cambodian Americans and 4 semi-structured in-depth interview with first generation Cambodian refugees. In conjunction with asylum seeking patterns, the 18 to 32-year-old age range ensures that the participants will be 1.5 or second generation. The 1.5 generation in this study includes persons who “emigrate before twelve years of age” (Maira, 2002, p. 212 n.6). The second generation refers to American born Cambodian Americans who have at least one parent who is born in a different country. However, in terms of analysis, it is more appropriate to consider sociological cohorts rather than generations because those who belong to the 1.5 generation may span a large range of ages and may also have different experiences depending if individuals were born in Cambodia or in the Thai refugee camps (see Shinagawa and Pang 1996).

Participants were identified through quasi-respondent-driven and purposive sampling. From ethnographic research and community involvement, I identified key informants, leaders from student organizations and Cambodian community organizations, and a targeted sampling. Targeted sampling helps identify a number of

subjects at specific sites that are representative from ethnographic research. She also employed quasi-respondent-driven sampling (Heckathorn 1997, 2002). Heckathorn (1997:177) asserts, “[R]espondent-driven sampling derives from studies of incentive systems.” A \$10 incentive was provided to the initial key informants and then a secondary monetary incentive was offered for additional subjects recruited. According to Heckathorn (1997:179), such respondent-driven sampling helps overcome some “potential bias of oversampling subject with larger personal networks” because it seeks to recruit subjects with “traits associated with small personal networks.” While Cambodian Americans may not be a “hidden population,” it is difficult to locate individuals from systematic random sampling. The second generation population is small as compared to other ethnic groups and layered random sampling with census data is too costly to be feasible for the scope of this project.

The interviews, which ranged from one to three hours, helped draw out the multiple yet similar dimensions of identity formation and trauma traces. The interview schedule included questions about family history, familial relations, particularly parent-child relationships, memories of socialization, intragenerational relationships with peers or cousins, educational attainment, life-long goals, guidance and mentoring pre, during, and post college, cultural identity development, social network formation, and more. The qualitative nature of interviews requires a more inductive approach. After transcribing the interviews, I identified themes and visual patterns with Atlas-ti software. I find that it is absolutely necessary to identify and discuss outliers and negative cases because these anomalies can inform the research

about the varied and nuanced nature of trauma. Perhaps, there are not any trauma traces that affect youth. In this case, there must be further analysis on why trauma and social transmission are prevalent in some groups and not others. The interview schedule is included in Appendix A.

Lastly, I secured access to survey respondents at the 2013 KSCC. There were 80 responses to the survey, 69 of which noted that respondents were Cambodian. This survey employed purposive convenience sampling with three \$100 incentives. This survey questionnaire not only included similar questions to that of the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ) and the Modified Secondary Trauma Scale (MSTS) but also questions that pertained to family history, demographics, and culture. The self-administered questionnaire provides a comparative context for this overall study: background information about the Cambodian youth's family history, relationships, secondary trauma, and mental health. A survey numbering system ensured the confidentiality of the data. The survey instrument is included in Appendix B.

Scope of Study

Because of nonrandom sampling, findings will be difficult to generalize to Cambodian Americans outside of the sample or to other groups that may have experienced trauma. However, because of the unfeasibility in attaining a systematic randomized sample, quasi-respondent-driven sampling has been employed to account for some sampling bias (Heckathorn 1997, 2002). The strong ethnographic foundation of this study allows the researcher to triangulate and cross reference findings from interviews, observations, and survey questionnaires. While subjects are

linked to site specificity (i.e., colleges and community organizations), such sites are found to have close connections with the larger Cambodian American community. Since this study is on the collective nature of social trauma and memory, it is necessary to reach out to groups that represent the target population.

The interview schedule may seem broad and not directly address this study's research questions, but preliminary data from the thirty interviews show that the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed the researcher to do further exploration, as necessary, after establishing a general rapport with the subjects. More direct questions that specifically pertain to trauma and the four main research questions were ineffective because of the ineffable nature of trauma and pain. However, with longer discussions, the researcher was able to identify smaller nuances that demonstrate the transgenerational nature of collective and social trauma. Furthermore, the study included elements of the HTQ and MSTS questionnaires to measure trauma and memory. However, such clinical psychology assessment tools tend to focus on the western and individualized nature of trauma and stress. Recognizing such limitations, I used the collected data to critique the inappropriate nature of using quantitative surveys to account for pain and silence. I also added additional questions on the questionnaire in order to address the collective, social, and cultural aspects of trauma, history, and mental health. Such an approach strengthened the validity of more "individualized" measures of trauma. Because of the ineffability of pain and trauma, it is necessary to use mixed methods to account for such challenges.

Chapter 3: Stories of Trauma as Time Image Episodes

...I know, I know, it's hard to digest but it's the truth.
And if we don't talk about it'll be forgotten.
And I'll be damned if I let that happen.
You see its barely even mentioned,
Barely in school textbooks,
How do you expect the kids to know?
Some don't even believe their parents,
Some just don't care at all.
Post traumatic stress, silently they cry.
Casualty of war, no cure but to slowly die.
Some claim Khmer pride, not knowing about their past.
Identity crisis and generation gap...
Prach Ly, *Hidden Truth, Open Lies*

Trauma and the transmission of trauma are theory-based but need to be understood through concrete historical examples. This chapter opens a three-part discussion of the case of Cambodians, including survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime and its subsequent refugee diaspora. In this chapter, I first document and account for a crucial aspect of trauma: silence about traumatic experiences and traumatic histories. Silence alone is likely a necessary but not a sole feature of trauma. Then, I not only present a standard empirical inventory (i.e., Harvard Trauma Questionnaire) on the incidence of key features of trauma but also show that such inventories are insufficient in mapping and locating trauma in the subsequent generations. And lastly, using quantitative and qualitative data, I argue that silences are an entryway to latent trauma and the articulation, unfolding, of trauma in the next generation.

To discuss these processes, I provide stories of the muddled soundbites and fragmented accounts of first generation survivors' experiences during and after the

Khmer Rouge regime. Although there has been research on the relocation and assimilation of second wave²¹ Cambodian refugees,²² there are few studies on the impacts of first generation history on 1.5 or second generation Cambodian Americans, those who were solely or primarily raised in the United States.²³ Because of a lack of official resources, including textbooks and courses, on Cambodians and the Khmer Rouge, many children do not learn about the horrors and trauma of the genocide until much later—late in high school or in college, if at all. Some hear bits and pieces of information from parents, but others have little to no knowledge about their cultural pasts or family history. Like the stories told by other groups that have experienced social trauma, Cambodian American family histories are also anachronistic and incomplete. This is why it is so important to consider the genealogies of history, particularly by juxtaposing official narratives with suppressed stories and silences.

To engage in this larger discussion about the construction and circulation of trauma narratives, I first address how the official accounts of the Khmer Rouge genocide cannot capture the complexities of Cambodian trauma—especially in a

²¹ The first wave of refugees out of Southeast Asia consisted of the educated and well off individuals who were able to get access out of Cambodia before the Khmer Rouge takeover. The second wave of refugees came after the Refugee Act of 1980.

²² For additional studies on first-generation experiences or responses to trauma, please see Chan (2003); Carlson and Rosser-Hogan (1994); Hinton et al. (2009); Marshall et al. (2005); Ong (2003); and Sack et al. (1999).

²³ For studies on 1.5 or second generation Cambodian Americans, please see Chhuon and Hudley (2008); Chhuon et al. (2011); Ngo (2006); Wright (2004); and Wright and Boun (2011).

transnational context. Second, I explain how Cambodian genocide and the associated traumas are unique from those from other cases such as the Jewish Holocaust and the genocides in Rwanda, former Yugoslavia, and Darfur. Third, I offer a discussion about how my affective approach to trauma allows us to widen our understandings of the sociological subject. Fourth, I share the stories and narratives that have been circulated and told by older and subsequent generation Cambodians to provide evidence as to how Cambodian people were traumatized. Lastly, I will explain how such narratives function as time-image episodes that expand the present to allow for subsequent generations to engage with their families' pasts.

HISTORICAL GENEALOGY OF TRAUMA: READING AGAINST THE GRAIN

Contrary to scholars who adhere to history's teleological underpinnings of "truth" as neat chronological orders of events, Foucault, as influenced by Nietzsche, argues that genealogy is a "form of history"²⁴ that "operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times" (Foucault 1971/1984:76). Unlike traditional history, genealogy is not "black" (unknowable) or "white" (transparent), but is instead "gray." The method of genealogy deconstructs and uncovers the processes that *make up* history. For example, Foucault asserts,

²⁴ Foucault (1980:117) in *Power/Knowledge* writes, "And this is what I would call genealogy, that is, a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history"

The genealogist refuses to extend his faith in metaphysics, if he listens to history, he finds that there is 'something altogether different' behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms. (1971/1984:78)

Despite the claims of a single truth as represented by some forms of history, representation actually arises from the competition between different versions of the past, present, and future; such competing discourses are simultaneously supported and called into question (Kansteiner 1993).

In particular, such approaches give us the tools to deconstruct the official narratives that have been used to describe Cambodian American refugee experiences. Hayden White's (1995) interest in deconstructing the literary techniques used in the discipline of history parallels Foucault's critique of history's use of traditional devices to construct comprehensive reviews of history as "patient and continuous" developments (Foucault 1971/1984:88). Unlike traditional history, the method of historical genealogy

deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millennial ending. It will uproot its traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity. This is because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting. (Foucault 1971/1984:88)

History cannot be self-evident because narratives are always emplotted and (re)created. The narratives of war are often sanctioned by those in power and can never fully capture the experiences of the subordinated and marginalized.

According to Schwab (2010:55), “Violent histories can be silenced and relegated to obscurity in spite of a circulation of stories and narratives.” This shows how language has the power to hide certain truths: whose communication is seen as valid and whose stories are understood as self-evident facts? To better understand violent history, it is important to look for “traces of such hiding” by reading “against the grain of overt narratives” (Schwab 2010:55). Such critiques of history and language are particularly salient and important when considering how long it has taken for the United Nations and Cambodia to identify and try Khmer Rouge leaders for their crimes against humanity and “genocide.” Despite the prevalence of continued suffering among survivors, this lack of international recognition and justice is one of the many ways in which violent history has been silenced and relegated to obscurity. Meek (2010:29) asserts, “War crimes, including genocide, have been publicly denied leading to a failure to memorialize entire communities or an inability by survivors to communicate the horror of their experience.” By denying an outlet for survivors to seek justice, the painful realities of the Cambodian people and Cambodian American refugees are isolated and suppressed, disallowing the “free flow of ideas, emotions, and modes of relating and creating” (Schwab 2010:56). The secrets become buried under the national accounts of history.

Cambodian and American Dirty Secrets and the Khmer Rouge Tribunals

Until recently, no accounts of the Khmer Rouge genocide were included in national textbooks approved by the Cambodian Ministry of Education (De Launey 2009). The uncooperative nature of the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP)—which is

run by long-time prime minister Hun Sen (Cambodia Information Center 2015), a former Khmer Rouge soldier that has been accused of not serving or protecting the interests of the Cambodian electorate (Bahree 2014)—and the inability of the United Nations to create an international criminal court to try former Khmer Rouge leaders in a timely manner show how both the Cambodian government and Western nations have had certain investments in keeping the truths about the Khmer Rouge genocide hidden. The following discussion, which shows the limited international recognition of the suffering by Cambodians, only reinforces the fear and unease Cambodian people have about the current Cambodian government.

The Khmer Rouge was overthrown by the Vietnamese on January 7, 1979 (ECCC 2015). However, this genocidal period was followed by an extensive war that lasted until 1998—when Pol Pot, leader of the Khmer Rouge, passed away, and when the official Khmer Rouge political system and military structures were dismantled (ECCC 2015). During the war against the Vietnamese, extensive suffering by civilians continued (Krogh 1990). Those realities were exacerbated by the complicity of the western world, which allowed the Khmer Rouge to continue to hold its seat in the United Nations until 1982, without any vocal objections raised by representatives (Luftglass 2004:31). Because the American military aided Khmer Rouge guerrillas to fight against the Vietnamese who controlled and occupied Cambodia after 1979, the United States had actually led most of the western world to support the exiled Khmer Rouge over the Vietnamese-sponsored government of Cambodia (Kiernan 2005:19).

The United States had hoped to use Cambodia to offset the balance of power in Asia, especially having lost the Vietnam War just a few years earlier.

Issues of international recognition of the Khmer Rouge war crimes and the necessary steps that needed to be taken to hold Khmer Rouge leaders accountable continued to be overlooked even when Cambodian independence from Vietnam was reinstated. At the Paris Peace Accords of 1991, human rights concerns were raised in Article 15, but they only stated that the Cambodian government must ensure that the Khmer Rouge does not return and that human rights conditions are monitored (Luftglass 2004). Again, there was no mention of creating an international tribunal that would invoke the Genocide or Geneva Convention on behalf of victims.

Even though the Cambodian government initiated a request for assistance from the United Nations to try Khmer Rouge leaders for their crimes against humanity in 1997, it was used primarily as a ruse to detract from the bloody political coup that Hun Sen was planning against Norodom Ranariddh, leader of the FUNCINPEC opposition party (Brinkley 2013). Ever since, Hun Sen and the CPP has resisted the establishment of an international criminal court. In a public speech in March 2009, Hun Sen openly said that he would rather the courts run out of money and fail than to pursue additional cases against former Khmer Rouge, many of whom, including Hun Sen, continue to serve as high-ranking officials in the CPP (Human Rights Watch 2014).

Because of the acrimonious debates and impasses instigated by the Cambodian government, it took almost seven years for the United Nations to agree to

a hybrid tribunal that would have a Cambodian judge majority. The “Law on the Establishment of Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for the Prosecution of Crimes Committed During the Period of Democratic Kampuchea” was signed into effect on June 6, 2003 (“Law”). According to the law, the Khmer Rouge Tribunals “can only prosecute two categories of alleged perpetrators for alleged crimes committed between 17 April 1975 and 6 January 1979: 1) Senior leaders of Democratic Kampuchea; and 2) Those believed to be most responsible for grave violations of national and international law” (ECCC 2015). So far, the tribunal has only considered four main cases: Case 001, 002, 003, and 004. More than ten years after the establishment of the tribunals and more than \$200 million in donations later, it has only handed out two verdicts: one against Kaing Guek Eav, alias “Duch,” in Case 001, and one against Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan in Case 002/01. Case 002/02 is currently being considered, and persons of interests for Case 003 and 004 have not been officially released.

While most survivors were relieved to have finally sought some sort of recognition and justice, those who were found guilty were already in their 80s and will likely die soon from old age. After the judgments of Case 002/01 were handed down, instead of celebrating the successes of having sought justice, many Cambodian people mourned the losses of opportunities to try more than just three leaders of the Khmer Rouge. With a record of corruption, a lack of funding, and international judge resignation, it is unsure how long the ECCC will continue. The multiple contradictions of this hybrid tribunal continue to raise questions about the purpose of

the courts, the motives of the CPP, and the international community's lack of timely consideration and investment in trying Khmer Rouge leaders.

What Makes the Cambodian Case Unique?

Even before the Germany and the Soviet Union surrendered in mid-1945, the United Nations War Crimes Commission had already been created (during the beginning of 1944) to establish an international war crimes tribunal to hold the Nazis responsible for their crimes of aggression (Taylor 1955). While this recognition of suffering and the determination of guilt are central to Jewish Holocaust narratives, such swift actions did not exist in the Cambodian context. Much of the western world either did not know about or purposely ignored what was happening in Cambodia and the surrounding Indochina areas (Chomsky and Herman 1979). I argue that literature on Holocaust²⁵ trauma, although encompassing analysis on genocide and torture, cannot fully capture how race and racism (as associated with immigrant and refugee experiences of relocation) and other structures of inequality produce a trauma that is distinct from that which stems for a singular event. Cambodian American experiences of racism and other inequalities require a trauma perspective that addresses the relationships between the “initial trauma” and racial trauma. According to Cvetkovich (2003:38), it is necessarily to track “how contemporary experiences of racism rest on the foundation of traumatic events such as slavery,

²⁵ The Holocaust is commonly understood as a cataclysm that happened to the Jews during World War II, but this common understanding fails to recognize that the Roma people (“gypsies”) were also persecuted. By definition, holocaust does not necessarily equate with the WWII and Jewish experience. However, “the Holocaust” has been understood in largely limited terms.

lynching, and harassment.” Racism at all levels, including microaggressive and national ones, have the ability to produce and reproduce trauma for persons of color (see Cheng 2000).

Understood to be racially white in the present context,²⁶ Jews are distinct from Cambodians and other minority groups in many ways. For one, Jewish Holocaust narratives have come to symbolize universal evil in the western world. This universality, however, is not recognized as present in all genocidal events. Consider the Roma, Slavs, disabled, Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals, and other political and religious dissidents who were also killed during the Holocaust but rarely acknowledged in the dominant narratives. Other genocides such as those in Rwanda (targeted killing of Tutsi people by Hutus), Bosnia (ethnic cleansing by Bosnian Serbs), and Darfur (ethnic cleaning by the Arab Sudanese military) have also received much less notoriety and attention from the international community. I do recognize, however, that for all of these atrocities, international criminal courts (ICC) have been established to indict leaders responsible for the crimes of genocide.

In the Cambodian case, after the United Nations Group of Experts for Cambodia recommended that “the UN Security Council establish a Chapter VII international criminal tribunal to try Khmer Rouge leaders for atrocity crimes committed from 17, April 1975 to 7, January 1979,” Hun Sen rejected the proposal for an international tribunal and instead asked for considerations for a hybrid court system that was similar to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission

²⁶ See Brodtkin (1998).

(Cambodian Tribunal Monitor 2011). In addition to the structural differences between the ICC and the hybrid tribunal, the Cambodian hybrid tribunal has also been unable to simply try Khmer Rouge leaders with crimes of “genocide.” The 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which declares that genocide is a crime under international law and states are obligated to punish genocide that occurs in their territory, states that there are three main elements to genocide:

1. The accused must undertake one of a series of acts - killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm; deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction; imposing measures intended to prevent births; and forcibly transferring children from the group;
2. The accused must do so against a “national, ethnical, racial or religious group”;
3. The accused must do these acts “with intent to destroy, in whole or in part,” one of these groups “as such”. (United Nations 1999)

There is evidence that Khmer Rouge officials specifically targeted the extermination of ethnic and religious minorities, including Muslim Cham, Khmer Krom, and Buddhist monks—which directly satisfies the 1948 Genocide Convention’s definition of genocide. However, in regards to the autogenocide against the Khmer population (persecution of Khmer people by other Khmers), complex interpretive issues arose regarding the Khmer Rouge’s intent in targeting the “non-minority Khmer population” (United Nations 1999).

To date, the Khmer Rouge Tribunals have been forced to primarily charge Khmer Rouge officials with crimes against humanity and not genocide or autogenocide. Autogenocide is not recognized by the 1948 Genocide Convention and

is outside the purview of the courts. The United Nations has noted five elements salient to the crimes against humanity that were committed by suspects:

1. The acts must involve one or more of a list of serious assaults on the individual, including murder, extermination, deportation, enslavement, forced labour, imprisonment, torture, rape, other inhumane acts and various types of persecutions;
 2. Those acts must be of a mass or systematic nature against a civilian population;
 3. The acts must be committed with a discriminatory motive based on the race, religion, political viewpoint or other attribute of the population;
 4. The acts must involve governmental action;
 5. The acts must be committed in the course of armed conflict.
- (United Nations 1999)

Elements one through four pertain to the specific atrocities that the Khmer Rouge inflicted. Element five, however, garnered some controversy because although the Khmer Rouge was in conflict against the Vietnamese, the crimes against humanity they committed did not always result as a course of armed conflict. Nevertheless, the nexus that linked the armed conflict and the designation of crimes against humanity was argued to have been severed post World War II (United Nations 1999).

Although the Khmer Rouge also committed war crimes that should be recognized via the Geneva Conventions, the majority of the crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge did not occur during the warring periods between Democratic Kampuchea and Vietnam (United Nations 1999). Internal conflicts were not yet recognized by the Fourth Geneva Convention as of 1975 (United Nations 1999). Therefore, the only violations that fell under the jurisdiction of the tribunal related to the pillaging and crimes committed at the Thai border after the Vietnamese forces

took over Phnom Penh in January 1979—such actions violated Article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (United Nations 1999).

In short, the Cambodian genocide cannot be fully analyzed and explained by current trauma perspectives. Not only were the mass killings by the Khmer Rouge largely not recognized as “genocide,” but the United Nations has also failed to take charge of the hybrid Khmer Rouge Tribunals. Furthermore, the Cambodian genocide is unique in that the United States played such a large role in destabilizing the country with its secret bombing campaign and its subsequent support of the Khmer Rouge (Chomsky and Herman 1979; Owen and Kiernan 2006; Ngor and Warner 1987). According to Chomsky and Herman (1979:137), there is surely no doubt that “it was U.S. intervention that inflamed a simmering civil struggle and brought the horrors of modern warfare to relatively peaceful Cambodia...” As a result, the Cambodian diaspora that was relocated to the United States symbolizes a trauma coming home.

Beyond the Pull-Pull: A Critical Transnational Approach to Immigration

An individual-level trauma perspective or approach (in regards to psychology and legal studies) would focus primarily on the causes of trauma and seek to identify what is amendable to fixing. So for example, Cambodians suffer trauma because of their experiences with starvation, torture, and execution brought on by Pol Pot’s revolutionary ideologies and tactics; it was these experiences that resulted in individual manifestations of post-traumatic symptoms. From a collective-level trauma approach, however, we have to consider the long term effects of the French

colonization of Indochina and American military influence (i.e., bombings and political coup). And yes, individuals may have post-traumatic symptoms, but the mass international relocation experiences make Cambodian trauma unique. The nature of Cambodian American trauma is compounded by transnational factors in relation to their status as illegal immigrants at Thai border camps and refugees (a type of legal permanent resident) in the United States.

While immigration studies have focused on the push-pull factors that push individuals to emigrate from a country and pull individuals to immigrate to another country (see Zimmerman 1996), the Cambodian American refugee context is not so simply defined. Zimmerman (1996:124) found that the “inflow of asylum seekers and refugees [to Europe] is often considered to be entirely push migration.” However, these push-pull dichotomies are not so distinct when the receiving country has played a central role in creating the conditions that “push” refugees out of their home countries. And also, the pull that a receiving country has does not necessarily speak to the economic benefits that both the immigrants and the receiving country may gain. Southeast Asian refugees, including Cambodians, were pulled to relocate to the United States because of the American military’s involvement in the area.

From 1975 to 1998, the United States admitted 147,228 Cambodian refugees (Mekong.net 2008). In 1980, the United States Congress passed the Refugee Act of 1980 to “ameliorate the refugee crises precipitated by American military involvement in Indochina” (Park and Park 2004:38). The Act, however, established strict guidelines as to who was considered a refugee and is therefore admissible into the United States

for protection. The exact terms stated that a refugee must have a “well-founded fear of persecution” on the grounds of “race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or membership in a social group” (Park and Park 2004:37). This did not include any persons who were displaced but not persecuted. Although the law was based on humanitarian grounds, it had many contradictory components because it did not recognize how the United States played a large role in creating the displacement and persecution of individuals who needed to seek relocation. Also, it placed an immense pressure on the Cambodian refugees to prove that they had been in fact “persecuted.” Such policies speak to the ways in which individual-level trauma frameworks fail to consider how trauma is affected by social, economic, and political contexts.

AFFECT, TRAUMA, AND SUBJECTHOOD

Unlike individual-level approaches to trauma, sociological ones consider how trauma affects people not as distinct but social subjects. The sociological “subject” is defined by the broad contours of what it means to live in a particular historical period; it is shaped by economic, political, social and cultural factors. These general factors are created by structures of inequality such as work, income, poverty, race, immigration status, language, education, and neighborhood (Bonilla-Silva 2006). As such, “subjecthood” is the quality of being a subject. When considering Gordon’s claims that “life is complicated” and that it produces qualities of “complex personhood,” we must acknowledge that subjects are dynamic: thinking and feeling, reactive and proactive, rational and contradictory, and so on.

Most often, the complicated nature of life is intimately intertwined with power relations. Power relations are historically embedded in society, but power can be invisible, fantastic, dull and routine (Gordon 1997/2008). For example, power relations may arise when a young black man is being harassed by a police officer for no other reason than his being young and black. Power relations may arise even when you look at yourself in the mirror and identify something you think makes you undesirable: I'm too fat; I wish I had more musculature; or my skin is too wrinkled. But even if you cannot cognitively pinpoint what it is that makes you unhappy about or uneasy with your appearance, you may embody those feelings (e.g., slouching or averting your gaze). Power relations manifest in the language of our thoughts and desires: what we do not like about ourselves, what we want, what we want to be, and how we feel about others.

Because of power relations are so embedded, people (and even institutions) cannot solely be bound by labels (e.g., man, woman, black, queer, liberal, and immigrant) because people and institutions are contradictory and may misrecognize themselves and others. Such complexities make it difficult to define subjects purely by either their individual thoughts and feelings or the structures that produce and reproduce certain power relations. Complex personhood encompasses many facets of our lives. It can mean that the *stories* that we tell ourselves about who we are are limited to and entangled by not only the narratives that are available to us but also our imaginaries and our hopes of what is to come. From Alexander's (2000) definition of cultural trauma, we can only assume that these narratives are the official ones

sanctioned by the overall collectivity. However, through the stories I have referenced and collected from first and subsequent generation Cambodians, I will show that despite a marginalization of survivor accounts, the ways in which people feel and understand their presents and pasts play a central role in shaping their subjectivity. So complex personhood may mean many things, but at the very least, it is about giving the respect to others “that life and people’s lives are simultaneously straightforward and full of enormously subtle meaning” (Gordon 1997/2008:4-5). These complexities are not based solely upon the individual. In his study of collective consciousness, Durkheim (1982/1997:329) argues, “But in reality that human consciousness that we must realize within ourselves in its entirety is nothing other than the collective consciousness of the group of which we form part.” Even if people do not share a specific identity, there is something (I argue affect) that binds them.

In traditional sociology, the subject is often taken for granted as unified, individual and rational; it is simply understood as something that is governed by social interactions such as family, school, church, and so on. In this chapter, I consider but also challenge the purely unidirectional relationship between structures and subjects: structures create subjects and the affects associated with certain subjectivities.

Through my data, I show that the affects of trauma can shape not only structures [akin to William’s (1977) “structure of feeling” and identity positions] but also how people perceive and experience their structural positions (e.g., class, gender, race, sexual orientation, immigration status). When considering the ways in which power is wielded and controlled via these identities and positions, it is important to

acknowledge how these categories cannot fully capture the affects that circulate among collective bodies (e.g., a racial or ethnic group, an imagined community, or a nation). It is the *excess*, that which cannot be captured by certain labels, that produces the collective conscious of subjects. Even though Bui (2015:93) argues that “[r]efugees and their children are never truly free from what happened in the past,” I theorize that the sign and identity of “refugee” cannot fully conceptualize the dimensions of refugee subjecthood. An affective approach to critical refugee studies and trauma studies allows us to speak about the ways subjectivities can be non-conscious and *becoming*. *Becoming* speaks to a futurity that recognizes how subject positions have the potential to become something else.

I also argue that it is not just the narration of stories that produce certain subject positions but also the silences and the “critical illiteracy” that bespeak the nature of subjecthood. Critical illiteracy is found “in the *productive failure* and ‘teachable moments’ of never fully grasping the diverse experiences of war-ravaged populations” (Bui 2015:79). So while the first and subsequent generation interviews that I reference in this chapter recount stories of the past, there will always be some excess that cannot be encapsulated by that which is uttered—there will always be something that escapes language. Bui’s theoretical analysis of refugee subjecthood and trauma are tethered to the original “source” of trauma, but he proposes to use “reeducation” as a way to recognize the simultaneous “impossibility of fully reviving or reading the past correctly” and “possibility of discovering more information about the past and learning from it” (2015:79). These contradictions highlight the

productive nature of trauma. The circulation of trauma via stories has the ability to reveal information to the subsequent generations, but there will always be an impossibility of capture. The stories or narratives I have collected speak to both the possibilities and impossibilities Bui discusses. However, I provide the caveat that the subsequent generations may not consciously recognize what they “learn” about the past. What is learned may be non-conscious (but felt) and that process of “learning” can be non-intentional.

The stories that I will share in this chapter are articulations of the latent traumas that circulate among families. According to Hall (1986/2008:141), “[Articulation] is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute, and essential for all time.” Because of the fluidity of affect and the malleability (suppression and expression) of narratives, the contexts in which transgenerational trauma is transmitted are constantly changing. Therefore, the articulations of trauma are also constantly changing. The stories I offer are a temporary closure that convey a contradictorily and complexly articulated unity or totality.

Trauma Stories as Time-Image Episodes

The telling of a trauma story necessarily elicits certain feelings and sensations, but I do not believe that these affects must be negative. Rechtman (2000:410) found that when discussing what happened during and after the Khmer Rouge era, his study subject “recalled her story without much emotion and passively accepted events, misfortune, separations, sufferings and so on.” Although it is expected that those who are traumatized and the stories they tell should be characterized by expressive

suffering, “styles of underperformed emotion, flat affect, or diffused yet animated gesture,” speak to the wide range of potential embodied traumatic responses (Berlant 2012). While such gestures of withdrawal demonstrate complex entanglements between subjects and an “action and event,” only some recollections will be immediately accessible (Berlant 2012). This inaccessibility is that which escapes capture. The stories in this chapter can be understood as what Berlant calls “an episode.” An *episode* is “a space of action leaking into pasts and futures at its borders while stretching out the present moment in a drama of adjustment in lieu of confidence about the event” (Berlant 2012).

As discussed in the previous chapter, this affective approach to studying trauma is preferred to those that fall under the individual frameworks because it allows us to conceptualize how traumatic memories do not only circulate within individual or familial contexts but also speak to wider sociological conceptions of subjecthood. The events of trauma along with how people respond to or feel trauma are embedded in larger processes that point to larger systematic inequalities. While narrative and cultural approaches take into consideration the collective nature of trauma, they privilege the intentional and linguistic forms of communication that can never fully capture the ways in which trauma can manifest as *excess*. Berlant says that excess, this oft-cited term, relates to an “intensity that, encountered in relation to an action or an atmosphere, is irrational, outside of ratio.” This intensity may be expressed or understood not only as an emotion or qualified feeling of grief, guilt, shame, or so on but also as flat affect.

It so happens that the interviews with the older generation in which I reference revolve around primarily negative affects (recall: I am using affect in the sense that evokes emotion, sensation, and feeling). However, the second generation is more likely to display flat affect. I argue that these respective aesthetic and affective performances do not make one group's connection stronger or more legitimate to the trauma than the other's. Instead, the affects and relationships are different. In addition to the fact that affects of survivor trauma and transgenerational trauma are different and continuously changing, each type is also articulated to and helps articulate the other. Because this connection is latent (i.e., existing but not yet developed or manifest), it mostly remains hidden. The stories in this chapter, however, give us a moment of insight or a snapshot into what the circulation of trauma entails. This snapshot is not purely an action-image, which is something that is inherently representative and produces a coherent narrative, but a time-image. A time-image is a matter of images (the depth and surfaces of an image that defy language and produce potentials for affective engagement); it is a machinic assemblage moving in conjunction with one other at different angles and speeds (Clough 2007; Deleuze 1989). The time-image is related to heredity and transgenerational trauma because the time-image disrupts traditional notions of time, memory production, and inheritance. Time-image speaks to the productivity of time and the movement of time outside the subject (Clough 2007; Wall 2004).

I argue that the *productivity of time* refers to the ability of the present to expand not only to include the past events but also to reference the futurity of affect—as

sensations and feelings are to be produced. In this chapter, the stories that are retold by the subsequent generations qualify as postmemories because there is a tether between the original source of trauma and the present recollection of that trauma. Recall, Hirsch (2015) finds that these postmemorial experiences are so deeply and affectively felt that they “constitute memories in their own right.” But instead of perceiving these postmemories as narratives that are likely to displace and evacuate the life stories of the subsequent generations like Hirsch (2015) does, I believe that the *circulation of affect and time-image episodes* among the multiple generations bespeak the fact that postmemories do not displace or evacuate but provide context and add to the life stories of the subsequent generations. By combining the concepts of episode (see Berlant 2012) and time-image (see Deleuze’s 1989) into what I call *time-image episodes*, I am referring to presently-situated *imagined* accounts of history and memory that are made up of a circulation of (failed) narratives and affects associated with the process of capturing traumas that extend the present into that of the past. Because of this time expansion, the past is necessarily also connected to the future—the potentials of trauma to be transmitted and to be re-imagined. In regards to the *time-image*, Deleuze (1989) was referencing the cinema and films, but I conceptualize the *time-image* episode as that which pertains to the imaginary—akin to Hirsch’s findings that postmemories are created and imagined by the second generation.

RECOUNTING THE TRAUMAS OF WAR

I find that the experiences of not only prisoners of war and civilians who were once forced into re-education camps but also the subsequent generations all

share a history of trauma. No one is spared—everyone has either seen or heard of someone (whom they may have been close to) starved, raped, tortured, or executed. In addition to the scholarly histories and documentaries²⁷ that give us critical insight into the events that transpired before, during, and after the Khmer Rouge, memoirs²⁸ about survival and triumph have given readers insider accounts of what the Cambodian people experienced. Because the scholarly histories and event-based documentaries focus on the historical contexts and leaders that led to the Khmer Rouge takeover, there is less emphasis on the individual stories of victims and survivors. Biographical stories or memories and creative films and documentaries have begun to provide those specific stories, but they most often revolve around organized narratives of survivorship and triumph.

Because my interviews with survivors and their children are semi-structured and are not dictated by the specific rhetorical strategies required by memoirs or documentaries, I find that interviewees not only share feelings of triumph but also contradictory pains or flat affect. My data provide a unique perspective because my study critically contextualizes not only the Khmer Rouge atrocities but also the prevalence of multiple points of inequality for Cambodian American refugees (e.g., relocation, gang recruitment, mental health disparities, and educational outcomes).

²⁷ Some books on the Cambodian genocide include Chomsky and Herman (1979), Etcheson (2006), Fawthrop and Jarvis (2004), Kiernan (1996), Schlund-Vials (2012), and Shawcross (2002). Some documentaries include Pilger (1979), Dong (2015), Sambath and Lemkin (2009),

²⁸ Some memoirs include Keat and Kendall (2009), Ngor (1987), Oeur (2005), Pran and DePaul (1997), and Ung (2001, 2010, 2012). Some popular films and memoir-based films include Poouv (2006) and Pan (2013).

Unlike the medium of memoirs and films, interviews and survey data may not have a neat, conclusive, or reflective ending. It is what “hangs” that creates the excess. That excess is incorporated into the time-image episodes and recirculated within the narratives produced by the subsequent generations. Before I discuss the time-image episodes produced and circulated by the younger generations, I believe that it is important to provide first-hand accounts of the Khmer Rouge era. I postulate that it is the older generations’ recounting of the past that help create the basis of the time-image episodes.

Recounting the War through the Stories of Prisoners

The stories that I reference from the older generation are categorized by those who were political prisoners and those who were civilians. The accounts from prisoners show the brutality of Khmer Rouge torture and questioning, and the accounts from civilians show how starvation, fear, and forced labor were widespread. The older generation’s recollection of these traumatic times begin to show why many Cambodian refugees have lasting mental and physical health issues.

In particular, interviews with former prisoners of war contextualize not only the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge but also the role that the United States government played in exacerbating those atrocities.²⁹ These narratives provide alternative perspectives to those about widely accepted American benevolence. After

²⁹ The interviews in this section are excerpted from the testimonies that Documentation Center Cambodia (DC-Cam) collected as evidence against defendants in the ECCC, particularly against Duch and his involvement in the S-21 Tuol Sleng detention/torture center (DC-Cam 2015).

the Khmer Rouge took power, many non-Khmer Rouge citizens were accused of helping or simply being affiliated with enemies such as the United States, the former Khmer Republic, or the Vietnamese. These accusations most often resulted in the use of brutal and deadly force. It seemed that Khmer Rouge leaders, those who enforced these torture techniques, were confident that these tactics would lead to confessions of guilt. In an interview for Documentation Center Cambodia, Bou Meng, one of the few survivors of the S-21 Tuol Sleng Detention Center, shared how he was physically and mentally beaten and tortured by the Khmer Rouge soldiers:

They took me out of the prison and walked north of the prison, at the corner now houses for rent. I was beaten in the upper floor of that house. There, they locked the door; one of them carried a bunch of bamboo sticks of about two fingers. Then they started to beat me for answers. I said that I did not join them [CIA]. ‘Who was your leader?’ I did not know how to answer their questions because I did not join them. I suspect that I was accused. Maybe Hakk [Meng’s co-worker from before their detention] accused me or they tried to seek hidden agents like CIA and so on. I suspect, but I am not sure.

In fact, Meng did not know who or what the CIA was, and he did not know why he was being accused. But because of the beatings, Meng eventually gave a false confession about how he joined the CIA, hoping that the Khmer Rouge soldiers would stop torturing him. Meng simply “confessed” to appease his torturers. But even after he wrote out his confession, the beatings did not stop. Meng said that they continued to hit him until he would faint.

At the end of the interview, Meng again questioned his supposed connections to the CIA. He even asked the interviewer to help him get a visa to visit the United

States so that he could find out more about this agency that caused him so much suffering. Meng passionately detailed,

I wonder why I was brought to Tuol Sleng...I was beaten up, electrically shocked, and whipped with a bunch of sticks. My back was wounded all over; I was in too much pain. I was accused of being a CIA, while I never joined in any CIA. I did not know who brought me into CIA; I have no ideas at all. It was so dark that I did not know anything. I am still wondering why I was accused of joining CIA. Sometimes after the prosecution, I want to see the US to see how so bad the US is that made the Khmer Rouge hate them so much. What does CIA benefit the world? Or it does not benefit the world at all, and that's why the Khmer Rouge hated them. Or was CIA the enemy of the Khmer Rouge? I am wondering and want to learn this point.

Still to this day, Meng does not know why the Khmer Rouge hated the CIA so much. He also does not know how or if even the CIA benefits the world because all he has experienced is torture from his supposed affiliation. Meng's impassioned questioning of the role of the CIA demonstrates how the United States government continued to impact civilians after it supported the coup to overthrow King Sihanouk. There were residual repercussions to American political involvement in Cambodia. Although one can chock up the questionings to paranoia on the part of the Khmer Rouge, a historical genealogy shows that some of the roots of the killings could be attributed to American interference.

Like Meng, Chum Mei, a fellow witness and survivor of Tuol Sleng, was also tortured and beaten until he gave a false confession. When the interviewer read excerpts of Mei's confession, Mei said, "No, it was not true at all. All was invented...I invented all in order to protect my life." Like Meng, Mei did not know what the CIA was, but he was still forced to confess that he was affiliated with it. He even included

random names of people he knew because he had suspected that someone accused him of being an enemy of the Khmer Rouge, so he wanted to do the same to others. This tactic helped save his life.

Mei's actions and grave financial and familial losses during this time, continue to haunt him, even three decades later. Mei often has nightmares in which he screams in his sleep and his current wife has to wake him up. He not only relives the beatings that he has experienced, but he also mourns the execution of his first wife and children and stresses about the state of his current children. Mei shared, "It takes me a long time before I can sleep because I think too much about my children who are unemployed, about not-enough living, and about the fact that we don't know how long we will live." It is very difficult for Mei to speak about his past, and sometimes he is afraid that former Khmer Rouge cadre might kill him for speaking up, but he does so nonetheless because he believes it is important for the younger generation to know what the Khmer Rouge did to the Cambodian people.

Both Meng and Mei hoped that the Khmer Rouge Tribunals would help the Cambodian people seek justice and recognition. They ultimately wanted the younger generations to know about the truth: their history and all that they have gone through. Both men felt that the law was on their side, and with their testimonies, the ECCC law would prevent any of these atrocities from happening in the future. These narratives that have been suppressed for almost forty years shows how certain truths are hidden by officially sanctioned ones. It is this construction, deconstruction, and

reconstruction of truth and history that makes the case of the Cambodian genocide so unique.

Recounting the War through the Stories of Civilians

Under the reign of the Khmer Rouge, just as prisoners of war suffered, so too did those who were forced into work camps. Below, I will provide the stories of Kiri, Samphy, and Chhourn to show how civilians were affected by forced evacuation, hard labor, and starvation. I interviewed Kiri, a Cambodian refugee who was born in 1935 and sought refuge in the United States in 1984, and Samphy, a Cambodian refugee who was born in 1939 and also sought refuge in the United States in 1984, together at a Cambodian Buddhist temple in the Bay Area. The two are friends and leaders of the temple, and both said that they were happy to answer any questions. I also interviewed Chhorn, a Cambodian refugee who was born in 1963 and sought refuge in the United States in 1982, in his home. We first discussed his experiences in Cambodia, and then we talked about his experiences moving and adjusting to the United States. All three interviewees from the first generation are considered to belong to the second wave of refugees who relocated to host countries. According to Um (1999:264), “In comparison with the smaller group of refugees who were resettled in 1975, the overwhelming majority of the later arrivals were less educated, more rural in origin, and generally less endowed with the skills, or the ‘human capital,’ that are generally deemed essential for successful resettlement.” Although all three interviewees had trouble coping with their relocations to the United States, they have since adopted the United States as their home.

During the interview, when Kiri said that most of the Khmer Rouge leaders and soldiers in the city and the work camps were very brutal, Samphy shared similar sentiments. As portrayed in the popular film “The Killing Fields” (1983), when Khmer Rouge soldiers entered Phnom Penh, everyone was given strict instructions to evacuate. Kiri said that during this time, he saw that when one couple refuse to leave, the Khmer Rouge started spraying bullets into the building, not caring about who they could wound or kill. There was no mercy. Those who evacuated the city were forced into the work camps. Many were also executed because of supposed “political ties” that were against the Khmer Rouge (e.g., ties to the Lon Nol regime and the United States). All of the property, jewelry, and land no longer belonged to the people, and anyone who tried to flee the work camps and return home was also killed.

After being forced to go to a work camp in the countryside, Kiri and Samphy both had to try their best to fit in and act deaf, mute, and dumb. The soldiers did not care whether people were young or old; they would kill them if they had probable cause (e.g., if someone was educated or if someone had any sort of accent or if the soldiers just felt like it).³⁰ According to Kiri, all of the babies at his camp were murdered. Choking back tears, Kiri said, “I have seen with my own eyes the babies

³⁰ According to the United Nations, “The regime saw the educated sectors of the population as part of the corrupt class that had made Cambodia a puppet of outside influences and had exploited the poor peasants, and thus as potential counterrevolutionaries. While many thousands perished in the communes alongside the rest of the population, others were targeted for execution. When identified through trickery or other means, teachers, high school students and professionals were often killed. Cambodians with foreign language proficiencies or ties to foreign countries were considered spies and also killed. Whatever cosmopolitanism had existed in Cambodia's cities disappeared over the next three years” (United Nations General Assembly Resolution).

that are useless to the Khmer Rouge. The soldiers would literally kill the baby by throwing a baby up, and you know they have the gun with the knife, and kill them by poking them. They did this one by one. Every baby.” The look in Kiri’s eyes conveyed to me that no one was safe. Samphy added,

You pretty much have to keep your eyes closed and pretend that you are dumb—you don't have any skills. You cannot show that you are smart in any way. They will kill you. But they trick you. They ask questions pretending to see if you have any skills or knowledge so they can use you. They ask people to contribute their skills to Angkar,³¹ but those people never return. They take you to a hole and shoot you.

Samphy had been a monk for nine years before the Killing Fields happened, so he was able to read and write fluently. When they tested to see if he could write, he used his left hand rather than his right even though he was right-handed. He needed to make sure that the soldiers did not know who he actually was because he probably would have gotten killed. Kiri, Samphy, and their wives all changed their names and identities to avoid any complications. Even children and relatives from the same family had to change their names because the soldiers would try to purposely separate families. By changing the name, the soldiers would not expect that the children were related to the parents; it one strategy to help families to stay together. If the parents were executed, soldiers would try to recruit the children who did not have any family and were illiterate and uneducated. Samphy recalled, “It doesn't matter how old a kid is, as long as they can carry a gun, that child can be three and hold a weapon, and they tell the kid to shoot at whoever comes their way.” In the documentary “The

³¹ Angkar is the symbolic head of the Khmer Rouge.

Killing Fields of Dr. Haing Ngor” (2015), a clip showed a former Khmer Rouge child soldier confessing that he had killed over 200 people, killing everyone he could.

For Kiri and Samphy, this time period was very tragic and filled with loss and grief. Samphy shared, “The Khmer Rouge said that the people would be able to return in three days to get their stuff, but we would not return for three years, eight months, and twenty days.” But in actuality, Samphy did not return to his home. He and his wife fled their work camp in Battambang to go to Khao-I-Dang, a Thai refugee camp. During this time, Samphy and his wife were able to flee with the others. However, the escape was quite dangerous because of remaining Khmer Rouge soldiers and land mines implanted (by both the Khmer Rouge and the Thai government) throughout the area. Samphy pounded his chest, raised his voice, and covered his face with his hands as he said, “During this time, we had no hope. We never thought we would survive because so many people died right away. Pretty much all hopes are lost.” But Samphy also said that he was not alone because all Cambodians suffered the same fate.

In discussing the politics related to the war, Kiri was adamant that the Vietnamese did not liberate the Cambodians. He said that it was the feuding between the Vietnamese government and the Khmer Rouge that started the conflicts in the first place and continued the ruthless suffering of civilians post-1979. Kiri said, “If you think about Cambodian history, Vietnam made Cambodians lose all hope and then they ‘rescued us.’” Kiri went on to critique the current political regime in Cambodia. He, however, did not want to risk his life by even mentioning the name

Hun Sen. Overall, Kiri wants to see justice and peace—see the Khmer Rouge leaders finally held accountable for their crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity. On the day to day, Kiri is able to be a religious leader in the Cambodian temple and live a relatively calm life, but he nonetheless continues to feel the pain. He shared, “I am always in pain. I am filled with pain, beyond pain. It cannot be described. I make choke one day. I want to see justice for all those who died, including my family.” Kiri also shared that he knew many people who would still cry when they would think about what happened.

Unlike Kiri and Samphy, Chhourn did not share such vocal sentiments regarding the need to seek justice against the Khmer Rouge. Unlike the older interviewees, Chhourn was in his early teens when the Khmer Rouge took power. He noted that shortly after he was born in 1963, Cambodia was already plagued by economic hardship and war. Chhourn shared, “But it was bad when I was born, you know. [long pause] When I was about nine years old, during Vietnam War, in my country, you cannot learn. There was always fighting. I would always hear guns and whatever. And after 1975, I stayed in the communist country.” Chhourn only had four years of schooling in his home province of Pursat. When Chhourn turned thirteen, the Khmer Rouge gained power and forced everyone into the work camps. He remembers, “When the communists controlled Cambodia, they sent a lot of people out of town. Some people want to stay in town, but communists killed them.” During this time, Chhourn was forced to farm with the other children, but the soldiers did not feed them well. When I asked if working on the farm was more difficult than working

at his current job as a donut baker, he responded, “Yea because they didn’t let us eat. I was hungry all the time. I almost got killed by hunger.” I am not sure if Chhourn witnessed any of the killings and executions that Kiri and Samphy saw, but he did acknowledge how much suffering that he and the others had endured.

In 1980, Chhourn reunited with his mother, who was at the same camp, and they fled to the Thai borders. Although the camps were a beacon of hope for the refugees who had experienced horrid conditions, the conditions at the refugee camps did not necessarily provide a sanctuary for those who made it. Cambodian refugees were classified as illegal immigrants and had to escape from Thai soldiers and pirates in addition to the Khmer Rouge who were interspersed throughout the country. Chhourn said, “[At Khao-I-Dang], we just had some rice and then some fish. We tried very hard to live. You know, we get a little water and just cook rice.” Also, the makeshift areas they slept in were made of poorly constructed bamboo. Again, there was never enough food and the cramped spaces resulted in poor sanitation. Those who tried to farm were frequently punished for breaking the rules of noncompliance because the camps were under the strict jurisdiction and the law of the Thai government and Thai police.

After a year in the Thai camp, Chhourn and his family applied as political refugees to the United States. Two of Chhourn’s sisters had husbands who were murdered by the Khmer Rouge because they were Khmer Republic soldiers who fought against the Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese. It was necessary for Chhourn’s family to prove these connections because of the strict standards that were set by the

Refugee Act of 1980, which required that persons who were seeking asylum or refuge prove that they were being “persecuted” (Park and Park 2005:38). Since Chhourn’s family would be indeed persecuted if they were to return home, they belonged to two categories of refugees: “targets,” which are characterized by the “specific perceptions and experiences of fear or force, past political association, and related motives” and “victims” which deal with “harsh material conditions of famine and other dismal economic conditions” (Rumbaut 1996:330).

Unlike the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, the Cambodians who survived the Khmer Rouge were not safe to return home for many years. The reign of the Khmer Rouge supposedly ended in January 1979, but the suffering did not end. The Thai refugee camps also represented a liminal space not a sanctuary. Not everyone was granted refuge in a host country, and it was often a very long and grueling process that entailed tedious questioning and evaluation. According to Caniff (2001:17), “The majority of Southeast Asian refugees who spent from one to five years in displacement camps were taught to abandon their language, cultural customs, and aspirations in order to ‘make it’ in the new society.” Only when refugees were able to prove that they were not communists, were indeed in danger of being persecuted, and were pliable enough to abandon their traditions were they allowed access to sponsors who would help them move to and adjust to a host country. Those who were unable to prove that they were at risk of persecution were ultimately forced to repatriate in 1991, per United Nations Resolution 718. According to Eastmond and Ojendal (1999:38), the United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees (UNHCR) assumed operational

responsibility for repatriating upwards of 370,000 refugees. This process, however, was very complex and required a vast yet lacking infrastructure. Those who were repatriated faced grave challenges because the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was not able to successfully secure peace and security. Also much of the farmlands were littered in unexploded ordnance left over from the infighting between the different political and military powers within Cambodia (McLellan 1993:15). Furthermore, many of the villages were razed and family members were either dead or separated (Easmond and Ojendal 1999). Housing, job security, health, and general safety were main challenges that faced UNTAC and the repatriated refugees.

So even though it has been almost forty years, the affects associated with the original trauma are still present. I argue that all of the older generation's stories are time-image episodes that bespeak the ability for trauma to extend the present into that of the past. Just as Meng's and Mei's anger and fears demonstrate how trauma has the ability to collectively haunt those who continue to reside in Cambodia, so too does Kiri's, Samphy's, and Chhourn's experiences reveal how trauma can transcend national and temporal boundaries. The narratives of Kiri, Samphy, and Chhourn demonstrate some of the types of atrocities and struggles that older generation Cambodian refugees have experienced. While Chhourn refuses to share the details of his past to his two children, Kiri and Samphy are open to speaking about what happened. Because Chhourn was a young teenager when the Khmer Rouge took power, he did not have the skills and education that Kiri and Samphy had. Unlike the

older people who had developed a relatively stable sense of self, the young people of the first generation suffered because they were denied educational opportunities and were subjected to harsh labor, starvation, and beatings at a very young age.

Trauma and family socialization literature (Danieli 2007; Kellerman 2001a, 2001b) have state that parents who have PTSD, depression, or other trauma related mental health disorders often have trouble communicating with and raising their children. This is one of the ways in which trauma can have lasting effects, even across generations. In the next section, I will provide excerpts from interview and survey data to show what children of the subsequent generations know about their family histories. Although some have very detailed and graphic stories, many have none to tell. This pattern of silence has been well documented in other groups, such as Holocaust survivors, that have also experienced social violence. I argue that both the stories and the silences make up the time-image episodes that temporarily capture what it feels like to be Cambodian—how someone is cognitively and/or affectively connected to his/her cultural history.

Recounting the War through the Stories of Subsequent Generations

If the first generation of prisoners and the Cambodian civilians who survived the regime demonstrate how the horrors and atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge were precipitated by American military involvement and how those experiences continue to produce lasting effects, then the next generation shows how the children of trauma survivors have come to understand and recognize their parents' pain. The accounts from the subsequent generation not only show what

happened to parents or family members of participants in this study, but also and more importantly, what children can recount from their family histories. How have they imagined and reimagined what happened to their families—especially in the presence of silences and grief? Some can share detailed stories of their parents’ experiences while others have a vague understanding of what parents went through. Because of language barriers and the pain associated with trauma, the first generation does not often have the discursive resources to discuss this with their children.

According to survey data, only 23.2% of the seventy Cambodian respondents in this study indicated that they were unsure about what happened in their family histories. In a free response field, however, many indicated that they did not have the exact details. Only a few had an actual first-hand account of the active reign of the Khmer Rouge from 1975 to 1979 because most were born in the United States or in the refugee camps. Even those who were born prior to or during the Khmer Rouge regime were too young to have had many formidable memories. Some gave quite vivid and detailed secondhand accounts while others pieced together fragmentary narratives or broken silences.

Unlike what literary approaches to trauma would call the psychic incorporation (“blockage, stasis, and even paralysis”) of happens when violent histories are suppressed or silenced, the writing and speaking of traumatic narratives and stories allow for introjection: “the autopoietic process in which loss is taken in, transformed, and translated into the emergence of something new” (Schwab 2010:56). The free flow of ideas and emotions allow for us to consider traumatic

stories not as pure trauma or stasis, as suggested by Gordon, but instead hauntings that call for action, including recognition of entrenched systems of inequality (e.g., war, militarism, and racism) and potentials for improving the quality of life of the oppressed. I argue that the psychic incorporation is never complete because even when the older generation does not purposely tell their children a story about their lives, the non-stories leak out at arbitrary (and sometimes even odd) moments.

The trauma experienced by the younger generation is quantitatively and qualitatively different from the trauma experienced by the older generation, but the source of their pain can be traced forwards and backwards in time and space: from the Khmer Rouge to the refugee camps, to their childhood socialization, to their current states, and finally to possible futures. This quality speaks to the time-image episode which expands the present into the past and the future. Rather than represent some unidimensional narrative, transgenerational trauma stories denote the movements of time and highlight the failures of words to capture the excesses of trauma. This phenomenon forces us to consider how constructions of subjecthood must consider affect and time—not as separate from traditionally established social positions but as that which helps produce those positions in the first place. This is why it is so important to consider a collective rather than individual-based approach to trauma.

Associating a singular event as the “traumatic trigger” may be insufficient and also risks essentializing and ontologizing one event as the source of trauma when there may be multiple encounters that create and reproduce trauma. It is these

multiple traumatic intersections that make up the insidious nature of hauntings—the surfacing and reproduction of inequalities among certain communities. From Ahmed’s theory of affective economy, I argue that bodies that are traumatized (or haunted) in one way or another become sticky in the affective economy of emotional exchange (Ahmed 2004a, 2004b). Certain affects, particularly negative ones like pain, shame, and guilt, which are intensified in times of war, attach to bodies as they move through time and space. Because of systematic suppression of traumatic violences and stories, and its subsequent psychic incorporation, the affective exchanges often fail to manifest as recognizable feelings or emotion, but nonetheless, the potential and intensities linger. For example, even though the parents of those in this study silence their pains and suffering associated with the war, certain affective intensities can be transferred to the younger generations. Recall the various models of transmission discussed in Chapter 2.

As time-image episodes, these subsequent generation accounts of the first generation’s experiences describe a temporary capture of the affective transference between the first and subsequent generations. According to Hirsch (2008:109), what the younger generation feels is often associated with what they can “remember” from the stories or “not memories” that are communicated through “flashes of imagery” and “broken refrains,” which are not just transmitted through spoken language but also the “language of the body.” Without privileging the initial wounding, I find that it is important to consider how traumas continue to manifest as hauntings that perpetuate and create certain silent and hidden inequalities, particularly associated

with lower educational access and mental health well-being in the Cambodian American communities (which I will address in detail in Chapter 5).

Silences

This section offers empirical evidence for how an “accumulation of [a] non-traumatic cascade of stressors, ordeals, or predicaments in space and time can create trauma like experience” (Kira 2001:78). This factitious trauma, or post-trauma secondary traumatization, is particularly prominent among second generation survivors of social violence. As identified by researchers of Holocaust related violence, this transgenerational transmission of trauma is mediated through a conspiracy of silences that is prominent among first generation survivors (Danieli 1998). This conspiracy has been known to be “detrimental to the survivors’ familial and socio-cultural reintegration [because it intensifies people’s] already profound sense of isolation, loneliness, and mistrust of society” (Danieli 1998:66). Furthermore, this process is worsened by structural violence and inequalities, which create other sources of multigenerational transmission of trauma (e.g., overwork and fatigue; stress and irritability; absent parents because of chronic illness, overwork, tension, and fatigue; lack of security of housing; and poverty). Such stressors are not only produced by the conspiracy but also reproduce the conspiracy. Kellerman (2001b) has found that much of the communication between parents and children is quite confusing because parents fail to share narratives that fully explain parents’ trauma and experiences. Much of the transmission process happens through “non-verbal, ambiguous and guilt-inducing communication” (Kellerman 2001b:263). These gaps in knowledge

show not only how parents do not have open communication, but also how children do not know how to ask their parents. In the section on mental health issues in Chapter 4, I further describe the ways in which tumultuous relationships may prohibit the channels of communication between children and parents.

Below, I give some example about how the younger generation is tasked to piece together the broken narratives, so that they can better understand their parents. For example, Mark, an undergraduate student in his early-twenties, shared how his parents would fail to tell any stories that made any chronological sense: “They tell me bits and pieces here and there. It comes up at random points. I mean it like jumps like all over the place.” Mark went on to share a story that his father told during Thanksgiving dinner one year. Mark said,

He was building a dam; he was in charge of a bunch of people. He was telling us about like how even though he really didn't want to be mean to people, he had to. And my dad is a really nice guy. If you meet him, he is one of the best people. And so, but back then in order to survive, he had to be on top of everything. And so, he [pause] basically had to be in charge of 300 people. And he didn't want to like—there was one guy that was super lazy and so he [pause] basically had to scare him and threaten his life. I don't want to get into details. But do you want me to go into details? So, I guess this one guy was super lazy and then my dad ended up like calling him out a few times. And nothing really happened. And so my dad ended up taking him out. [Uncomfortable laughter] This is my dad's personal story. I hope I don't screw anything up, haha. Um, so my dad ended up taking him out, basically, basically had him in the middle of the night. He made him dig his own grave. And then, at the end my dad didn't do anything. He said that this was his final warning. And after that, the guy wasn't lazy anymore. That's the basic gist of the story. I don't know if I got everything. We were at our uncle's house. Our uncle was having the whole Thanksgiving dinner thing. And so it came up during that. I don't really know how it segued into that. He just kept telling those stories about that.

Although Mark's father is not representative of the parents of most of my other research participants, it does show how children of former Khmer Rouge soldiers live among children of former Khmer Rouge prisoners and captives. Mark's uncomfortable laughter shows how he may have exhibited some guilt in knowing that his father was responsible for hurting and controlling people at the dam. Realizing what he was about to say, in the middle of retelling of the story, Mark tried to explain that his father was "one of the best people." It was very important for Mark to maintain that his father was "a really nice guy." He wanted to ensure that I did not perceive his father as one of those ruthless Khmer Rouge soldiers. It is through these rationalizations that Mark is able to come to terms with the little bits and pieces of information that he has gathered about who his parents were during the war.

Like Mark, Diana, a graduate student in her mid to late twenties, also described the trouble she had in trying to get her parents to share their experiences.

Diana tells me,

Sometimes, you just get little fragments, and it's hard to put things together because you can't really explain it well. You don't really know what's going on. And then you hear different things. And then, our conversations go off on a tangent and then we pick it up again next time. Sometimes they don't want to remember or go into detail about their experiences.

She acknowledges that her parents may be reticent in sharing what they have gone through because it could be very painful. Diana knows that her mother has gone through many traumatic experiences. Her mother doesn't want to talk about it too much because Diana said, it "makes her nervous to remember a past that she does not really want to remember." Her dad was a veteran during the Vietnam War and was

recruited to pursue an education in the United State prior to the war, so he did not experience the heart of the genocide that her mother experienced. Despite being confused more often than not about her family history, Diana tries her best to communicate with her parents. One time, when she and her parents were watching the Cambodian American documentary “New Year Baby,” Diana said that it was one of the first times that her mother actually wanted to share. But despite Diana’s mother’s wanting to share her numerous stories, Diana asserts, “My mom would tell a couple stories and then move on to something else.” That is why Diana has not been able to really understand the full extent of her parents’ experiences during the war.

While these fragments may come in the form of unfinished or illogical stories, they may also manifest as passing comments that are not meant to evoke sympathy or confusion but yet convey to the subsequent generations that their parents must have experienced grave hardships. For example, Vanna, an undergraduate student in her early twenties, shared, “When I can't finish my food, my mom would [say], ‘You know that would feed two people under Pol Pot.’ She doesn't say it maliciously; she was just stating a fact...little things like that throughout my childhood.” Her mother hinted at the starvation that she experienced as a way to compel Vanna to eat all her food, but without the full stories about her mother’s experience, Vanna had to put together fragmented information to try and reconstruct the times of Pol Pot that her mother was referring to.

Jane, a graduate student in her late twenties, also had similar experiences with her mother. One time, Jane overheard her mother talking to friends about certain

digestive problems. Her mother said, “It was probably because during the Khmer Rouge time, I was eating tree bark.” Jane told me that there were always “little things like that that would just be spit out of places.” Out of nowhere and unexpectedly, Jane would hear about the suffering that her mother experienced. And one time, when Jane was completing an oral history project for school, she had to interview her mother. When Jane asked her mother about her experiences in Cambodia, her mother said, “Everything wasn’t too bad. They didn’t kill a lot of people in my camp.” Her mother’s nonchalant tone and the content of her message caught Jane off guard. Jane responded, “They didn’t kill A LOT of people...like they killed people?” Jane could not understand why her mother was trying to convince her that the times were not that bad, but in hindsight, Jane knows that her mother was just trying to make sense of all of it.

When passing comments convey grave tragedies, it is often difficult for the subsequent generations to process because they have never learned about the Khmer Rouge genocide and autogenocide at school and do not have a full understanding of their parents’ family history. Take Seatha for example. Seatha is an undergraduate student in her early twenties. When she and her father were hiking through a lush green field near her school, he mentioned that something big must have died for the land to be so green and fertile. To Seatha, this comment was so jarring. Even though her father rarely talked about the genocide, minor comments like this created a crack in time that opened up the traumas of the past to swerve into the future, creating a time-image episode. But just as quick as the crack opened, it also closed. Time had the

ability to move without being tethered to a specific subject. While the crack in time exposes the latent articulations of trauma, there was no discursive action that happened between Seatha and her father. There was a potential for her to investigate, but because of the quick and passing nature of the statement, Seatha was not able to clearly articulate her thoughts or questions. It was understood that death is always so every present in her family. Youth get bits and pieces of their families traumatic history—some make it their mission to find out more, others just recognize that their histories are complex, but leave it be. All of my interviewees, however, recognize that there are members of their family, especially aunts and uncles that existed at one point but no one talks about anymore. Death is recognized as ever present.

Because of these gaps and fragments, the subsequent generations have had to piece together the stories to create a more or less logical time-image episode—a story that expands and compresses history and memory to produce an imaginary, something that temporarily articulates a family history. And these episodes are sometime dismantled and reconstructed when new pieces of information arise. For example, Leia, an undergraduate student in her early twenties, told me how she used to think that her oldest “brother” was her half brother. But she could not really explain why she thought that. Because she never felt comfortable enough to ask her parents, she creatively filled that void of information with what she imagined to be true. Leia explained, “My parents and I had never really talked about the past or what they went through.” Eventually, she confirmed that her brother was indeed her full

brother. The stories of that generation became incorporated into Leia's personal stories until they were rearticulated when new pertinent information arose.

Unlike Leia who was afraid to ask her parents about their pasts, Samboun, a college graduate in her late twenties, always tried her best to get her parents to tell her about their experiences. Samboun realized, however, that her parents did not want to talk about it because it was a very painful time for both of them. Samboun recalled what she could remember about her distant family:

My grandma had ten kids. Everyone split and after the war, half of them died, along with many other family members. So I don't really know about our family tree—family members and mom's brothers and sisters who passed away. My mom never really talks about her brother who passed away. My father doesn't really talk about his siblings. He doesn't talk much. So we really don't know much about family.

Samboun even has a “brother” who is actually her cousin. This is actually why Leia thought that her brother was not actually her brother. It was really common at the time for siblings to raise their nieces and nephews if their brothers or sisters died. As a young child during the time of the war, Samboun's brother/cousin was forced into a work camp where he was responsible for tending the buffaloes. However, if the buffaloes ever got injured, he and the other children would be severely beaten. Some even died. Samboun said that her brother also never liked talking about the war: “He doesn't really say anything about the war. He doesn't want to remember those bad memories. I know he can remember a lot. We ask him, but he includes no descriptive details of what happened or how he feels.” This conspiracy of silence can be so frustrating. More than anything else, I think that Samboun wants to know more about

the people in her family. Since she did not grow up with much family around, it was a source of inquiry and pain that was never adequately addressed.

Like Samboun who actively asks the older generation about what happened, Sok, an undergraduate student in his early twenties, knew that he also needed to actively seek out information from his parents if he was to learn anything about the genocide and what his parents experienced. Although Sok did not know how his family was affected by the Khmer Rouge when he was younger, he did realize that he did not have much extended family. This fact was very difficult for him to reconcile because his parents never willingly shared their migration histories with him. Sok shared,

They would never talk about it so much. I would just ask because I didn't know who my aunts and uncles were. One aunt on mom's side, her older sister, is in Canada with my grandmother on her side. The rest of my family is in Cambodia or Vietnam, so when I was growing up as a kid, people would talk about their cousins and grandmas and grandpas. I was just like, I don't know mine. I would just ask my parents. They would bring it up like, 'Oh we have this person here.' At the same time, they would say, 'I did have one, but she died.' I didn't really understand the gravity of it until much later. I was just like, 'Oh, okay.' Then I left them alone. I didn't really understand the concept of death and what it entails in terms of emotions it brings to people, what ideas or meanings it brings up. So for me, it was just a passing, 'Oh, they died so I didn't have a chance to meet them.'

Growing up without aunts, uncles, and grandparents, Sok was always unsure if they were either in another country or not alive. The nonchalant nature of his parents' identification of deceased family members showed that his parents expressed flat affect and withdrawal from the emotions related to death. So when Sok was younger, he did not have the typical emotions that people would have when they find out that

so many people in their families had been killed. Death merely became a passing reality. As Khmer Krom, indigenous Khmer who lived in or near South Vietnam, Sok's family were systematically persecuted by the Khmer Rouge. His family was forcibly separated through relocation and execution. I argue that the feelings attached to his disappointment about never being able to meet his family members is a form of transgenerational trauma. The flat affect and loss that he feels speaks to the affective nature of trauma.

Like Sok, Alyssa, an undergraduate student in her late teens, recognized that she always had to ask their parents about what happened if she wanted to know. As a child, however, she did not know what specific questions to ask her parents. She knew that something was different about her family, but she was not able to pinpoint it. As you can see, trauma traces need not be transmitted via coherent narratives. Sometimes, it is the absence of communication that allows for trauma to be expressed and identified. Alyssa was only able to find the right questions to ask when she pieced together other fragmented stories. According to Alyssa, "Stories would not have come up if I had not asked, 'Oh wait, how did you escape and not die? Why did your brothers not make it?'" But nonetheless, Alyssa's parents, like many of my other interviewees' parents, like to only focus on the less tragic stories. Alyssa said that her parents "don't really talk about the people who didn't make it."

The ability for youth to ask questions does not come naturally. For some, college becomes a place where children of Cambodian refugees can begin to engage with their histories and pasts. College admissions essays frequently ask students to

write about the world they come from or their background. Without much information, many students are tasked to ask their parents about their experiences. Having eased into these discussions, some of my interviewees find that it becomes easier to speak to their parents. Vanna, for example, came up with the following strategy: start with very specific questions that did not directly relate to the war: “What did you learn in high school when you were in Cambodia? Were you able to finish high school?” Eventually, these random questions would lead into a fuller story. Having done this for several years, she has become more accustomed to asking her parents after meal time. Vanna shared, “I would literally would ask them after every breakfast. After a two-hour conversation, Vanna’s dad told her, “I want to go take a nap.” The subsequent generation has a great thirst for knowledge, but it could be very exhausting for the parents. This, however, is still a step closer to piecing together the fragments. Perhaps the older generation was so silent because they were just waiting for the younger generation to ask the right questions.

When I interviewed Kiri and Samphy, they said that the older generation purposely does not convey the full truth to the younger generation because they want the youth to ask them what happened. Perhaps this is working for people like Sok, Alyssa, and Vanna who are compelled to ask their parents detailed questions, but for the majority of the younger generation that are not particularly knowledgeable about the war, these gaps and silences can reproduce more silences and confusion. Kiri wants to educate the younger generation, so they can understand the older

generation, but he said that the kids were too busy with their friends to care about their family. He shared,

The older people don't provide much background because they don't want to force it in. If you force it, the kids will not want to understand. So we give a little information at a time. If we tell them the whole thing, they are just going to say that it's a story. But if you give them a little information, it will make them more curious. They will want to know more. I hope that it will work, but I don't know if it is working.

Although Kiri rationalizes the prevalence of silences within the community, he does acknowledge that their strategies for educating the younger generation is not efficacious. The contradictions actually reproduce many of the silences and negativity between the older and younger generations. I believe there may be a grave misunderstanding on both ends. Kiri has also observed, "The kids choose not to want to understand. The kids think that it's gibberish or a lie. You cannot force them to understand. The new generation doesn't want to know." But for many of the people from the younger generation whom I have spoken to, it is often times very difficult to speak to parents because of negative parent-child relationships. I will discuss more about parent-child relationships in Chapter 4.

Also, it is difficult because some of the older generation do not want to open up and speak about the past because they do not want to be reminded of what happened. This sentiment is common even in a transnational context. When I talked to Sann, a Cambodian scholar and journalist, he said that the second generation living in the United States was actually more knowledgeable than those living in Cambodia. Sann explained that in Cambodia, "People want to forget. The younger

generation, they don't know. They don't know what happened." Like Kiri and Samphy, Sann believed that many Khmer children "spend too much time with their peers." However, this was not the only factor that led to the children's not knowing about the war. In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge genocide was systematically erased from the history curriculum. Only in 2009 did the Ministry of Education put the 1975-1979 time period back in the history books (De Launey 2009). From Sann's point of view, the new curriculum was a great idea; he said, "Instead of having the family talk about their story, there is now a formal document that is accessible." Sann's reasoning for why it is important to include the Khmer Rouge atrocities in the textbooks shows how he is personally invested in perpetuating the "conspiracy of silence." Instead of encouraging parents to talk about the war, he suggested that all children should just read the textbook. According to Sann, because the older generation wants to forget, they should not talk about what happened. While Sann praises Cambodian Americans for knowing more about the war, he does not consider how the Cambodian genocide and the United States bombing of Cambodia is often left out of American history books too.

From the survey data in this study, approximately 78% of respondents find that it is important for Cambodian Americans to learn about their family histories. Also, 99% and 98% are saddened and angered, respectively, by what happened during the Khmer Rouge. Contrary to what Kiri and Sann believe, the younger generation is actually quite eager to learn about their pasts. In the section below, I

compile some of the stories in which youth have either solicited or heard from parents.

Transmitting the Silences

From my survey questionnaire, I have found that mothers are more likely to be eager to share their experiences with their children than fathers: 72% of mothers are likely to eagerly share while only 59% of fathers are likely to do so.

Table 3.1 Transmission of Family History and Parents’ Eagerness to Share

	Mother’s Eagerness to Share	Fathers’ Eagerness to Share
Knowledge about Family History	significant moderate positive effect	no significant effect
χ^2	14.576**	0.305
τ_b	0.454***	0.040
		*p<.05 **p<.01 ***P<.001

Chi-squares and tau-b tests of significance (see Table 3.1) reveal that respondents’ mother’s eagerness to share her migration history has a significantly moderate positive effect on respondents’ knowledge about family’s migration history, but respondents’ father’s eagerness to share his migration history has no significant effect on respondents’ knowledge about family’s migration history.

Therefore, trauma is more likely to be transmitted discursively through the mother. Survey data also reveal that there is a significant difference between male and female respondents and whether they have a good relationship with their mothers and

fathers ($\chi^2=6.57^*$). Twenty female respondents stated that they have a good relationship with their fathers and with their mothers (13 stated that they did not have a good relationship with their father and with their mothers). But 29 male respondents stated that they had a good relationship with their mother while only 22 stated that they had a good relationship with their father (6 did not have good relationships with their mothers and 13 did not have good relationships with their fathers). I also found a significant relationship between socioeconomic status and respondents' relationships with their fathers (Spearman's $\rho=-0.3$, $p<.05$). This means that those who tended to be wealthier had better relationships with their fathers, or those who tended to be less wealthy had a more trouble relationship with their fathers. There were no such findings in regards to respondents and their mothers. Overall, respondents had better relationships with their mothers.

Interview data supports these quantitative finding because most interviewees have developed closer relationships with their mothers and are therefore more likely to have had conversations with mothers about their family history. In a joint interview with Chenda and her boyfriend Ken, both of whom are undergraduates in their early twenties, Ken said that his parents either did not talk about the war or only talked about the "lighter side." Ken said, "My dad doesn't want to be a part of it, but he corrects my mom all the time. You know, it hurts." Ken's father's silence is not non-communication but instead an affective display of his trauma. It is something that Ken may or may not actively recognize, but the way that Ken speaks about his parents' silences and his own relationship to the war show that these silences generate

an affective response within him that helps form his position as a second generation refugee. Chenda has had similar experiences. She said, “My mom thinks it’s important for us to know what she’s been through. Appreciate the fact that she’s here. But my dad doesn’t really talk about it much. I guess it hurts to bring up the past.” And when her father does talk about the tough times, she recognizes how uncomfortable it makes him. Also, when her mother talks about the things she went through, her father would go and sit quietly in the corner, away from the conversation but within earshot. Without even having to speak, Chenda’s father’s physical discomfort signaled to Chenda that he could not bear talking about his past. As such, the verbal transmission of the trauma stories came from Chenda’s mother.

In terms of the maternal transmission of trauma, Melanie, a recent college graduate in her mid-twenties, shared how open her mother was in terms of what she told Melanie and her siblings. Melanie shares, “She wanted us to know what she had experienced.” While tucking the children away in bed, Melanie’s mother would take the opportunity to share how she dodged death and escaped with her family from Cambodia to Thailand. Consistent with the fragmentary nature of trauma narratives, however, Melanie notes, “She would tell us variations of it. It was hard to grapple with everything because it was always through snippets or vignettes.” Melanie’s father, however, “was never one to tell stories.” That history and his experiences with striving to survive were very private at him.

Like Ken, Chenda, and Melanie who have mothers who are eager to tell them about their experiences, Chann, an undergraduate in his mid-twenties, said that

he also learned about the war from his mother—but in Chann’s case, it was not through direct conversation. Chann mostly overheard his mother talking to his other family members (i.e., brother, sister, and aunts) when he was very young. They did not really know that he was eavesdropping on their conversations, but they did not try to hide it either. Chann shared, “I was seven or eight when I heard the stories, but I still remember them. My mom and two aunts would get together, and I was just around. And I would hear them talk about the war.” For Chann the stories seemed so vivid, but when trying to retell them, he had a difficult time putting them into a coherent narrative. Chann warned, “This is fragmented for me so I am going to try to put it all back together.” And as Chann was telling me these stories about his family, especially about his youngest uncle who passed away, he apologized, “Sorry, I’m getting emotional. It is strange.” Apparently, Chann had never really felt so connected to his family history before. He knew how hard the war was for his mother, but he had never really expressed such emotions when sharing his family’s stories. The process of *re-imagining* the episodes of war can often elicit affective responses by the younger generation. Even though they may have heard or told the story over and over, there are points in which the feelings and sensations associated with being a second generation survivor can become overwhelming. The episode or the story cannot contain the excess, which leaks and produces affective intensity.

In terms of the maternal transmission of trauma, I find that mothers are more likely than fathers to be vocal about their experiences. Interviewees have said that because of they usually have closer and more emotional connections with the

mothers, this process of sharing is more natural. Gendered expectations often dictate the manner in which the older generation of Cambodian men interact with their children, meaning that they have to be stoic and in control. However, in terms of non-verbal or non-narrative transmission of trauma, I find that both mothers' and fathers' actions and interactions create the potential for trauma to be transmitted to the subsequent generations. Interviewees and respondents, however, have had a more difficult time pinpointing how they know about their history if they do not ever hear those stories. So while my statistical analysis shows that there is a significant difference between maternal and paternal transmission, these processes privilege verbal communication.

While there is research on gender (i.e., childrearing, and mother-daughter and mother-son relationships) and transgenerational trauma for several generations of Jewish Holocaust survivors (see Kellermann 2001; Halik, Rosenthal, and Pattison 1990; Vogel 1994), most studies do not directly consider whether the trauma is more likely to be transmitted via the mother or the father. Vogel (1994), however, did find that mother-daughter relationships that are very closely bonded may lead to a girl's projective identification of her mother's experiences. As a result, girls become more "vulnerable" to the transmission process. However, there were no clear conclusions that this process happens only in mother-daughter relationships. This gendered interaction between mothers and daughters, mothers and sons, fathers and daughters, and fathers and sons is not natural or self-evident. Instead, gender roles and expectations affect the subject positions that people can identify with and enact.

Hardt (1996:96) argues that emotional labor is “immaterial, even if it is corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible: a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passions—even a sense of connectedness or community.” Through my research, I find that the sense of connectedness or community often stems from the time-image episodes that are able to connect the younger generations to the experiences and affects of the older generation. In regards to other fields such as labor, environment, and so on, however, the role of the nurturer is usually ascribed to women-gendered characters. Hochschild and Machung (2003:186) assert, “...women who normally care for the young, the old, and the sick in their own poor countries move to care for the young, the old, and the sick in rich countries, whether as maids and nannies or as daycare and nursing-home aides.” Even though Hochschild and Machung are talking about the “care drain” (akin to “brain drain”) that happens when there is demand for gendered, classed, and radicalized care/emotional labor, this is relevant to our discussion about the maternal transmission of trauma. In order to understand the family conditions under the current stage of late-capitalism, we must trace how material and gendered conditions have affected family structures in a way that has shaped the affects that are to be exchanged between certain types of bodies. For example, mothers share their experiences with their children while fathers are too busy worrying about taking care of the family, financially or otherwise.

However, in the case of Cambodian families, in which both the father and the mother most often have very visceral responses to their past trauma, the emotion

work cannot be fully contained by one person or another. My data, however, do show that mothers are more able to do the “emotion work” that is required when storytelling. For Hochschild and Machung (2003:95), “To ‘work on’ an emotion or feeling is the same as ‘to manage’ an emotion or to do ‘deep acting.’ Note that ‘emotion work’ refers to the effort—the act of trying—and not to the outcome, which may or may not be successful.” By managing the emotions or feelings that are related to their trauma, mothers, more so than fathers, attempt to more or less coherently convey their pains to their children. Affectively, however, there is always escape or excess—that which cannot be contained or managed. Cambodian mothers and fathers “do difference” by creating distinctions in their forms of communication (West and Zimmerman 2009). That process of “doing that difference,” however, is never exact, precise, or natural. As asserted by West and Fenstermaker (1994:33), the labels we assign to certain dynamics (based on race, class, and gender) do “not necessarily capture their complex quality.” As such, the subject or identity position of a Cambodian person is always performed and accomplished. While it may seem that mothers are more likely to speak to their children about their losses, there are also some fathers who are vocal and vice versa. Furthermore, the gendered differentiation of such speech acts are complicated by the prevalence of mental health struggles within the Cambodian community.

The Time-Image Stories: Making Sense of and Feeling the Silences

According to studies by Carlson and Rosser-Hogan (1994), Hinton et. al (2009), Lee et al. (2009), the RAND Corporation (2001), Sack et al. (1999), and Um

(2013), PTSD and other mental health disorders were not only widespread among Cambodian refugees during the initial years of relocation but also remained prominent even almost thirty years since the large waves of refugees resettled in host countries such as the United States and Canada. These conditions have made it difficult for people in the first generation to convey their pains and experiences to the subsequent generations, who are often perplexed by their parents' silences and mental health conditions. Although my research does not focus primarily on the first generation, I have so far presented several first-hand accounts of the war from prisoners and civilians. These stories give context to the secondhand accounts that were given by second generation survivors.

As a way to identify the number of people who have parents or families members that have experienced war trauma, especially as related to the Americans of Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge, I distributed a survey with questions that were derived from the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ) (see Mollica et al. 2004). As a measurement tool, the HTQ is effective (valid, reliable, and culturally sensitive) in identifying and testing for PTSD and other psychopathologies, as specified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, in Southeast Asians and other non-Western populations (see Mollica et al. (1997)). But because the HTQ focuses on first-hand experiences and PTSD and depression symptoms, it is inadequate for testing transgenerational trauma. However, the tool provided a good starting point to check whether or not children knew what types of traumatic experiences that parents had and what symptoms parents displayed.

But despite the fact that the survey was distributed at a Cambodian-centered event, about a quarter of the respondents were unsure about their families' pasts. But this also means that over three-quarters of the respondents at least knew some family background or history. These data demonstrate how a conspiracy of silence still proliferates. These quantitative findings were validated by a free response question modified from Motta et al.'s (2001) Secondary Trauma Scale that asked respondents to recount the "most memorable, hurtful, or terrifying event that your family member(s) has/have told you." The extent of the responses ranged from general and vague (e.g., "My mother only mentions her past briefly.") to very detailed (e.g., "My dad was tied to a tree to be killed the next morning but a soldier he knew let him loose. He also witnessed his best friend's head get blown off."). Silences and failed narratives (or off-hand comments) have the potential to circulate an affect of trauma among the younger generations, without the older generation even knowing that they are doing so.

The survey data show that a majority of the respondents' parents or family members were indeed affected by the Khmer Rouge genocide in one way or another. This means that a majority of the respondents had family that came during the second wave of migration. The first wave of refugees were able to escape Cambodia relatively unscathed because they fled prior to or shortly after the Khmer Rouge took power. Table 3.2 shows that over 60% of respondents indicated that their parents experienced ill health without access to medical care, lack of shelter, forced evacuation under dangerous situations, forced hiding, forced labor, and a lack of food

or water. In the next few sections, I offer some excerpts from the free response items and interviews to provide details about the types of suffering that family members experienced and the stories that the second generation have heard and can recount.

Table 3.2. Percentage of self-identified Cambodians whose parents or family members have experienced the following traumatic events

Event	Percent
Lack of food or water	81.2%
Forced labor	71%
Forced to hide	69.6%
Forced evacuation under dangerous situations	66.7%
Lack of shelter	62.3%
Ill health without access to medical care	60.9%
Confiscation or destruction of personal property	59.4%
Combat situation	49.3%
Beatings	43.5%
Torture	36.2%
Extortion or robbery	31.9%
Forced isolation	29%
Improper burial of bodies	26.1%
Serious injury from land mines or other combat situations	23.2%
Brainwashing	14.5%
Rape	2.9%

Lack of Food or Water

81.2% of respondents said that they knew that their parents or family members did not have access to food or water. Some noted that family members, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and parents' children, died from starvation and

malnutrition. For example, Respondent 56 wrote, “My mom was so tired from labor camp and ill-fed, so she couldn’t breastfeed her 13-month-old-son, who passed away. She was so tired that she wrapped her son up and placed him on a tree branch hanging in a scarf.” So not only was Respondent 56’s mother malnourished, but because of her condition, she was unable to feed her first child. The child was not given a proper burial because for one, it was not allowed and two, her mother was too exhausted to even attempt to do so. In terms of knowing that some siblings did not survive, my interviewee Chanvatey, an undergraduate student in his early twenties, also shared that his older brother passed away during the Khmer Rouge era. Even though Chanvatey never met his brother, he feels connected to him. He says, “When my mom was pregnant with me, she had dreams about him. And uh, a thing about dreams when you're pregnant. It kinda means that the kid you're having is a reincarnation of him.” Often these deaths that preceded the birth of the respondent or interviewee function as a source of transgenerational trauma in which the children feel a burden of having to replace the children that were lost during the war (Schwab 2011:120).

In addition to the deaths of siblings from lack of food and clean water, the deaths of grandparents and near deaths of parents were also particularly traumatizing. Respondent 51 wrote, “My mom’s parents died of starvation in front of her eyes.” That pithy statement was all that was provided. Others described how their parents were forcefully beaten when they were caught for stealing or cooking food. Respondent 22 described how her father was so hungry and desperate that he decided

to steal food from the soldiers. When he was caught, he was badly beaten. She wrote, “He wasn’t sure if he was going to survive as they beat him mercilessly.” Others said that their parents tried to find food nearby when the guards were not watching. However, many got ill from doing so because they were not able to properly cook the food or identify edible foods from toxic ones.

When I spoke to Samboun about the war, she said that her father rarely opened up, but one time, he did tell them about the types of intensive labor and medical infirmary he was subjected to. Samboun recalled,

My father told me about a time when he was starving. Really starved. He would sneak out to dig for roots, plant roots, so they can boil it and eat it. And he said that a lot of people did that. Some people get caught and they are killed right away. They sometimes talk about the living situation during the war. They reflect a little, but not too much in detail: how they can easily get infected because they do intensive labor. And there is no medication or anything like that. At sometime, he almost died because of high fever due to malaria and infection.

What was particularly painful was that Samboun's mother had also told her that at the camps, she had to dig holes and canals to bury all of the people that had starved or were killed. These recounts of the war are both tragic and eye-opening. In the glimpses Samboun can see from her parents’ past, she knows that her family has endured tremendous losses and pains. However, to this day, she does not know many of the details about the sources of their family’s suffering.

Furthermore, by hearing these tragic stories, the young generations begin that see the precarious nature of life. The fact that some parents survived was purely up to chance or fate. For Alyssa, it was actually the act of stealing food that saved her father

from imminent death. Alyssa said that when she asked her father how he survived the Khmer Rouge, he told her a story about how he was caught stealing rice to help a sick friend. Alyssa explained,

My father has a story about when he was in the concentration camp. A friend of his was sick, and one of the remedies that would cure any sickness that they grew up with, he would boil rice water and get that cloudy rice water, it would cleanse or something, but there wasn't rice, obviously. And so he snuck out one night to steal a handful of rice. I believe there was like a passing guard carrying a knife and he was caught. So they quarantined him and kept him in isolation for like questioning and whatever. So while that questioning was going on, the little group he was in had been taken to be executed. If he hadn't stolen that rice for his friend, he wouldn't have gotten caught, and he wouldn't have been detained, and he wouldn't have survived. It was just insane. I don't know. [chuckles] He is the luckiest person alive. There were a series of ridiculous events, completely unrelated. What are the chances that the fact that we was away?

In several of these stories, it seems that parents often survived solely by chance or luck. Without food, water, or medical supplies, Alyssa's father only went to steal to help heal his friend. However, had he not done so, he would not have been separated from the others in his group who were executed. It was by pure chance that he survived. It is this precariousness that makes the subsequent generation both grateful and confused about their existence. There is always that "What could have happened?" feeling that hovers. The fear of almost having lost a parent or having never known a grandparent can generate a loss that cannot be fully reconciled in the subsequent generations.

Forced labor

Although there were not many detailed accounts of the hard labor that family members endured, 71% of respondents identified that their family were forced to

evacuate and go to work camps. For example, Respondent 9 wrote, “My mom went through forced labor and every night feared that her life would be taken.” And Respondent 5 detailed, “My family was forced to build railroad tracks and were separated from other family. There were extremely long hours of work with meager food.” And although Respondent 51 did not overtly talk about the work camps, he did describe how his father was forced to return to the work camps when his attempts to escape to the Thai refugee camps failed: “Running through jungles at night. Sleeping with dead bodies because that told him the land mines had already blown up. Then being turned away at the border and going back into a forced labor camp. It took three attempts for my dad to escape Cambodia to a refugee camp.” The work camps provided the source and a backdrop to the other types of suffering that the respondents’ parents experienced. The hard labor was worsened by the fact that the captives were not well fed and were brutally beaten—sometimes for no reason at all.

Beatings

43.5% of respondents noted that their family members experienced brutal beatings. In the free response field, many mentioned how their parents have discussed how they once witnessed sometimes lethal beatings of family members and other captives, especially babies who were killed by being thrown against a tree. Some of these accounts were very vivid and gruesome. Take Respondent 66’s account of her grandmother’s experience. She wrote,

One of the most painful memories was when my grandma told me that during the Khmer Rouge era, she and her sister-in-law were kidnapped and dragged by their hair to a field. Once there, she was questioned several times and beat

constantly for not ‘telling the truth.’ She didn’t know what the ‘truth’ was and wasn’t sure what exactly they wanted from her. They continued to beat her and her sister-in-law and she begged them, ‘Whatever you do, please don’t take my virginity!’ They continued to beat her and her sister-in-law until she passed out.

Because the Khmer Rouge soldiers were known for raping and killing young women, Respondent 66’s grandmother was very lucky that she survived the brutal attack.

Similar to the torture that the prisoners experienced, regular civilians were also “questioned” about their ties and familiarity to Khmer Rouge enemies, particularly the United States and the former Khmer Republic. Another respondent described how when his father was working the “plantation/fields,” one of the “prospectors came up and whipped him in the head and almost cracked it open.” This shows that the soldiers did not even provide reasons as to why the peasants/captives were to be beaten and tortured.

Family Separations and Deaths

Either out of necessity or by chance, many family members were separated from their loved ones. Some were able to reunite sometime during the war or at the refugee camps while many others either found out that their family had been executed or had died from starvation or were still unsure about their whereabouts. Respondent 9 described the harrowing experiences that his mother had while his father was separated from the family. As a member of the Cambodian air force, Respondent 9’s father was an enemy of the Khmer Rouge. Since his life was in grave danger, he was not able to return to his family when the war started. Respondent 9’s parents were separated for seven years. During this time, five out of six of Respondent 9’s aunts

and uncles died, his mother's first born daughter passed away from starvation, and his grandmother died during the escape to the Thai border. Respondent 9's family experienced several great losses. In another case, Respondent 3's family was separated when the Khmer Rouge ambushed his family. He wrote,

My father wounded his left leg. When he returned to the site, he found many people were killed by bullets and some people have their throats cut. I was only five or six at the time, and I remembered fleeing into the jungle where my family got separated and did not reunite until the end of the war. My father and I met my mother and sister in the middle of a dark jungle that night.

Respondent 3's immediate family was reunited that night, but what was left of his extended family did not reunite until the end of the war.

These forced separations often led to deaths within the family. Many respondents noted that their parents would discuss how they lost siblings, parents, grandparents, and young children. For example, Respondent 67 shared, "During the evacuations, my grandparents loss two of their sons. One of the sons died in my grandmother's arms, and she didn't want to stop carrying him while running away." Respondent 53 wrote, "My dad has mentioned about an uncle that would have been here with us if it wasn't for the Khmer Rouge. My uncle, my dad's oldest brother, was an educator, a teacher, and highly intelligent. [sic] My dad briefly told me that the communist rebels kidnapped his brother and murdered him in the fields." Respondent 39 added, "My dad told me that he watched all his siblings and parents pass away. He was left all alone for a long time before he was taken in by his cousin's family." And when Respondent 47's mother lost her brothers, she had to raise two of her nieces as her own children. Respondent 47's grandmother and first sibling also died from

starvation while at the work camps. There are many more of these types of accounts. Death was just so prevalent among the group of respondents.

What made matters worse for families was that many were unable to give proper burials for their loved ones. Although only 26.1% identified that their family members had to do so, their stories are very powerful and sad. For example, Respondent 50 described how her father was running away from the Khmer Rouge with his mother, but his mother did not survive the journey: “My father had to bury her in the middle of nowhere, leaving a marker to find her corpse when he could return. Unfortunately, the marker was covered over by the nearby forest.” Respondent 21’s parents have also been very distraught because they were also unable to properly bury their first-born child who was four years old and died in the mountains. In another account, Respondent 46 shared that whenever her mother returns to Cambodia, she tries to find the remains of her family’s bodies but is unable to do so: “My mother and her family were forced out of their home by soldiers. They were then separated. Her parents were taken to the jungle and killed somewhere. Her sister and her sister’s family were also taken somewhere and killed. My mom escaped alone.”

Even when families survived the work camps and were able to finally escape towards the Thai border so that they could seek refuge from the war between the Vietnamese and the Khmer Rouge, danger still loomed. Escaping through the forest in inclement conditions (heavy rain and freezing temperatures), Chann’s family “would try to keep warm by sleeping against each other. And sometimes they would

wake up and find the other person dead. And that was really hard. They would find corpses along the way.” It made matters worse that Khmer Rouge guerrillas had poisoned the wells and dead bodies had sullied the water sources along the way. People often died from drinking the water. This is how one of Chann’s great-grandmothers passed away. The overwhelming loss of family, of their livelihoods, and of their humanity resulted in great pains for the first generation.

For example, Sophie, a college graduate in her early thirties, thinks that her mother kept having so many children because her mother needed to have the “feeling of being needed.” Sophie’s mother originally came from a very large family—a family of twelve. But there were less than a handful of people from her family who survived. This was also true for her father’s side, which originally consisted of nine siblings. Sophie said, “She loves being depended on. I think it comes from maybe the trauma from the war. I am still trying to figure out what makes her click or how or why she is the way she is.” These deaths were very difficult for Sophie and her family:

I really thought that we were the only family left. It was just my mom and my dad. And just us. I can see why my mom wanted to make more family. I think my aunts and uncles just passed away in the war. I'm not sure exactly what happened. All I know is that, I know that other people had grandmas and grandpas, and I didn't have grandmas and grandpas...I know that that it affected who they were as parents to not have their own parents with them. You know, the culture is very extended. They just didn't have that extended family. I always kind of wondered how it felt to have a grandma and a grandpa of your own. And I felt like there was always a missing link to the history behind it. They would hardly ever bring them up.

When Sophie’s parents did share stories about her grandparents, or grandmother in particular, Sophie’s mom would use quite poetic forms of magical realism. Magical

realism is the “matter-of-fact inclusion of fantastic or mythical elements into seemingly realistic fiction.” For Sophie, she knew that some of these stories could not be reality, but they were nonetheless very telling of what happened and how her family and her culture conveyed death:

[My mom] said that, that my grandma had really, really long hair. And um long jet black hair. And this one day, she had wrapped her hair around her neck and a wind came and blew and she died. But I think that means she killed herself. This story came up when I was a little kid. It just kind of made me think. Like wow, the way it is described. I just think that it's like a fairy tale. It's very poetic. And also sad because I know that it probably affected my mom a lot.

But because Sophie’s mother does not really give her the full accounts of what happened, Sophie is unsure whether her grandmother had committed suicide before, during, or after the war. These mysteries that often shroud what happened in the past. Like the feelings associated with having deceased siblings, the feelings of never having had grandparents are also a source of transgenerational trauma.

Although this study and these secondhand accounts cannot prove that these experiences have negatively impacted first generation survivors, these are the stories that have been passed down to the subsequent generations. While some could remember a little about the escape or camp life, most have no firsthand accounts of the war. These stories are both powerful and telling about the conditions in which Cambodian refugees were subjected to and the grave losses that most families have. Although it has been almost forty years since the Khmer Rouge took power, the gruesome experiences continue to affect the first generation. As described in Chapter 2 and early in this chapter, these stories make up one of the sources of trauma

transmission. Some experience survivor guilt; some feel a tremendous familial loss (i.e., siblings, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents); and some feel grateful to be alive.

THE EXTENDED PRESENT: COMING TO TERMS WITH THEIR PAST

Even though most of my interviewees and respondents had never experienced any of the Khmer Rouge traumas first hand, many are able to vividly recount the stories they have heard or overheard from the first generation. The stories from the old generation can become a part of the everyday narratives and histories for the second generation. I do not believe that any account (personal, official, or otherwise) can ever fully capture the immensity of the events, but the subsequent generations' ability to retell them shows how those narratives, non-narratives, and silences are taken in and re-imagined as time-image episodes that help the younger generations make sense of their world. The trauma stories that they tell will never be the same, even if the story is told verbatim because the affects that are conveyed by the words will be different. But again, it does not mean that one feeling of trauma is qualified as more legitimate than the other. It merely means that the process of exchange, circulation, and transmission created a modified and mediated form of transgenerational trauma. It is through these connections, which are built upon fragments, that create the potential for traumatic affinities between other Cambodians, intergenerationally and intragenerationally.

Although all of these accounts that I have given in this chapter are "true," they also make up a bricolage of information. The stories are often pieced together with

different soundbites and at different points in time to make a more or less coherent narrative. Although some theorists would categorize these reflections as failed narratives and “not memories,” transgenerational trauma literature identifies these fragmented accounts as sources of transgenerational trauma (Hirsch 2008, 2015). The trauma of the first generation can become as real and can have as much as an impact as real memories. These varied accounts demonstrate why it is necessary to consider the fragmented nature of “history telling.” Chapter 4 addresses the ways in which transgenerational trauma can manifest and affect the second generation.

Prevalent in this chapter is a sense of what Schwab (2010:107) asserts to be “complementary oppression.” Similar to arguments about the decolonization of the mind, complementary oppression speaks to the ways in which trauma and historical violence affects both perpetrators and survivors. Take Mark’s somewhat uncomfortable recount of his father’s “mercy” in punishing the “lazy” worker. Like the survivors of the Khmer Rouge, Khmer Rouge soldiers themselves are invested in burying certain secrets. Mark’s father merely gives him snapshots of his past, and it is up to Mark to deal with the fact that his father was former Khmer Rouge. The weight of the war and the suffering, however, is not equally divided between the perpetrators and the survivors. This is especially the case when the perpetrator is not an actual person but a political party or a government entity, take the United States, the United Nations, and the Cambodian People’s Party for example. Therefore, perpetrators and victims do not equally “experience alienation and psychic damage” (Schwab

2010:107). The alienation and psychic damage is similar but different. That is why it is important to consider the narratives and experiences of all who are involved.

These historical genealogies of people's multiple and varied pasts, which have been highlighted in this chapter, speak to the ways that history is constructed. In the official sense, history is made up of narratives that have been sanctioned by the ruling governments. But as such, the bombings in Cambodia are relatively unknown and not included in most compulsory education history books. Also, the atrocities Khmer Rouge committed are often boiled down to a sentence or a paragraph that helps contextualize the Vietnam War. Also, as stated earlier in this chapter, the delayed process of trying and holding Khmer Rouge leaders accountable contributes to the muddled nature of the Khmer Rouge genocide. The narratives from Meng and Mei provide vivid firsthand accounts of what it felt like to be accused of something that one did not do. It also demonstrated how fatal punishment and torture could leave great mental and physical scars. Although Meng and Mei were providing testimony against the Khmer Rouge, their interview transcripts addressed the central role the United States military and CIA played in creating sources of suffering among Khmer Rouge prisoners. The suppressed accounts of American political interference how how "history" may cover up the ways that the United States contributed to the dismantling of the the political and economic infrastructure of Cambodia.

Such a lack of critical analysis accompanied with the controversy regarding whether or not the crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge were in fact "genocide," have made it difficult for survivors to seek justice, recognition, and reconciliation. By

denying the Khmer Rouge killings as genocide and instead autogenocide, the Cambodian people are robbed of international recognition. While the Nuremberg Trials quickly ensued after the end of World War II, it took almost thirty years for the ECCC to be established. This international conspiracy of silence parallels that which occurs in individuals homes.

These international political and judicial proceedings help contextualize why the older civilian generation is unwilling to speak openly about their experiences. For the fear of their families' safeties from old Khmer Rouge soldiers who are now in power in the Cambodian People's Party and because of debilitating and unaddressed mental health struggles, many of the parents of the interviewees I have highlighted in this chapter do not want to speak about their pasts. The past hurts and to try to move on, many have decided to bury the traumas. However, these traumas can haunt the survivors and their children. The specters of war do not disappear and are not only present but active in reproducing many structural inequities. Financial struggles, lower educational attainment, and legal troubles, which are prominent among the Cambodian American community, can be traced genealogically to the traumas associated with war and relocation. Therefore, it is important to consider the role of affect in formulating our conceptualizations of inequality. It is not just the material or individual subject positions people have, it is how affect and trauma help articulate people's subject positions.

The narratives from Kiri, Samphy, and Chhourn provide further contexts for why many first generation refugees, even the civilians, are so guarded about their

pasts. Having suffered great losses, the older generation may feel the need to move on. However, the shrouds of silence and the broken narratives sometimes frustrate and compel the younger generations to seek more information about where they came from. In this chapter, I shared some of the tidbits and stories that the older generation have shared with the younger generation. While some had very detailed accounts of the pain and suffering of their parents and other family members, many lamented that their families refused to speak up.

Often the logic of asking about silences is innocent, spurred on by both curiosity and confusion. However, in relation to social movement politics (see Cvetkovich 2003; Gould 2009), the logic of asking about silences and revealing marginalized and hidden narratives centers around the need for recognition and healing. Giving survivors of traumatic events, such as the Holocaust, the AIDS/HIV gay and lesbian movements, domestic violence and/or sexual assault, the Japanese American internment, and so on, the space to verbalize and share their stories can be tremendously reparative—allowing for suppressed narratives to be told. In a Freudian sense, such articulations can provide a catharsis that may lead to a restoration of balance in the individual and group psyche. I posit that such aforementioned groups have been able to achieve some semblance of catharsis because of their ability to garner the cultural power and “competence” (Alexander 2004) that allows for their voices to be heard. There already exists a sanctioned narrative of cultural trauma wherein survivors can add in various layers and complexities.

In the Cambodian case, speaking in terms of the diaspora in the United States, resettlement of non-white people as refugees, not immigrants, has a different valence. I argue that this case is unique for three primary reasons. One, as subordinated racial and legal subjects who come from a country that continues to obscure full recognition of the atrocities committed between 1965 (when the United States first starting bombing Cambodia) and the present, Cambodian American refugee subjects have historically not been able to garner much institutional (Cambodian, American, or international) support for projects of Cambodian American memory work and recognition. Two, refugee status is different from immigrant status. As precarious subjects of immigration and humanitarian law, refugees continue to be legal subjects whose rights are largely shaped (and restricted) by their legal status. Furthermore, the community lacks leadership and organization because of the Khmer Rouge's systematic persecution of political leaders and the educated. Grave mistrust proliferates throughout the community, adding to the conspiracy of silence among the old and the young. Third, "western" approaches to mental health and social movement politics may not be efficacious when considering the intersections between first and subsequent generation Cambodian Americans. In an interview with Sann, a journalist and scholar, he expressed, "In the west, people speak out and feel better. But in Cambodia, the more you talk about it, the more pain you feel." Therefore, it is problematic to ascribe the process of speaking candidly as the accepted mode of healing and recovery. It can be the silences and the modes of "failed communication" that allow for the older generation to express their pains.

Without socially sanctioned mechanisms of expression (e.g., the Nuremberg Trials, ACT UP movement, and Japanese American internment reparations movement), Cambodian American logics of silence challenge the normative expectations for speaking up about trauma.

While silence is often pathologized as an individual's failure to narrate and subsequently cope with the traumas of the past, I find that silence carries with it an affect of trauma—allowing the trauma to leak from one generation to the next or one person to another—not via direct speech but instead collective and public feelings. An affective analysis of subjecthood shows that the qualities of being a subject are not singularly shaped by an identification of a certain subjectivity. Rather, refugee subjecthood must consider the affects of trauma as one of the defining features and feelings of refugee subjectivity. For example, a person experiences certain feelings or affects not because this person identifies as a refugee but instead, I posit that it is the feelings associated with growing up as a child of refugees that produces the refugee subject. Therefore, refugee subjecthood does not require discursive utterance or identity naming.

Chapter 4: Trauma Formation

...Ashamed growing up thought of section 8 living had us growing up
had dreams of being a drug dealer with the whips they was rolling up
I knew the welfare life was nothing nice
And I knew that Pops never approved of it, just a sacrifice
Because mom had no education but she's educated...
Every time I'm slaving, I am reminded
Dreams are to get my parents off this government machine.
Don't lose sight of it...
RJ Sin, *Do You Know Who You Are*

The previous chapter provided historical background information about the Cambodian “genocide” (and autogenocide) and clarified why the phenomenon of transgenerational transmission of trauma is unique in the case of Cambodian American refugees. It then posited why an affect of trauma is crucial to widening current conceptualizations of subjecthood. For example, both first-hand traumatic experiences and transgenerational trauma generate affects that help create the refugee subject. Collective trauma and subjectivities are shaped by public feelings and affective exchange. Because widely recognized national traumas are elevated to that level via cultural and political work (Alexander 2004, Cvetkovich 2003), the “production of a public culture frequently privileges some experiences and excludes others” (Cvetkovich 2003:37). To better understand refugee subjecthood, beyond that of national recognition, we must acknowledge how an “archive of feelings”—both personal and collective—help produce the refugee subject. It is not just the labels and the discourses that define someone as such. As a part of the subsequent generation, Cambodian American youth should not technically be considered refugee subjects because they are born and raised in the United States, but by considering the longue

duree of trauma, we can better understand how an affect of trauma is inherently social and collective and can transcend time and space.

To argue that trauma is collective is a theoretical, empirical, and political move. Theoretically, it challenges scholars of memory-work, culture, and psychological inquiry to address the non-discursive and non-sanctioned expressions of both personal and community-based trauma. I argue that the intensities produced by trauma circulate amongst all who encounter trauma (either through direct experience or social interaction with the structures or individuals who have experienced trauma). Empirically, research must address both the prevalence of individual manifestations of psychopathology and collective response; traumas are inevitably shaped by social interactions, which necessarily extend the range of trauma's impact to others. Politically speaking, the process of individualizing trauma denies a critical juxtaposition (Espiritu 2014) of the historical events and aftermaths that cause and result from trauma. Manifestations of trauma become fantastic and unique to certain individuals rather than ubiquitous and mundane as related to the social fabric that is caused by politically motivated war and violence.

To substantiate these claims, in this chapter, I move from examining silences to clarifying what is transmitted through silences and the fractured narratives of history by my subjects. While it is tempting to conceive of transmission as a linear, passage of stories and affect, my interview data is suggestive of an alternative mechanism of transmission. After I explicate claims for a collective nature of trauma (via a discussion about ruptures of linear temporalities and trauma formation), I provide

trauma stories from the first and subsequent generations to show how trauma narratives (or more like incoherent narratives) can provide a mechanism for trauma to be passed from one generation to the next. In the previous chapter, I postulated that these stories are what I call time-image episodes because they denote the movement of time beyond the subjects themselves.³² For refugee subjects, including their offspring, the present is extended into the past. Scott (2013:126) asserts that the past can be kept “alive in a fragile tension with the present in ways that allow possible modes of non-recriminatory political action.” Trauma opens up new temporalities that challenge neatly organized concepts of time—not only as a metaphor of “haunting”³³ but as something (e.g., intensity, “memory,” or so on) that is sui generis and exists in the present from the past.

BEYOND *CHRONOS* & *KAIROS*: TRAUMA AND THE RUPTURE OF LINEAR TEMPORALITIES

Because this chapter addresses the collective nature of trauma, it is necessary to reiterate the nonlinear movement of trauma through personal and social time, not necessarily as a cognitive or coherent narrative but as intensity that challenges the linear temporalities constructed by *chronos* and *kairos*. The Greek words *chronos* and *kairos* denote two words for “time.” *Chronos* can be understood as the “quantity of

³² As discussed in Chapter 3, I conceptualize a time-image episode to be presently-situated imagined accounts of history and memory that are made up of a circulation of (failed) narratives and affects associated with the process of capturing traumas that extend the present into that of the past. Because of this time expansion, the past is necessarily also connected to the future—the potentials of trauma to be transmitted and to be re-imagined. For the origins of this term, see Berlant (2012) and Deleuze (1989).

³³ See Gordon (1997/2008).

duration” while *kairos* “points to a *qualitative* character of time” (Smith 1969:1). *Chronos* speaks primarily to the length and organization of historical events: how long did something last, what came before, and what came after? *Kairos*, however, is all about timing: when is the “right” or “best” time for something to happen in order to achieve some result? While *chronos* denotes social and collective time, *kairos* is a concept of individual time (Smith 1969). Trauma, however, disrupts these notions of linear temporality. As for the wars in Southeast Asia, Nguyen’s (2015) reflection on the 40-year anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War concluded that for the people who were directly affected, the “Vietnam War never ended.” By critically juxtaposing American military aggression in Korea, the Philippines, Laos, and Cambodia, Nguyen posits that war does not simply end. War and its associated trauma ruptures the duration of time as a neatly bounded category—what happens when there is no before and no after?³⁴ As for *kairos*, I argue that there is no singular “right” or “best” time for trauma to be experienced or transmitted—for refugees, there exists a perpetuity of trauma that evokes multiple possibilities for trauma to be felt, acknowledged, and transmitted. For the next generation, there may not be an identifiable “best” time to cognitively acknowledge or engage with an affect of

³⁴ For Cambodia and other parts of “Indochina,” colonialism and postcolonial realities produced a seemingly never ending cycle of war: “In addition to the ghosts and specters of approximately two million victims, there are many other post-colonial hauntings in Cambodia. Even though Cambodia gained sovereignty from France in 1953, the country was destabilized because of ninety years of colonial rule. The French colonial government failed to properly establish political, educational, and legal systems. Such poor post-colonial realities along with U.S. intervention allowed the Khmer Rouge to rise to power. Sovereignty’s failed promises compelled the Khmer Rouge to rid the country of all international, religious, and historical influence. This ultimately resulted in the persecution of ethnic minorities, Buddhist monks, and the educated” (Kwan 2015:67).

trauma. Furthermore, I argue that trauma speaks to the ability of the present to extend into the past rather than the process of the past impacting the present (in a linear fashion).

To give an example trauma's transcendence of time and its ability produce an affect of trauma in the younger generations, I offer an excerpt of "Out of the Poison Tree" by Prach Ly.

...I can't explain the pain,
no words to describe.
It rain and storms. I'm torn inside.
My past is poisonous. It can destroy me.
...
My history my root is rotten,
Past should be forgotten,
Its haunting, destroying me...
But my words bring hope,
An antidote, OUT OF THE POISON TREE...

For those not only from the first but also from 1.5 and successive generations, the Khmer Rouge genocide along with the French colonialism, the American bombings, and the subsequent war against Vietnamese occupation were not events that had a definitive "start" and "stop" date. There is no before or after. Prach shows how an affect of trauma (in the present) encompasses the pains of cultural and familial death and suffering. The newer generations acknowledge how the present is intimately articulated to the past, and they work with and transform their pains. This ability "destroy" coupled with the possibilities of hope show how trauma is dynamic, changing, and always in formation. Youth in the present help shape the narratives produced about the past while the past and future intersect to produce a protracted present.

The time-image episodes, from the previous chapter, highlighted two major findings that I will further explicate and provide empirical support in this chapter. First, the discursive practices among Cambodians about their war experiences, regardless of generation, share certain features, but also, there are distinctive generational differences. Second, while the literature on collective trauma recognizes the transmission across generations, the precise mechanism, among Cambodians, flows *verbally* through mothers and not fathers. Maternal transmission is suggestive of a specific gender dynamic in the management of emotional valences in households. While it is beyond the scope of this research to fully explore this, the qualitative data do show how mothers are more likely to speak about their experiences because the emotion work that they do make it easier for their children to develop closer bonds and speak openly about the past. As I will further demonstrate in this chapter, in terms of *non-verbal* or *non-narrative trauma*, such processes of transmission happen through both the mother and the father.

TRAUMA AND AFFECT FORMATION

Given the generational differences in the expression of and connection to historical and personal trauma, I turn, in this chapter, to examine how transmitted trauma is different from the direct experience of trauma. My focus here is twofold—on the one hand to document the trauma, however latent, in the next generation and to control for and address compounding variables that may affect the transgenerational trauma. On the other hand, it may be important to consider other alternatives, as the data suggest that to recognize that a transmission of trauma

involves not simply a handing down, but, a making and remaking of social life, ordinary life, within a particular set of assumptions about how the world operates. In short, trauma constitutes a social construction that is inherently collective. The alternative temporalities I previously discussed demonstrate how trauma may be formed not only through present-based interactions but also through engagements with the ruptures of linear time—opening up a space for trauma to be shaped and informed by collectivities from the past, present, and future.

Although my approach to collective and social trauma recognizes but does not privilege the negative and individualized affects associated with trauma, I still have a certain investment in the term transgenerational “trauma” because the phenomenon evokes a set of affects that is unique to the experiencing, living through, and dealing with *traumatic* events. Cvetkovich (2003:19) asserts, “...traumatic events refract outward to produce all kinds of affective responses and not just clinical symptoms.” Those affective responses can include negative affects in the first and subsequent generations but not necessarily so. Like Cvetkovich, I am interested in the ways that trauma manifests in everyday life—at times referencing larger catastrophic events but oftentimes dealing solely with the excess (non-cognitive feelings that linger and give off a small hum). Without a connection, an articulation to, or a tether to the present, “trauma stories can become in their own way an exercise of self-indulgence, a substitution of the melodrama of the past for the everyday weariness of the present” (Cvetkovich 2012:132). And that is why it is necessary to theoretically define trauma as the affects that circulate and rupture linear temporalities. Trauma is not

merely “being stuck.” I define trauma as an embodied response that emerges from the circulation of affect (i.e., emotions, sensations, and feelings) as related to the longue duree of historical events. Because singular causal factors cannot fully explain how or why someone, some collectivity, or some nation is traumatized, it is necessary to consider how unarticulated (i.e., expressed or recognized) trauma responses can still create bodily intensities and feelings that reference others bodies. By de-pathologizing and de-essentializing everyday trauma, an affective approach to refugee trauma, including transgenerational trauma, can help us understand how inequalities are produced, reproduced, lived, and endured daily. The focus is not on the source of the trauma but how the trauma transforms into different forms.

A circulation of refugee trauma is related to postmemorial work and postmemories (see Hirsch), but there is less of a direct focus on the source of the original wounding and more of an emphasis on the movement of memories, trauma, and affect. Postmemory, however, does denote the productive nature of trauma, the futurity of trauma to transpire into “something else.” It shows how there is hope for people who are recognized as traumatized to not just move beyond their pain but to interact with it and transmit those intensities to other people. The transmission process may happen from individual to individual (e.g., parents to children), but when it happens to a collectivity, an archive of feelings and memories are created. It generates an affective connection that produces and reproduces certain subject positions, such as the Cambodian American refugee subject. Not everyone in the group has to acknowledge that link, but I would say that the affects that circulate

among various refugee bodies produce the potentials for recognition of shared trauma.

Cambodian American affect formation exists not as an individual phenomenon but a collective one. Individuals may or may not have similar experiences, but nonetheless, they have the capacity and potential to develop deep connections to their families and culture. Some Cambodians, however, have questioned if and when it is possible for the Cambodian people to not be defined by the Khmer Rouge genocide. For example, Phatry Derek Pan, CEO and founder of Khmerican, asserts, “Mainstream media typically produce the same visuals about Cambodian Americans as gang members, troubled, and *survivors of the genocide*. We want to change the landscape of how the world views us.” I argue that Cambodian refugees and their children should not solely be defined by their legal status or genocidal experiences because people’s experiences cannot be simply summarized or categorized by one label. But for the Cambodian people, their subject positions will always be articulated to the Khmer Rouge trauma and American military aggression in Cambodia. While they may be community activists, educators, poets, students, engineers, and so on, their shared social experiences necessarily denote a collective structure of feelings. I do not claim that these feelings and sensations may be the same in each person, but it is the capacity for that affect formation that creates a link between different Cambodian people. In this chapter, I offer empirical evidence to highlight the manifestations of negative and flat affects of transgenerational trauma.

In the next chapter, I will address how Cambodian affect formation can also produce the potentials for positive affect, for example, awe, inspiration, and gratitude.

In addition to this affect formation which is necessarily collective and social, I argue that my research also speaks to a theory of “trauma formation” that is akin to Omi and Winant’s theory of racial formation. As a response to reductionist conceptions of race, racial formation is the “sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (Omi and Winant 1994:55). Related to racial formation, trauma formation emphasizes the social and collective nature of trauma, both the presence and absence of sources of wounding, the dynamic manifestations of trauma across generations, and the intersection between politics, history, racism, and legal status. Trauma formation is mediated by sociohistorical processes that denote the multiple ways trauma is narrated, treated, experienced, and transmitted. Social trauma is constructed on the macro- and micro-levels. The macro-level includes American military and political involvement in Cambodia, the continued lack of recognition and prosecution of former Khmer Rouge leaders, the legal treatment of refugees, and the medical treatment of trauma disorders. The micro-level involves the everyday experiences of trauma survivors, their children, and those who are connected to the group.

Trauma formation can include those who did not experience a trauma firsthand because affective connections can create intra- and intergenerational connections that are compelling enough to encompass a larger collective in an organic web of transmission (for affiliative postmemory, see Hirsch 2008). Trauma is a

formation that exists *sui generis*—it results from the interaction between humans, their activities, decisions, and the policies and laws they create. Although it can be posited that trauma is something that is not the product of conscious intention, trauma and the is produced and reproduced by certain social conditions.

UNMAKING AND REIMAGINING TRAUMA

In Chapter 2, I addressed how silence carries with it an affect of trauma, which includes the emotions and sensations that result from grief, pain, and depression. Silence can temporarily capture some of the intensities and potentialities that result from the failures of expressive utterance. Although trauma is not always coherently articulated and although the transmission of trauma may be obscured, it does not mean that just because we cannot cognitively understand something—aurally and visually—that it does not exist. The affective approach that I use allows us to investigate both socio-historical contexts and the mundane happenings of everyday life. An affect of trauma can be as debilitating as it is fantastic and dull.

In this chapter, I will show how latent articulations of trauma can show how personal, social, cultural, and transgenerational trauma are articulated (read: connected) but may remain hidden until certain circumstances or encounters allow for the latent traumas to swerve into a moment or moments of affective attachment. Because latent trauma can be as much felt as it is expressed, the latent trauma may or may not be articulated cognitively. Multiple layers of trauma, take for example transgenerational war histories, family abuse, neglect, and poverty, are joined together and connected to make and remake the social world. Non-latent traumas in the first

generation manifest differently than in the second generation. I turn, in this chapter, to first examine how latent traumas may be transmitted in non-verbal (often affective) ways and then discuss how these latent traumas manifest in the subsequent generations. Because these latent traumas may be articulated as not only gang participation and development of mental health challenges, but also community engagement or even simply pausing and thinking about the day, I argue that traumas—both direct and latent—are productive.

To produce means to cause (a particular result or situation) to happen or come into existence. As such, being productive does not necessarily mean that whatever is produced is “good.” The futurity of trauma, which allows both the future and the present to intimately include the past, is what gives it this productive or reproductive quality. Given that trauma manifests differently across generations, this productivity is twofold. The first generation’s pain “unmakes” their world while the second generation’s imaginations about that pain “remakes” a different but interconnected world (Scarry 1985). For the survivors, the trauma can produce negative affects and mental health challenges (e.g., depression, PTSD, somatization, and anger) associated with their first-hand experiences of war and relocation. Scarry (1985:161) asserts that direct pain has qualities that “unmake” the social world because “physical pain is exceptional in the whole fabric of psychic, somatic, and perceptual state for being the only one that has no object.” When someone is being tortured, the world (i.e., the object) around her is unmade; it disappears because the affects of pain make up her only reference point. After that physical pain subsides, however, the connection to that

pain does not disappear. On an individual level, that traumatic experience is productive because it produces fear in the first-hand survivors.

For the subsequent generations, however, fear is not the product of trauma. Transgenerational trauma actually produces imaginaries that help “remake” the world that has been unmade by collective pain. According to Scarry (1985:162), “[T]he imagination is remarkable for being the only state that is wholly its objects.” In other words, because latent traumas can be re-imagined as time-image episodes (objects of imagination) of an affectively connected past, they also make up the capacity for self-extension. The capacity bespeaks the collective nature of latent traumas—first it requires an internal process (i.e., re-making or re-imagining) and then it requires an external process (i.e., responding to those imaginaries) (Scarry 1985). The making and remaking of everyday life is what makes trauma productive. Let us take for example a child of a who has dealt with physical and emotional parental absence (as related to war trauma). He yearns for and re-imagines a life with the close bonds and connections that his parents cannot provide. To externalize that desire for closeness, he seeks a gang that can provide him with protection and bonding. As such, the circulation between parental trauma and a transgenerationally mediated form creates the conditions that produce the desires and need for alternative social networks such as gangs. This demonstrates that “what haunts is not the dead but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others” (Abraham and Torok 1994:171). Unlike the first generation, the subsequent generations are not haunted by the dead but instead by the secrets and the caesuras that proliferate within families and the

community. The unmaking and remaking of trauma across generations speak to the ability for trauma to become something other than the initial pain.

To examine the productive nature of latent trauma, I provide data to address how traumas manifest in the lives of the Cambodian Americans whom I have surveyed and interviewed. The transmission of trauma is articulated (or expressed) as parental anger, neglect, overprotectiveness, and mistrust. Such manifestations coupled with the lived realities of multigenerational poverty and neighborhood violence reveal how the latent articulations of trauma extend beyond individuals and specific families to impact larger trends present among the Cambodian American community, revealing a meso-level trauma formation. Because of parents' lack of English proficiency and cultural capital and because of mental health struggles, children have had to take on additional responsibilities. These findings align with past studies that have addressed the prominence of parent-child role reversals in immigrant families (see Kibria 1995; Park 2005; Zhou 1997), but the case for Cambodians is unique because of legal status, low socioeconomic status, and community mental health outlook.

Cambodian Refugees in California

After the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979, many Cambodians fled the country and sought refuge in Thai border camps. Those who survived the treacherous journey stayed in the camps until they were screened and approved for relocation to host countries such as the United States, France, Canada, and Australia—not all who applied for relocation, however, were successful (Park and Park 2004). I choose to

focus on the United States because of its role in creating and exacerbating the conditions that precipitated the need for Cambodian people to become refugees and seek relocation. Since the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, those seeking refuge and asylum needed to provide evidence that they had a legal grounds for relocation—that is, a “well-founded fear of persecution” based upon “race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or membership in a social group” (Park and Park 2004:37). So even though thousands more were displaced, the United States only admitted 147,228 Cambodian refugees from 1975 to 1998.³⁵

Unlike immigrants, refugees are unique because they are legally accepted to the United States as refugees fleeing imminent persecution. Many Southeast Asian refugees had “lost everything, [had] nothing, arrive[d] with nothing, and so depend[ed] upon the state that [had] admitted them as refugees” (Park and Park, 2005, p. 39). Because refugees were more likely to have experienced traumas from the war and relocation, they tended to have a higher prevalence of mental health conditions within the community. Mental health experts have found that Southeast Asians are disproportionately afflicted with “depression, overdependency, isolation, psychosomatic illness, somatization, and post-traumatic stress disorder, as compared to other groups in American society” (Ong 2003:99; see also Carlson and Rosser-Hogan 1994; Hinton et al. 2009; Marshall et al. 2005; Sack et al. 1999).

³⁵ Prior to 1980, legislations such as the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 and Refugee Relief Act of 1953 set precedence for displaced persons from countries such as Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, Korea, China, and Cuba to seek refuge in the United States (Office of Refugee Resettlement).

As of 2010 in the United States, there were approximately 280,000 people who identified as Cambodian alone or any other combination. The top five Cambodian American Populations by Metro Area are as follows: 1) Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA (44,522); 2) Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH (24,528); 3) Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA (19,240); 4) Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD (13,000), and 5) Stockton, CA (12,557) (Pfeifer 2010). Out of all the states, California has the most Cambodian people (102,317) with the City of Long Beach having the most Cambodians in any city outside of Southeast Asia (19,998).

Table 4.1. 2013 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates³⁶

	Total Population	Hispanic	Asian	Cambodian
Less than HS*	18.5%	40.5%	13.8%	38.2%
Bachelor's*	19.5%	7.8%	31.8%	12.9%
Grad/Professional*	11.3%	3.1%	17.2%	2.9%
Speak English Less Than "Very Well"	19.1%	33.6%	36.4%	41.2%
Median Household Income (\$)	59,645	45,558	74,453	47,277
Per Capita Income (\$)	29,103	15,519	32,685	15,337
Poverty Rates (All people)	16.8%	23.6%	12.2%	26.6%
Renter-Occupied Housing Units	45.8%	57.8%	43.1%	66.2%
*Ages 25 or older				

In California, 48% of Cambodians are native-born and 52% are foreign-born. To offer some more contextual information on the Cambodian population in

³⁶ The source of these data come from U.S. Census Bureau (2013).

California, Table 4.1 provides an overview of education, language, income, housing information on Cambodians and comparison groups. Unlike what is expected because of the model minority myth,³⁷ over a third of Cambodian people, ages 25 or older, living in California have less than a high school education and less than 11% have a bachelors degree. Poverty rates are also very high, even higher than in Hispanic comparison groups. My sample is largely representative of the overall population of Cambodians in California, other than educational attainment because I targeted college students and graduates.

Socioeconomic Status

Because Cambodian refugees were primarily farmers and seldom literate even in Khmer, their experiences with war and relocation trauma cannot be decoupled with their experiences of poverty—in Cambodia, at the Thai border refugee camps, and as resettled refugees in the United States. Amongst my sample of interviewees, parents have made money by recycling cardboard, plastic, and aluminum; working in various forms of manufacturing (e.g., toys, clothing, and contact lenses); cooking in restaurants; and preparing food to sell at markets. These forms of “unskilled” labor demonstrate how parents have partaken in many sectors of informal labor. Because of physical and mental ailments and injuries, however, some parents were not able to work altogether, so they relied on social assistance and government welfare to support the family.

³⁷ The model minority myth “assumes that Asians can more easily achieve economic and educational success as compared to other ethnic groups” (Kwan 2015:6).

With over a quarter of Cambodian families currently at or below the federal poverty rate, it is clear that refugee disenfranchisement and dispossession have had lasting effects on the community—even decades after the initial resettlement. Such multigenerational poverty can be linked to not only their immigration experiences but also the lingering physical and psychic trauma in the older generations. In my survey sample, I used questions about parents' education, neighborhoods, and financial aid to create a socioeconomic index for my respondents. I found that out of 35 possible points on the index, 78% of respondents had less than half of the total points. This shows that the majority of respondents were from the lower and working class. I also created a parental post-traumatic symptoms index by summing the post-traumatic symptoms items, such as recurrent nightmares, trouble sleeping, feeling on guard, and so on (for a complete list see Table 4.2). In this parental post-trauma index, the greater the value, the more symptoms the respondents' parents have experienced and vice versa. When testing to see if parents' post-traumatic symptoms were dependent upon socioeconomic status, I found that there was no significant relationship between the two variables (Spearman's $\rho = -0.1298$, $p = 0.2879$). This means that socioeconomic status is independent from parents' experience of post-traumatic symptoms. Regardless of socioeconomic status, families and parents experience post-traumatic symptoms.

Although socioeconomic status (or social class) is independent of the post-traumatic symptoms that the older generation faces, poverty does intensify and exacerbate certain challenges. Like Danieli (2007), I also encountered concerns about

tracing transgenerational trauma among extensive disenfranchisement. With over a quarter of Cambodian people in California at or under the poverty rate (U.S. Census 2013), economic struggle among the Cambodian population is widespread. I posit that by itself, economic challenges may create additional challenges for the first and subsequent generations, but for the Cambodian case and as Danieli (2007) would suggest for other refugees as well, the sources of these economic or income inequalities are directly related to not only structural barriers but also war trauma and pre-resettlement socioeconomic backgrounds (See Figure 4.1). As a result, poverty, particularly multigenerational poverty, is a manifestation of latent war trauma.

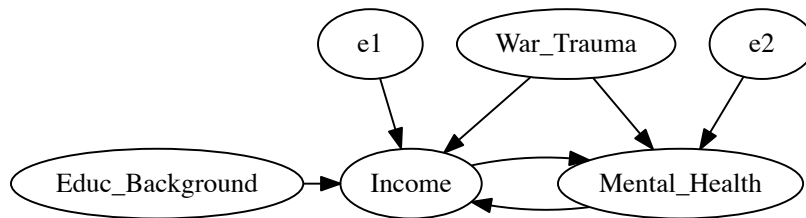


Figure 4.1. Hypothesized Relationship Between War Trauma, Educational Background, Income, and Mental Health

For the majority of my sample, limited occupational opportunities and the refugee relocation process made it tremendously difficult for families to make ends meet. Unlike the few families from the middle class, most other families did not have any knowledge about English, or even written communication in general (see also Becker, Beyene, and Ken 2000). In the following section, I will provide data to share how Cambodian American refugees have been disciplined by federal policies that

regulate their status as precarious legal subjects—ones that are systematically impoverished and marginalized.

Welfare Dependency

With little to no social, cultural, and economic capital, second-wave (post-1975) Southeast Asian refugees relied on the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975 (Tang 2000), which provided “public assistance...to most newly arrived refugees for a certain period of time” (Chung and Bemak 1996:347). Many Cambodian families lived and continue to live in disenfranchised communities with low rates of home ownership and low family income due to the lack of employment opportunities that offer these families a living wage. According to Ong (2003:123), “Cambodian refugees’ living arrangements were dictated by the structural conditions of public housing in rundown neighborhoods that were poorly served by public transportation and far from supermarkets, schools, laundrette, and other normal urban facilities.” Lived experiences of shootings, poverty, gangs, and drugs in “ghetto” urban spaces are felt by many Cambodian American youth across the nation.

In 1996, the United States passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) that largely limited access to social welfare. Becker, Beyene, and Ken (2000:156) assert that such welfare reform primarily targeted persons who were non-U.S. citizens, “thus demonstrating how liminal people are viewed as a danger to the nation-state and its efforts to create boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them.’” Scholarly research around that time even parallel these national

sentiments, claiming that Southeast Asian refugees who “had been touched by welfare at any period in their lives...were at risk of developing psychological distress” (Chung and Bemak 1996:346). The emphasis is placed on welfare dependency rather than pre-migration and resettlement experiences and stresses. As refugee subjects, Cambodian Americans straddle several contradictory positions. Both legal policies and research have perpetuated conceptions about the refugee culture of poverty—in contrast to the discourses of the model minority myth. According to Tang,

Southeast Asians are at once located within the welfare state *and* the sweatshop firm, they are both the unemployed “slum dweller” *and* the overworked, and their youth embody neoliberalism’s nihilistic fantasy of the “menace to society” as well as its promise for a brighter, multicultural future. (2000:58)

My interviewees’ experiences exemplify Tang’s assertions. While many refugees were dependent upon social welfare, many were also very vigilant and hard working.

Police Subjects

As refugees, Cambodian Americans were not only subjects of immigration and welfare policies but also community policing. Rather than simply assume Cambodian refugees to be victims (see Espiritu 2014), welfare queens (see Ong 2003; Tang 2000), or gang bangers (see Chhuon 2013, Chan 2003), it is important to consider how first and subsequent generation Cambodian Americans, must “simultaneously negotiate a problematic new world order (replete with new post-9/11 threats and ever-present gang violence) alongside an unreconciled legacy of war, genocide, and relocation” (Schlund-Vials 2011:167). Therefore, such essentializing terms cannot capture the complexity of the refugee subject. Rather than use a push-

pull immigration analytic model, it is important to consider that when the colonized (i.e., refugees) return to the colonizer spaces (i.e., United States), such movement inaugurates a new set of conditions in the colonizer's country. I find Espiritu's critical refugee studies approach central to teasing out the dynamic and complex relationships Cambodian Americans have with the wider policies, especially regarding the economy, policing, schooling, and health care. Espiritu (2014:10) defines critical refugee studies as an interdisciplinary field that "conceptualizes 'the refugee' not as an object of investigation but rather as a paradigm 'whose function [is] to establish and make intelligible a wider set of problems.'" In addressing this wider set of problems, let us consider the incarcerative state that refugees were subjected to when they resettled in the United States.

To do this, I offer an excerpt from Prach Ly's song "War in the Streetz."

where i'm from...broke'n gates and window bars,
perpetrate get regulates on concrete tars.
side walk chalk, tape'n up the crime scene,
rotten cops patrol the block of my streets.
i see robbery in progress in broad day light,
all this negative surround'n me, it's hard to be right.

...

who know what'll happen traps be'n set.
my conspiracy theory we're in the center of it.
we die over a buck, the government don't give a fuck.

...

it's just a little message who's really in control.
tolls and tax make'n hard for us to eat.
with jobs cut back we're starve'n our self to sleep.
teachers illiterate, counselors throw'n fits,
students are criminals, principal's an idiot.
my poetry paint pictures so i can show you,
the days of my live, what i go through....

It is through the simultaneous negotiation between parents' hidden and concealed war trauma produce and police brutality and gang violence that reproduce the daily realities of refugees and their children.

While "inner-city" gang violence may have very traumatic effects on children of all cultures and backgrounds, I posit that it was particularly difficult for Cambodian refugees because the gang turf wars and police surveillance paralleled what happened during the Killing Fields.³⁸ It was like they escaped one killing field to be relocated to another. Although not all participants dealt with the police state, a majority did. For example, 77.6% of respondents grew up in an area with gang activity. Many were raised in the "projects" or a neighborhood with few resources and little infrastructure.

Legal Subjects of Deportation

As political refugees, Cambodians who fled Cambodia for the United States were admitted as refugees, but after the Cold-War, "virtually all Southeast Asians [were] reclassified as permanent residents (or 'legal' immigrants)" (Tang 2000:55). Like other immigrants (non-refugees), Cambodians needed to formally naturalize in order to become United States citizens. However, many from the first generation did not understand the complexities of the American immigration system and many from the 1.5 generation were much too young to understand the nuances of their

³⁸ In the late 1980s and 1990s, many Cambodian youth joined gangs as a form of protection to stave off rival races and ethnicities who had controlled the areas where families relocated to. Many youth also joined gangs because those institutions functioned as a surrogate family. Because many parents suffered from mental health challenges, many were unable to provide the support that the youth yearned for. For further inquiry into Cambodians and gang participation, see Chan (2003), Chhuon (2014), and Ong (2003).

immigration status. Because of the school-to-prison pipeline that was exacerbated by failing schools, multigenerational poverty, racial profiling, and over-policing, many refugees turned to gangs for protection (Center 2010). According to my interviewee Susan, gang participation was high because when the Cambodian community first relocated to the United States, they often entered into communities that were dominated by blacks or Latinos. As a way for Cambodian people to stand up for themselves in a “city with no resources,” the youth joined gangs. Susan recognizes, “It’s natural to react in that way.” Because of these challenges, Susan says, “Growing up having to protect themselves, you don’t have time to concentrate on school. You have to just live day by day to make sure you stay alive.” While disaggregated data is scarce, one study by the California Youth Authority in 2002 found that Cambodian youth were incarcerated at four times the rate that would be expected from the general population (Center 2010).

In 1996, Congress passed the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) and Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA). These two acts expanded the categories of crimes that made legal permanent residents eligible for deportation to include minor and non-violent offenses³⁹ (Center 2010). The PRWORA, AEDPA, and IIRIRA all functioned as *racial projects* that targeted low-income immigrants and other people of color. Omi and Winant (1994) write, “A racial project is simultaneously an interpretation,

³⁹ A Cambodian legal permanent resident can be deported if her/she is convicted for having more than thirty grams of marijuana or committing any crime of theft in which the length of imprisonment is more than one year (Center 2010).

representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines.” Unlike European immigrants who came to the United States after World War II, Cambodian refugees were subjected to additional legislation that secured their subordinate positions within the American racial hierarchy.

In terms of international diplomacy, Cambodians who had sought refuge in the United States and subsequently committed a deportable offense were deportable starting in 1996, but the United States government did not sign a formal repatriation agreement with Cambodia until 2002 (Center 2010). When someone is deported, their families are torn apart, causing emotional and economic hardships. Often those from the 1.5 generation do not speak Khmer very well and lack social networks in Cambodia, making it tremendously difficult for them to be integrated into a society that they never really were a part of in the first place (see Sugano 2014).

In my study, two out of 31 interviewees mentioned concerns about deportation.⁴⁰ Sophie’s father is on the deportation list. She shares, “It’s so funny. He got into a little bit of trouble and as much as I’ve tried to fix it and make it okay, he would be a candidate for deportation because the time and the conviction he received.” Sophie jokingly says, “If he did want to return to Cambodia, he would get a free ride.” When Sophie says that “It’s so funny” and jokes about her father’s immigration status, most would interpret this as an inappropriate affect. However,

⁴⁰ Others may have had more to say about the subject, but because I did not directly ask about deportations only three interviewees discussed their experiences.

having gone through so much with her family, she cannot help but to laugh about all the hurdles that her family have had to jump over. Suffering from mental health issues, Sophie's father committed an aggravated assault years ago, in which he served time and three years probation. But under AEDPA and IIRIRA, which works retrospectively, Sophie's fathers' crime made him deportable—even today. Her father wanted to start the naturalization process, but if he had submitted his paperwork, an investigation may have further alerted the authorities of his deportable status. As of now, her father has not been contacted by immigration, but she worries that he will be slated for deportation at anytime.

Besides Sophie, Chann also discussed his personal fears for deportation. Unlike the Cambodian refugees who came in the 1980s, Chann and his family came to the United States in on a business visa—but what they actually wanted to do was escape the proliferation of violence and disappearances that were happening in Phnom Penh. They have since overstayed their visas, and he is on the list for deportation. They applied for asylum, but Chann says, “[The U.S. government] didn't believe us.” Chann's immigration status gives him an ominous feeling. He says, “I cannot go back to visit because then I can't come back. I try not to think about being deported.” Although Chann is hopeful, he knows that he cannot control what will happen to him and his family.

Sophie and Chann try their best to avoid thinking about their family's immigration status, but no matter how much they try to hide or conceal their troubles, they understand that their families could be forced to separate. Although my sample

of participants are not greatly affected by the latent effects of immigration status, there are many other Cambodian families that continue to be torn apart.⁴¹ Although deportees' underlying mental health challenges are exposed during this process, it is rare for the United State government to take this or family situations into consideration when considering deportation cases. Using a critical refugee approach, we can not only see how deportations are racial projects that seek to expel the “undesired” races and peoples from the United States but also how they disproportionately affect refugee communities. The United States played a direct role in creating the conditions that exiled Cambodian people, but when refugees were relocated, American government agencies purposely placed families in under-resourced communities (Ong 2003). While dealing with turf wars, drug use, and gang violence, refugees were expected to thrive in the American labor markets, but when refugees were unable to do so (because of structural barriers and mental health challenges), they were subjected to draconian punishments.

As legal subjects of welfare, police, and immigration policies, Cambodian American refugees give insight into the larger processes of trauma formation. The macro- and micro-level processes that shape our perceptions of trauma are constantly shifting. As demonstrated by the shift in the United States' refugee policies, from ones of inclusion (Jewish refugees) to ones of exclusion (Southeast Asian refugees), trauma formation, like racial formation, is not stable and is subject to discursive shifts. An

⁴¹ There have been several documentaries within the last ten years that address Cambodian American refugee deportations. See for example, *Cambodian Son* (2014).

affect of trauma includes social sensations, feeling, and emotions that are subject to the discursive politics that I have addressed in this section. The language through which trauma and affect formation is constituted through both macro-level discourses and micro-level and meso-level interpersonal and intergroup exchanges. I argue that affects can be generated at any level of trauma formation because the trauma is collective and social—social interaction must be inevitably present between people and structures and other individuals.

...

Up to this point, I have provided a socioeconomic context for my participants. Survey data show that there are no significant relationships between socioeconomic status (a proxy for social class) and first generation post-traumatic symptoms. This means that poverty and wealth do not have a significant effect on parents' experience with mental health struggles. Now that I have established that social class is not an intervening variable in measuring post-traumatic symptoms or transgenerational trauma, I will briefly discuss the prevalence of mental health challenges in the older generation. I argue that it is often these mental health issues that are associated with the war that create affective exchanges between the older and the younger generation. Linguistic utterances and stories about the war are not necessary for the trauma transmission process. Trauma may be transmitted via negative affects and everyday actions. But either way, because trauma is a formation, it is an inherently collective rather than individual process.

MENTAL HEALTH

In the survey I distributed to respondents, I included psychopathological measures from the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ). It asked respondents to identify which symptoms parents have experienced. To be clear, I am not evaluating whether parents have actually had a certain psychological illness. Instead, the purpose of that portion of the questionnaire was to see if respondents had recognized some of the signs of PTSD, somatization, insomnia, general anxiety, and depression from their parents. As you can see from Table 4.2 and 4.3, there is overlap between the MSTS and HTQ. Based on the data on respondents' views of parents' mental health conditions, first generation survivors continue to be affected by their experiences during the Khmer Rouge regime. Approximately 50% of respondents have indicated that either one or both of their parents have difficulty trusting strangers (57.6%), trouble sleeping (56.1%), recurrent thoughts or memories of terrifying or hurtful events (50%), unable to display or feel emotions (48.5%), and bodily pain (47%). About a third found that one or more parents have feelings of being irritable or having outbursts of anger, recurrent nightmare, difficulty trusting others of their own race, feelings of being on guard, feelings of being detached or withdrawn from people, feelings of being jumpy or easily started and difficulty concentrating. See Table 4.2 for exact percentages. While the percentages are not overwhelming, they do show that some parents continue to be affected by the trauma and memories of wartime. Also, as I stated previously, the data from Table 4.2 cannot be an accurate assessment of parents' actual post-traumatic symptoms.

Table 4.2 Percentage of self-identified Cambodians who indicated that either one or both parents have ever displayed the following symptoms

Symptom	Percentage
Difficulty trusting strangers	57.6%
Trouble sleeping	56.1%
Recurrent thoughts or memories of terrifying or hurtful events	50%
Unable to display or feel emotions	48.5%
Bodily pain	47%
Feeling irritable or having outbursts of anger	34.8%
Recurrent nightmares	33.3%
Difficulty trusting others of their own race	33.3%
Feeling on guard	31.8%
Feeling detached or withdrawn from people	30.3%
Feeling jumpy, easily startled	30.3%
Difficulty concentrating	29.2%
Avoiding activities that remind them of the traumatic or hurtful event	28.8%
Poor memory	25.8%
Hopelessness - feeling as if they don't have a future	24.2%
Difficulty trusting family	22.7%
Feeling as though the event is happening again	16.7%
Inability to remember parts of the most traumatic or hurtful event(s)	15.2%
Guilt for having survived	12.1%
Less interest in daily activities	10.6%

When the RAND Corporation conducted a comprehensive study on Cambodians in Long Beach and their mental health outlook, they released these data:

62 percent of the Cambodian refugees studied suffered from PTSD and 51 percent had major depression in the past 12 months. By contrast, in the general U.S. population only about 3 percent of people suffered from PTSD and about 7 percent had major depression in the past 12 months. 4 percent of the Cambodian refugees had alcohol or drug problems. Many of the refugees suffered from both PTSD and depression. Only 30 percent of research participants had none of the psychiatric disorders that were studied. (2005)

Over two thirds of the Long Beach Cambodian population still suffers from PTSD and depression. So while the data I collected were not as telling, other recent research (RAND 2005) and my interview data show that the older generation and their children are still affected by the Khmer Rouge trauma.

In my sample, 32% and 52% of my respondents, respectively, said that their parents had PTSD and general anxiety.⁴² There was a significant positive relationship between pre-migration trauma and the post-traumatic symptoms (Spearman's $\rho=0.5469$, $p<.001$), meaning that an increase in pre-migrations trauma relates to an increase in post-traumatic symptoms. There was also a significant relationship between respondent identification of parental PTSD and neighborhood characteristics. Those with parents who have PTSD were more likely to come from predominantly Cambodian neighborhoods (Spearman's $\rho=0.3$, $p<.05$) that had gang activity (Spearman's $\rho=0.3$, $p<.05$). From this, we can see that respondents with parents who had mental health challenges experienced both intergenerational war trauma and gang activity.

...

In the next section, I will provide some interview data to give examples of how parents displayed symptoms of post-trauma. I argue that it is these symptoms that transmit the first generation trauma to the subsequent generations. Because

⁴² I understand this is not likely to be very valid. However, for the purposes of this research that focuses on the subsequent generations and their perceptions of parents, it is important to see whether or not respondents think that their parents are suffering from the following mental health illnesses.

transgenerational trauma is a time-image episode, the present extends into the past and creates the potential for latent traumas to swerve into the present and the future. Because of the insidious nature of mental health challenges, participants may not have a solid understanding or grasp of how war trauma affects their lives, but they do understand how parents and people of the older generation continue to display qualities that stem from starvation and persecution. My data show that it is through anger, neglect, overprotectiveness, and mistrust that trauma is transmitted from the older generation to the younger ones. It is emotional absenteeism, physical absences of parents, parental control, and parental fears that convey to the subsequent generations the traumas of the past. These manifestations of first generation trauma are all articulated to one another and have a mutually constitutive relationship. It is the interaction between multiple articulations of trauma that produce and reproduce the postmemories and encounters with trauma within the subsequent generations.

After discussing this transmission process, I will provide examples of how transgenerational trauma manifests. While the first generation exhibits well-recognized symptoms of PTSD, depression, and general anxiety (RAND 2005), the subsequent generations may or may not display these exact symptoms. Solomon, Kotler, and Mikulincer (1988) found that children of Holocaust survivors who served in the 1982 Lebanon War had higher rates of PTSD than did the control subjects. But because I did not study the clinical prevalence of PTSD or focus on additional traumatic (unrelated to the Khmer Rouge) experiences, I cannot make similar claims. But I argue that transgenerational trauma manifests as unexplainable negative affects

(e.g., anger and frustration), flat affects, positive affects (e.g., awe and excitement), relationships and bond making, ambivalent parent-child relationships, and parent-child role reversals. I also posit that these manifestations help produce and reproduce structural inequalities related to education and mental health.

NON-VERBAL TRANSGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF TRAUMA

Anger

For some participants in this study, parents' PTSD, depression, and insomnia symptoms were merely an inconvenience, but for others, the mental illnesses shaped a large part of their upbringing and socialization. Several respondents and interviewees spoke about the prevalence of anger between their mothers and fathers, between themselves (the child) and their parents, and between their parents and other family members. These angry outbursts often could not be explained, and when things spiraled out of control, the Cambodian youth could not help but to think that it was their fault. While some knew that their parents suffered from mental health problems, others just thought that it was normal to have a dysfunctional family.

Respondent 56 said that her parents would often get into fights and even “beat each other over trivial disputes.” The anger response is often heightened among individuals who experience PTSD (National Center for PTSD 2014b). This affects the children not only because they witness the domestic disputes and abuse between parents but also because they can also become a target for parents' anger. Respondent 53 writes,

I remember feeling fear of my dad because I wouldn't want to get hit or do something wrong to get hit. I remember feelings of hiding. I wouldn't want to get my dad fired up, so I would cover up things. I remember feelings of authority from my dad and inequality for my mom. I had to have more respect for my dad.

Strict discipline from parents was not unique to Respondent 53. Others, like Respondent 11, say that "being disciplined" by her mother was a very negative memorable experience for her. As young children, my respondents had a difficult time trying to understand why their parents were always so abusive or angry. Studies on PTSD and anger have found that PTSD-positive participants reported having more anger across time (under neutral and trauma conditions) and higher anger reactivity (during the neutral and trauma conditions) (Taft 2007). Because PTSD goes on largely undiagnosed and untreated in the Cambodian American community, it has been difficult for youth to deal with parents' outbursts of anger.

Take for example Respondent 46. She was shocked to find out that after an argument with her father, he "walked out of the house and did not return for a few days." Later, she found out from her mother that her father was suicidal and that "argument caused him to become suicidal again." Apparently, their argument was a trigger for her father's mental health struggles. As a fifteen-year-old, it was very difficult for her to understand how a simple argument could lead to such a response from her father. Such realities become difficult challenges that Cambodian American youth must negotiate. Such shifts in mood and responses to arguments are one of the many ways in which traumas of the first generation are passed down to the subsequent generations. Not knowing about her father's mental health struggles,

Respondent 46 was made to feel very guilty about her actions. She had not meant to hurt him, but her father's response became a burden for her to bear.

Because of harsh punishment and a lack of a mutual understanding, it has become quite difficult for participants to develop close relationships with their parents. Respondent 32 notes how "difficult [it was for her] family to...get along." And Respondent 17 shares that it has been difficult for her to get close to her family because of miscommunications and negative relationships. From these perspectives, it seems that most parents did not understand how their disciplinary actions negatively affected their children. These actions, which could be considered tame as compared to conditions under the Khmer Rouge, were central in shaping parent-child relationships. Many children developed extreme fear towards parents, and therefore, relationships suffered. This coupled with the proliferation of the silences and mysteries associated with parents' pasts sometimes made it extremely difficult for the younger generations to develop strong bonds with parents. From interviews, I have seen how these relationships could be somewhat be mended, especially when the second generation begins to understand more of the pain and suffering that the first generation experienced. However, the trauma of the punishments and beatings is still present. There is just more acknowledgement from the subsequent generations about the pains that are still present in the older generation.

This phenomenon has been reported among Native Americans. Children of residential school survivors often have worse experiences than their parents because the second generation's "suffering/witnessing of traumatic abuse begins much earlier

—often at birth—and tends to be sustained longer and in a more intensive fashion” (Churchill 2004:71). For example, the ex-students often experienced the warmth of their families and parents before being removed and tormented at the schools. Children of survivors, however, are tormented by their own parents.

Neglect

There are many family situations that have created contexts in which participants in this study have felt neglected. Some have more negative experiences compared to others. The ones who express more pain associated with parents’ inability to engage emotionally attribute their parents’ neglect to underlying mental health issues. Others have had to cope with parents being physically absent from the home because of parents’ long working hours.

Emotional Absenteeism

Sophie poignantly addresses how her parents’ mental health problems and her subsequent experiences with neglect have continued to affect her. Growing up, Sophie remembers that her parents would have “insane parties” that involved excessive drinking and gambling. Her parents also hosted various gambling operations throughout the year. In an interview with Caylee So, writer and director of the short film “Paulina,” Caylee said that gambling is a form of “escapism” in the older Cambodian population. Rather than simply identify the prevalence of gambling as a social woe, it is important to consider the role of gambling in context with the war and relocation processes. Because many Cambodian elders were disabled from the war or did not have the social or cultural capital to find sustainable jobs in the United

States, many tried to find activities to 1) pass the time and 2) try to secure extra money to supplement their family's low incomes.

As a young child, however, Sophie was exposed to this type of environment that made her vulnerable to abuse from the strangers who would go to her home. Sophie shared, "I had some experiences with [sexual and child] abuse. I am actually going through therapy right now to deal with it." Sophie exemplifies the ways in which war trauma coupled with the parent socialization can produce transgenerational forms of trauma (and PTSD) in the subsequent generations. Her therapy sessions have been "very much helpful" because they help her "see how [her] experiences affect the way [she] relate[s] to other people." But Sophie also notes that therapy can be "very expensive" and "taboo," so it is not accessible to all who need the service. Even though Sophie struggled to understand why her parents were so neglectful when she was younger, in retrospect, she thinks that they may have been "reacting to their realities of war and trauma."

Because her parents were always preoccupied with gambling, partying, or being withdrawn because of their PTSD, Sophie does not have many positive associations with her childhood. Sophie went on to share how she felt that her mother was often not available to the children:

I think with the war trauma for my parents, you know there were so many moments when my mom would—even though she was a good mom—she would be very neglectful to her children. Just kind of treated us more like soldiers or just ordering us around. There were times when she would just kind of disappear into herself and not be responsive. I've never ever showed affection to her.

Even though other children of immigrant parents may share similar sentiments regarding child-parent relationships because of immigrant parents' increased needs to work long hours away from home, it is important to note that Sophie associates her mother's withdrawal to experiences with war trauma. In the middle of critiquing her mother, Sophie felt the need to state that her mother was still a "good mom" despite her neglect. Because her mother was emotionally withdrawn most of the time, Sophie had trouble showing affection to her mother—sometimes she was angry but other times, she expressed complacency and flat affect. Experiencing these things on the day to day merely became ordinary. As demonstrated by this, the trauma of parents' pasts may creep up, and it is quite difficult for children to cope with these challenges, especially when the children do not know what it is related to. For example, Sophie shares, "I actually don't know too much about my parents' experience. They don't really talk about it...I just wished my parents were more communicative." Sophie knew that something was different about her parents, but she did not know what.

When Sophie's father was not gambling or partying with friends, he was usually drinking alone. Sophie says,

"My dad is an alcoholic. He would always hit his face and say, 'My brain, my brain hurts. That's why I have to drink so much. I can't think. I don't want to think. I think too much. I think too much. Too much to think about.' He would repeat this over and over again. I think, for him, those memories are so traumatic that when they come to visit him, it's like they're haunting him. So he wants to numb himself. He wants to forget about it. But he can't because he's so all over the place. And at first, I had so much shame, 'Why isn't my dad able to go to work? Why is he at home just like either drinking or not doing anything?' I always thought, 'Wow, my dad is just so freaking lazy.' And so, I always had a lot of shame.

Despite the fact that the war in Cambodia ended almost forty years ago, Sophie's father continues to be affected by it and its aftermath. Those memories were so difficult that they haunt him daily. To try to rid himself of that pain, Sophie's father has relied on alcohol to numb himself. Because of her father's condition, Sophie was ashamed of her family. She felt that her parents' inability to work, their involvement with gambling, and their extended inebriation exacerbated her family's financial problems. Sophie's shame is an articulation or expression of the trauma that was transmitted to her by her father's condition. Again, transgenerational trauma is not one catastrophic event but instead the daily patterns and routines of life.

Although Jane did not have to deal with issues such as partying and gambling, Jane did have trouble dealing with her parents' messy divorce and her mother's mental health condition. Ultimately, Jane's father was granted custody of Jane's two older sisters; Jane stayed with her mother. She shares how difficult this process was for her to deal with:

My mom is very impulsive. She's very angry. She has a lot of anger issues. If she wants to do something, she's going to do it. I want her to be happy, but at the same time, the way she did things was difficult for us to take as young kids. It was hard for me to realize how much it affected me—going from one place to another and moving back and forth. She would just do things on a whim whenever she wanted to.

The neglect that Jane felt was not due to her parents' lack of interest in the children. Instead, it was because her parents failed to consider the emotional toll that their divorce and separation would play on the children.

In retrospect, Jane thinks, “My mom was probably going through her own depression, and her mental health wasn’t really okay. She was always very quiet or to herself—always isolated—and didn’t really talk much.” Jane adds, “My mom was physically there. She'd make sure I'd eat, and she'd clothe me, make sure I took a bath, but she didn't really engage me otherwise.” So while Jane’s mother was physically present in her life, Jane felt that her mother was emotionally disconnected. With her father and sisters in the Bay Area, moving to Southern California was very tough not only for Jane but also for her mother because her mother’s entire support network (i.e., other family and friends) were in the Bay Area. Jane’s mother only moved to Pomona to get away from Jane’s father. In the end, Jane’s tone changed from one of sadness to one of acceptance, but it was nonetheless clear that her parents’ divorce and her mother’s inability to engage left an indelible mark on her. While many young people experience their parents going through messy divorces, which can be a traumatic experience in and of itself, Jane’s case was unique because the divorce forced her mother’s underlying insecurities and depressions to manifest. For several years, Jane merely had to go through the day to day, pretending that everything was normal but in fact, she was forcibly separated from her father and her sisters. Transgenerational war trauma intersects with divorces, birthdays, dinner, lunch, and so on to produce intensities and affects (including feelings of sadness and neglect) in the subsequent generations.

Physical Absence

In addition to the mental health issues that produced situations of neglect, the demands of work also produced certain challenges for the participants in this study. These experiences, however, are more prominent among children of working class parents. While many participants assisted parents in entrepreneurial ventures, others experienced a lot of time alone. Some interviewees associate this absence for some of the larger issues within the family. In parents' struggle to gain financial stability, they have created conditions of absence where their children feel detached and neglected from the family.

Vanna remembers that her parents were always away at work, leaving her and her brother either at daycare, when they were young, or at home alone, when they got older. She attributes her parents' absence as to why her "brother got into trouble," doing bad things with the neighborhood kids. Because Vanna's parents were always away at work, her brother had the freedom to fraternize with the wrong crowd. Parental absence is difficult for many children. Susan expressed how her father's absence affected their relationship. In addition to her father being physically absent, her father was oftentimes emotionally absent as well. According to Susan, "My dad always puts the church first. [Begins to cry.] I guess that's why I get mad at him. Everyday, he's just on his computer doing church work. Every weekend, he is gone. He is always at church things." As Susan is describing her relationship with, she cannot help it but choke back tears. Every time Susan speaks about her relationship with her father, she begins to cry. While transgenerational trauma can be transmitted via neglect, it can manifest in a mediated form: anger, frustration, and sadness. These

affects are not unlike the ones that parents experience, but they are different because they stem not from a single wounding but from the everydayness of living as second generation refugees.

For the most part, the participants in this study recognize that their parents did not maliciously neglect them. However, that sense of abandonment is no less hurtful. While some parents are overprotective of their children, Cathy shared that she never had that predicament:

You feel that sense of isolation when you are always left alone. It's like, "Oh, where's everybody?" I felt that growing up...I was the kid in the corner because I didn't want to socialize with anyone. I didn't know how to start a conversation. My parents weren't overprotective. They didn't control what I did. I could've done anything I wanted to do when I was younger. They were so busy working that I didn't have a monitor system on my life.

Having been neglected as a child, Cathy realizes that she was less likely to socialize with others at school. She does not blame her parents for her introverted nature, but she does lament a bit that her parents were never around to monitor what she did. Self-motivated, Cathy abstained from trouble, but it was very possible for her to get into trouble without the monitoring system from her parents. Overall, I argue that the affects of isolation, loss, anger, and sadness can exist in and of themselves— independent of the individuals I referenced because there exists an archive of feeling that is generated from generations of loss: the first generation's loss of their family, their well-being, and their world and the second generation's loss of their parents' affection, presence, and communication. These are patterns that exists across both

generations—creating a collective trauma circulation. I also argue that parental “absence” is also exists despite the fact that parents are sometimes too present.

Overprotectiveness

Given the fact that parents were persecuted by other Cambodians during the Khmer Rouge and have witnessed the proliferation of gangs in their current community, many have tried their best to shelter their children from any and all possible harms and dangers. Chann said, “My father would have nightmares in which he would wake up screaming. I thought that it was strange before I realized it was PTSD.” Because of this fear that was embedded into the very fabric of Chann’s father’s life, his parents became very overprotective and kept a strict monitor of Chann’s whereabouts. Chann said that even when they moved to the United States, his parents would want him before before 9 o’clock at night. Similarly, when Alyssa went to visit her family during summer break from college, she said, “[My mom] wouldn’t let me stay out past 10p.” At the time, Alyssa was nineteen years old and had been away to college for an entire school year. But nonetheless, her mother enforced a strict curfew. Alyssa explained, “Whenever [my mom] hears in the news about shootings and car crashes, I'm on lockdown for like a week because I could get shot or get in a car crash. So it's like, I must protect you. So all day, she looks things up on the internet and freaks out.” Some may perceive this as normal parenting behavior, but the source of this behavior stems from fear of persecution and death rather than from overbearingness. This overwhelming alertness signals to the children a prevalence of underlying issues and fears.

I have also found that several of my interviewees who were women discussed the fact that their parents would never allow them to go to sleepovers. I did not ask this question, but it was a recurring topic. Seatha's friends would go to each other's houses and do sleepovers, but Seatha was never allowed to stay overnight. Both of her parents wanted her to be home unless she was at a sports or school function. She shared, "It wasn't something I was allowed to do. My parents weren't much for me going to hang out at other people's house." Seatha lived in an upper middle-class neighborhood, but her parents, nonetheless, fostered fears about her safety. This was also the case for Vanna. According to Vanna, "It became so awkward because it became like a thing [my friends] know about my parents. But [my friends] didn't know why. And I honestly couldn't say why." Vanna did not understand why her parents were so adamant about her safety, but I argue that this is one of the unconscious and mundane actions of life that transmit parental trauma to the children. The feelings of confusion and frustration help formulate the second and subsequent generations positions as refugee subjects.

Like Alyssa, Seatha, and Vanna, Katrina, an undergraduate student in her early-twenties was also not allowed to socialize with her friends outside of school. Katrina says, "It was extreme. [My twin sister and I] didn't get to go out with our friends or call our friends. We didn't get to go out to movie theaters until we graduated high school." Katrina and her sister also had to be home before the sky got dark, so about 7 o'clock at night. Like Alyssa, this was the case even after Katrina would go home during the breaks from college. From Katrina's perspective, however,

parental overprotectiveness is somewhat warranted—especially when children are in high school because it is a critical time in a teenager’s life. She believes that parents should check on their children because many of her cousins who were not closely monitored started dating, stealing, and getting into trouble (i.e., not graduating or getting pregnant). Katrina saw this overprotectiveness as a way for her mother to make sure that she and her sister would “stay on the right path.” This had unexpected consequences, however. Katrina shares, “When I got to college, I was very naive. So I didn't really know anything. I got into situations I didn't feel okay about. People would trick me into doing something. I didn't like it.” Although her mother was well-meaning, Katrina not have much experience with temptations and other exposures prior to going to college because she was so sheltered.

Although parents’ treatment of children is often gendered, the overprotectiveness also affects the men whom I have interviewed. Chanvatey shared, “My parents didn’t like to associate with *them*. My parents like to keep us inside.” And by “them,” Chanvatey was referring to the “other Cambodians,” similar to the ones that Katrina discussed that had gone on a different path. Because of the prevalence of gangs and negative stereotypes about Cambodian youth, Cambodian parents had trouble allowing their children to partake in events and activities that other children were allowed to do (e.g., going to the movies, sleepovers, or friends’ houses). Cambodian parents’ compulsion to keep their children inside the home stems from their fears about the loss of family and their fears about their local neighborhoods. However, most interviewees mentioned that these overprotectiveness fostered a certain

naiveté because they did not know “what was out there in the world.” Their world views and outlooks were strongly shaped by their parents’ mistrust of others. These interactions sometimes bred resentment and frustration within the younger generations because they could not understand why their parents were so irrational.

Mistrust

Some of this fear and overprotectiveness can be associated with the widespread mistrust between Khmer people, even people’s own family members. For example, my father-in-law refuses to trust or listen to anyone who is Khmer, let alone an Asian person because he has said, “Khmer and Vietnamese people have tried to kill us.” This sentiment remains prominent within families. Respondent 51 shared how the war and near-death struggles have resulted in parents’ inability to express trust:

The need for survival, especially what people would do to stay alive during the Khmer Rouge has caused long lasting trust issues in my family members who went through the Khmer Rouge. There are too many experiences of people witnessing death or trying to avoid it in a very physical and immediate way.

The traumas of the autogenocide continue to linger as fears in the older generation that get transmitted to the younger generations. This transmission does not necessarily mean that the younger generation also feels a fear of their peers or other Cambodians, but it means that the younger generations are affected by the ways in which their parents socialize them to other Cambodians and Asians.

When Sokha and her family first moved to the United States, they had residual fears from their experiences in Cambodian and new fears about the

unknown. She said, “I remember that at home, we never opened our curtains because of our safety.” Over time, however, Sokha’s fear about people subsided. She has since become more and more perplexed by the continued prevalence of mistrust among Cambodians: “It’s hard to understand when the older generation shuts everyone out. My husband says that people cannot be trusted. He even says this to his own kids!” Her husband’s fears may be related to the fact that her husband witnessed all of his family members be executed in front of his eyes. These personal experiences that Sokha has had has led to her understanding of why she believes the “Khmer community is not that strong.” She says,

People isolate themselves. They are afraid of each other. For example, my husband has no friends. He says that you can't tell who is your enemy. It was a war that killed their [sic] own people. My husband has trust issues and problems. He is anti-government because the government kills people. America can be just as bad as Cambodia.

These trust issues not only affect individual families but also community building and community health. For those who remain isolated, it is very difficult for them to trust other Cambodians and even the government. It was the Cambodian government that implemented such systematic violence so any other government has the power to do so. This guardedness and hyper-vigilance can take a toll not only on individuals but also relationships. Also because of this mistrust in others, Sokha’s husband is very protective of their children. Since he believes that no one can truly be trusted, he wants to teach his kids about the dangers in the world. They are never safe.

Similarly, Chanvatey also describes how it is also difficult for his parents to trust people. He shares, “There’s a lot of them. My parents knew them. It's hard to

trust people after everything they've gone through.” When Chanvatey refers to “them,” he means the Khmer Rouge. Because of everything that his parents experienced, it is very difficult for them to trust other Cambodians. Chanvatey goes on to say, “You never know, no matter how nice or trusting the people may be.” Chanvatey’s hyper-vigilance demonstrates the ways in which his parents’ mistrust for others has impacted Chanvatey’s perception of other Cambodians. In more overt terms, Chann explained that even though he grew up in Cambodia and has been surrounded by Cambodian people his entire life up, his parents had instilled in him beliefs that other “Cambodian people were not trustworthy.” Because of this thinking, Chann said, “I had some negative thoughts about other Cambodians until my junior year in high school.” After meeting and hanging out with other Cambodians, Chann realized how wrong he and his parents were for discriminating against others.

Just as Sharon Holland (2012: 3) asserts that “[r]acism is ordinary,” so I find that trauma is also ordinary. The chronic fear affects and low-level feelings parents express attach to the second generation and produce similar but different affects, such as frustration, isolation, anxiety, and so on. In some families, anger and neglect proliferate throughout their day-to-day lives. And even when parents are present, they tend to be too overbearing and not emotionally present. Their overwhelming presence denotes the excess that results from the affect of trauma. They are so omnipresent and controlling that they end up limiting their children’s exposure to life outside the confines of the home. For the rest of this chapter, I will discuss how verbally and non-verbally transmitted trauma manifest in the subsequent generations.

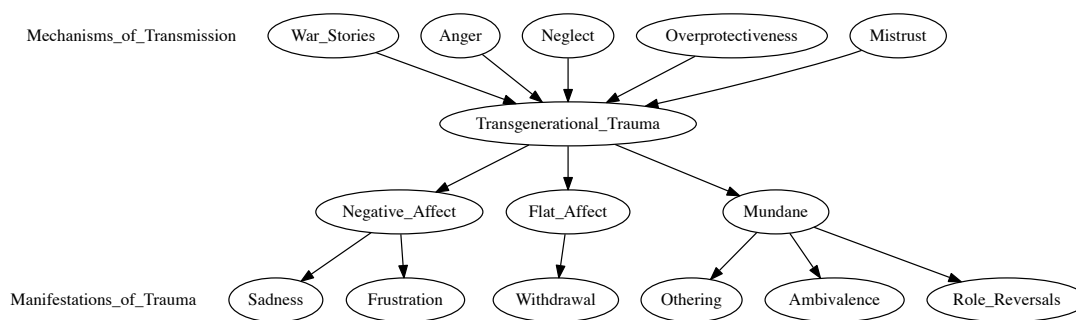


Figure 4.2. Mechanisms of Transmission and Manifestations of Transgenerational Trauma

PRODUCTIVE NATURE OF TRAUMA

I theorize that trauma and transgenerational trauma in particular is productive—in the sense that trauma produces and reproduces the lived realities of everyday life. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, parents and family members may or may not share how they were affected by the war, but nonetheless, children can begin to form time-image episodes that are made up of silences and fragments. These imaginaries are productive because they create new possibilities and potentials for how children of refugees may grow up and react to certain social situations.

As for transgenerational transmission of trauma, survey analysis revealed that there were no significant relationships between socioeconomic status and transmitted trauma (Spearman’s $\rho = -0.23$, $p = 0.06$). I measured transgenerational trauma with the Modified Secondary Trauma Scale (MSTS) (Motta et al. 1999). See Table 4.3. The survey asks the respondent to consider a negative experience or experiences that happened to a family member. Motta et al. (1999, 2001) were particularly interested in learning about “how that person’s emotional upset affected [respondents’] feelings

and thoughts.” Overall, the survey instrument was able to capture some aspects of the manifestations of transgenerational trauma but for the most part, I found that it was inadequate in considering the non-negative affects and non-cognitive effects of transgenerational trauma. While the second generation does not experience the avoidance or somatic symptoms of trauma that the first generation experiences, the second generation does experience feelings of attachment to parental trauma.

Table 4.3. Percentage of self-identified Cambodians who indicated that they felt the following in response to their parents’ trauma

Response	Percentage
a. I force myself to avoid certain thoughts or feelings that remind me of	34.8%
b. I find myself avoiding certain activities or situations because they remind me of their problems.	29%
c. I have difficulty falling or staying asleep.	26%
d. I startle easily.	26%
e. I have flashbacks (vivid unwanted images or memories) related to	16%
f. I am frightened by things that he or she said or did to me.	13%
g. I experience troubling dreams similar to their problems.	16%
h. I experienced intrusive, unwanted thoughts about their problems.	30%
i. I am losing sleep over thoughts of their experiences.	10%
j. I have thought that I might have been negatively affected by their	29%
k. I have felt "on edge" and distressed and this may be related to thoughts about their problem(s).	16%
l. I have wished that I could avoid dealing with the person or persons	10%
m. I have difficulty recalling specific aspects and details of their	26%
n. I find myself losing interest in activities that used to bring me	12%
o. I find it increasingly difficult to have warm and positive feelings for	16%
p. I find that I am less clear and optimistic about my life than I once was.	19%
q. I have some difficulty concentrating.	19%
r. I would feel threatened and vulnerable if I went through what the person above went through.	36%

Children of refugees have been conditioned to act in certain ways when among peers and their parents. Because my sample contained college students and college graduates, I find that they produce and reproduce narratives of the “us” versus “them” mentality. To distinguish themselves from other Cambodian Americans who are involved in gangs or other “delinquent” activities, the participants in this study have used narratives that “other” those whom they see as unsuccessful, unmotivated, or “ghetto.” In addition to the ambivalent views that participants have for other Cambodians, they also share that they have conflicting relationships with parents. Many of these conflicts and complexities can be associated with parents’ mental health status and coping mechanisms. And lastly, because of the latent effects of trauma, the subsequent generation are tasked with roles and duties that are tremendously stressful. By using a “productive nature of trauma framework,” I show how first generation trauma can not only have negative effects on the mental health and coping mechanisms of the subsequent generation, but also have mundane effects that shape the day to day thought processes, responsibilities, and relationships Cambodian youth have with family members and others.

Othering

Because of the widespread mistrust that the first generation has for other Cambodian people, other Asians, and strangers, I have seen the second generation exhibit some of those beliefs towards other Cambodians. This is especially relevant in my sample because all of the Cambodian youth in this study are pursuing or have completed their undergraduate degrees. With less than 15% of people with

undergraduate degrees in the population of Cambodians living in California, the people whom I am interviewing are unique in that they have had access to educational opportunities at the postsecondary level. The following data that I offer are also all from students who attend a University of California or a prestigious private university. As such, I have found that this “othering” process is more pronounced in this sub-sample of interviewees. The interviewees who did not partake in this “othering” attended California state universities or community colleges.

Cambodian Americans straddle a unique position between the “model minority myth” and the “culture of poverty.” Such contradictory narratives ultimately pose challenges for students who must engage not only with educational pressures but also stereotypical expectations (McGinnis 2009). Although my interviewees did not verbally mention the model minority myth, their discourses around those who pursue higher education and those who do not reveal a complex interplay between the two stereotypes. Chanvatey, Katrina, and Alyssa projected their insecurities around education and negative stereotyping onto other Cambodians who did not pursue college.

In describing the socioeconomic patterns among the Cambodian community, Chanvatey recognizes how the history of the Khmer Rouge continues to haunt the Cambodian people. But nonetheless, he feels that people should be able to overcome those challenges. He says,

I feel a lot of people don't have the motivation to break out of the past. All the things that happened and they made it to America, so you'd think they would

be a lot better off. You can still be Khmer if you are poor and you stay poor [pause] but [...] [trails off].

Even though Chanvatey comes from a predominantly low-income community with a substantial Cambodian population, he uses a “culture of poverty” framework to describe other Cambodians who have remained impoverished. He acknowledges how people’s pasts may have been difficult, but in “America,” people have opportunities for upward mobility. By not completing his thought, he demonstrates that he does not really acknowledge the cultural and structural barriers that many Cambodians refugees have faced. Using this “pull yourselves up by the bootstraps” mentality, he discursively distances himself from other Cambodians who have remained “poor.” For Chanvatey, the label of “poor” is understood to be gang affiliated, uneducated, and welfare-dependent.

This may sound contradictory because Chanvatey’s family has also relied on government assistance. However, Chanvatey distances himself from other Cambodians who in his mind wastes the resources offered to them. He says,

For our family, it was a lot different on [sic] how we use the welfare money. A lot people use it and spend it welfare check to welfare check.... Most people don't think ahead. But I really feel like my parents spend their money a lot wiser than *most people*. I can understand why people hate on the welfare thing.

From Chanvatey’s point of view, it is not that people do not deserve government assistance, but there is the right way and a wrong way to use and spend that money. His use of “most people” signify this othering process that allows him to distance himself from “those” people who are irresponsible. The traumas associated with refugee poverty can produce negative affects and judgments within the subsequent

generations. They perceive others who are poor and unmotivated to be “less deserving” even though their parents share similar experiences.

Katrina also keeps physical and social distance between herself and other Cambodians. Katrina explains that when she was a child, she never liked other Cambodians and never wanted to be associated with them. She says,

I don't have a good perception of Cambodian people. The Cambodian guys in general are kind of ghetto. They try to say things that are degrading to a woman. They dress hip hop, and they try to act cool. When I tell them that it isn't cool what they say about me, then they start making fun of me and cussing at me. I try to stay away from them. I never really had a good impression of Cambodian people or my peers.

Even as a Cambodian person, Katrina essentializes what it means to be a young Cambodian man. Katrina shares that she did not know much about other Cambodians until she was ten years old, when her family moved to an area with more Cambodians. However, her experiences with other Cambodians, especially “guys,” are primarily negative. She generalizes her perceptions of “ghettoness” to other Cambodians. Because Katrina does not want to be associated with the negative stereotypes, she detached herself from her local community. Part of this stereotyping can also be related to her mother's perceptions of other Cambodians and her mistrust of those in their local community. Later on, Katrina said that only when she met other Cambodians in college did she begin to like other Cambodians, but only the ones who pursued higher education and were not involved in gangs or criminal activity. The need for self-preservation and boundary making (Wimmer 2013) between the “deserving” and the “undeserving” or the “respectful” and the “ghetto”

bespeak the youth's understanding of the dominant representations of Cambodians. To distinguish themselves, they have assumed unique refugee subject positions that replicate the mistrust that is fostered by the first generation.

This trope of the “ghetto” Cambodian was also raised by Alyssa who said that she and her family tried to distance themselves from Cambodians who were more “ghetto” by nature. This discussion about “ghetto Asians” came up when I asked her to describe her local community. Although Alyssa’s family lives in an area with other Cambodians, she does not really interact with them. When I asked Alyssa to go into further detail about what she meant by “ghetto Asian,” she had trouble describing it beyond the “other.” She said, “I was the complete opposite. It was strange because my babysitters were ghetto Asian; my neighbors were also ghetto Asian.” This mutually constitutive process allows Alyssa to “always [be] aware of the difference between [her]self and the ghetto Asians.” Part of these feelings can be attributed by the fact that Alyssa does not really have any Asian friends. She decided to attend a college preparatory high school that separated her from the other Cambodians. She said that she saw fewer and fewer Cambodians as she progressed in her education. She wondered, “Why is that? Where’d they all go?” When I asked her what she thought about that, she chocked it up to “personal drive and commitment.” Alyssa said that she had promised her parents that she would do well in school, and she always wanted to live up to that promise. In Alyssa’s mind, Cambodian children need more supportive parents. She says, “I just feel like if other Cambodian kids had [parental support], they will also do good [sic].”

In addition to parental support, Alyssa believes that ghetto Asians her age do not have enough “structure in their lives.” Alyssa imagines what it may have been like had she stayed at her local high school:

If I went to a high school where it wasn't competitive or I didn't have any obligations, I would probably try other ways to entertain myself. It would probably lead to drugs. I don't know. I would've had friends, but it would've been difficult to maintain the academic standards as compared to the [college prep] school. Even though *I would've been amongst the pool of like relatively less ghetto people, just being around them would've made it harder to make better grades.* That's just not the norm. Where I went, it was normal to stay in on Saturdays to do your homework. Everyone else is doing that.

Alyssa distances herself from the “ghetto people” even in her imagination. Having admitted that she does not really know other Asians or specifically Cambodians from her community, she is quick to repeat many of the culture of poverty stereotypes, especially in regards to academic achievement and performance. She details how it was “normal” for kids from her college prep high school to study on the weekends, but it was “not the norm” for the kids at the local high school. In a sense, the students who did not attend the college preparatory school were not normal and more deviant. Even now attending a prestigious private university, Alyssa has primarily white friends, and she cannot imagine dating an Asian or specifically Cambodian guy.

Like Alyssa, Seatha was also in the college prep track at her high school. Living in the wealthier and “whiter” part of town in a city in the Central Valley, Seatha made the conscious decision to transfer to a high school that was in another part of town that had more diversity. She shares, “Going there, there were more ethnicities—Hispanic, Asian—which was really awesome.” Unlike Alyssa, Seatha had

a difficult time “clicking” with the white students in her old high school. She did not really get along with the students, and she always felt out of place as the “only Asian.” But even at the more diverse high school, Seatha did not really interact with the other Cambodians because she was the only Cambodian person in the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program. Furthermore, she found that “Cambodians didn’t play water polo or swimming” like she did. Lighter skinned because she is Chinese-Cambodian, Seatha was never really acknowledged as Cambodian to her classmates. While Seatha does not have much interaction with other Cambodians, she does not verbally “other” or stereotype her Cambodian peers. She simply recognizes that they are from different social classes and are therefore different. Also, because of Seatha’s numerous extracurricular activities, including water polo, swimming, acrobatics, piano lessons, and such, it was very difficult for her to maintain friends beyond those who were in her classes.

Sometimes even within the same family, this othering process occurs. For example, Vanna, Chenda, and Susan all have siblings who have one time or another been on the “wrong path.” Most of them attribute this negative outcome to their siblings’ fellow Cambodian friends who were a bad influence. Vanna distinguishes herself from her brother and her cousins, explaining that she was always concerned about how her actions would affect her parents. For her brother, however, he would “immediately adopt the persona of people he was hanging out with.” Because Vanna’s family originally lived in an area with more violence and criminal activity, they actually moved to quite a rural area, so that her brother could stay out of trouble.

Without providing the specifics, Vanna shared, “You can tell by some of the choices my brother made that he didn’t really care about anyone but himself. He was just a complete asshole.” Knowing that her “parents have been through so much,” Vanna tries her best to do her best and not give her parents extra stress.

When discussing her siblings, particularly her sister and brother who have not pursued higher education, Chenda identifies that it is her siblings’ friends who have a negative influence on them. Chenda says, “My [older] brother’s not doing anything with his life. He didn’t go to college. My little sister, again not going to college. Her friends have no life.” Even though Chenda that it was difficult for all of her siblings, she still blames her older brother and his friends for being inconsiderate and irresponsible. One time, Chenda and her brother got into a big argument because his friend broke her older sister’s laptop. This conversation escalated in Chenda’s expressing of her disappointment in him. Her brother said, “This is the way I grew up. I didn’t have a brother to look up to.” But Chenda responded, noting that her older sister did not have any role models, and most of her friends ended up having children at a young age (“She had a lot of ghetto friends too.”). Hence, Chenda believes, “It’s the path you take. You can’t blame it on your friend or not having some to look up to.” Sounding defeated, she utters, “I don’t know. He’s retarded.” Throughout the years, Chenda has become frustrated with her brother’s antics and cannot understand why he is unable to take responsibility for his actions.

Like Chenda, Susan has felt similar sentiments about her second oldest half brother with whom she shares a father. Susan’s oldest half brother moved out to join

the military when she was only in third grade. She has only seen him once since he moved out. Her second oldest brother, however, still lives at her parents' house. According to Susan, "I don't see him that much when I go home for vacation. I kind of avoid him. I don't talk to him at all anymore." Growing up, Susan and her brother were quite close because he was only two years older, but now, she says, "We don't interact at all, like at all." For her, it is quite awkward and uncomfortable. When I ask her why she thinks that her and her brother's relationship has suffered, she stated, "My brother doesn't do anything. He didn't even graduate from high school. He was never able to keep a job. I don't know what he's doing right now. My parents try to keep what he's doing a secret from me." Last summer, her brother was incarcerated, but her father refused to tell her about it. Susan thinks that "he might have been ashamed or embarrassed," especially given that Susan's father is a pastor and a devout Christian. Whenever Susan asked about her brother, her father would simply say, "Oh, he went to Hawaii to stay with his brother." But it came to no surprise to Susan that her brother was in trouble because it was not his first time. She shares, "The first few times was for selling drugs and possession of drugs. Once was for a possession of firearms." When talking about her family, Susan's affect goes back and forth from extreme sadness to withdrawal.

Such othering processes are present amongst the larger community—both in the older and younger generations. Some of these perceptions are associated with the overwhelming sense of mistrust that proliferates throughout the Cambodian community. However, it is particularly damaging and hurtful because those processes

sometimes involved people in the same family. Vanna, Chenda, and Susan ultimately love their siblings, but they recognize how their siblings' decisions have been damaging to the family. It is important to consider that the participants in this study are those who are pursuing or have attained a college degree. As a result, it may be possible that these othering processes are more prominent among this sample. By distinguishing between the self and the other, the participants are able to construct certain (i.e., more positive) identities for themselves. By othering their siblings or friends who are not going to college, the participants are able to justify their elevated positions as college students or graduates, somehow showing that they are more exceptional than others.

On a functional level, this othering process helps Chanvatey, Katrina, Alyssa, Seatha, Vanna, Chenda, and Susan justify why they are at a privileged institution while their friends and family (those who did not work hard enough or were not motivated enough) continue living downwardly mobile lives. There is a need to distinguish between “deviant” Cambodians versus the good ones because stereotypes created by dominant representations of the Cambodian gang member frequently haunt the Cambodian Americans in this study. Such manifestations of transgenerational trauma help reproduce the systems of inequality that reward those who have succeeded and punish those who were unable to. It largely takes the social factors and collective trauma out of context.

The model minority myth and the culture of poverty work in tandem. As supposedly failed model minorities, uneducated Cambodian youth are often

understood as being deviant and culturally impoverished. Not wanting others to assume that they are one of “those Cambodians,” students like Chanvatey, Katrina, and Alyssa create a dichotomy between the us (those who are working toward a better life) and them (those who are unmotivated, “ghetto,” or poor). According to culture of poverty narratives, Cambodian American students do not really fit in because of social distance between them and the traditional student (read: East Asian or white). So they cope by explaining that they are somehow more hardworking or have made better decisions to better their lives.

Ambivalence

All interviewees said that they loved their families and would do all that they could to ensure their parents’ financial, mental, and physical health, but many also expressed how their relationships with parents and family were quite ambivalent and even tumultuous at times. Sometimes, it was good, but when it was bad, it was very painful. Susan, Sok, Cathy, and Jane have all expressed that they have difficult relationships with their parents, particularly their fathers. It is important to note that Sok, Jane, and Susan’s parents were all divorced at one point or another. Cathy’s mother passed away when she was 22 years old. These dynamics have contributed to the ambivalent nature of their relationships with their parents. Survey data also revealed that respondents who had more difficult relationships with their father tended to also have difficult relationships with their mothers (Spearman’s $\rho=0.65$, $p<.001$).

Although Susan loves her family, especially her parents, it is sometimes difficult for her to express how she feels about them. The pain that Susan experiences when she talks about her father is ineffable but deeply felt. When I asked her about her father's involvement in the church, she begins to cry and responds,

My dad and I don't really talk at all. It's just weird for us. [10 second silence. Choking back tears and begins to cry.] I want to be close to him, but I always get mad at him easily. I don't know why. I've been trying to figure out why I get mad at him so easily. [Pause, crying] But I don't know why because I don't know. He was a really good dad. [Crying] I think it's because he doesn't understand me. Sometimes we don't get what we are trying to say to each other. He doesn't really get upset with me. It's just that I get upset with him. Ever time I talk to him, I get mad at him.

Questioning herself over and over again, Susan does not seem to understand why she is so upset with her father. She loves him and wants them to have a closer relationship, but for some reason, she is resentful of him. Throughout our interview, Susan cries whenever she talks about her family, especially about her half-brothers and her father.

Like Susan, Sok's relationship with his parents is "rocky" because of their messy divorce. He explains, "In the period right before I graduated from high school, there was a lot of tension in the air and a lot of conflicts between the two of them." While he could connect with his mother on a more emotional way, his father was more analytical and kept to himself. Sok shares, "My dad doesn't really talk about what he feels." Sok believes that this is due to a mixture of American and Cambodian masculinity. This is difficult for Sok because he says, "I'm very open to talking about what I am feeling, what I am thinking, that sort of thing. And my dad doesn't feel that I am in control all of the time." Although Sok's father is supportive of all that Sok

pursues, Sok has trouble connecting with his father on a deeper level. When I asked Sok if he was planning to move home after college, he said, “It’s just easier for me to move home. I want to help if anything occurs.” But again, Sok is conflicted because he knows that he is obligated to do so. His older brother had some struggle with his finances, so Sok knows that he needs to be there for his aging parents if they need him. However, when I asked further about his and his family’s relationship, he candidly shared,

I feel terrible but it's still a remnant of like issues with my parents that happened when I was in high school, issues and conflict before they even became separated. Um, there were issues that shaped myself, that involved my personal life, and how I've become who I am today. But not all of it is positive, so the more I stay there, the more I sort of realize that I try to avoid conflict.

This avoidance is easy when Sok is away for college, but he knows that he will soon have to return home to face his family when he finishes his education.

Earlier in this chapter, I shared that Jane’s parents went through a messy divorced. Jane has remained close to her older sisters, but sometimes Jane still struggles with their relationship because her oldest sister is bipolar. Jane tells me that her oldest sister goes to therapy, but Jane and her other sister have been encouraging her to “possibly go on some medication to help control her moods” because “it’s too much for [them] to handle.” Jane attributes her sister’s struggles to the war and relocation processes. Jane’s oldest sister was born in the refugee camp, and Jane thinks that fetal malnutrition may have caused “some sort of chemical imbalance.” Jane further explains, “My grandmother said that my mom had postpartum depression, so when my sister was born my grandmother actually took care of her a lot.” In Jane’s

mind, it was possible that her mother's struggles with her mental health are reflected in the depression and bipolar nature of her oldest sister. This is another example of the transmission of mental health challenges from one generation to another.

These rocky relationships play an emotional toll on both my interviewees and their families. It seems that when the children get older and are able to better understand their situation, they are able to rationalize that they have such ambivalent relationships with their parents. But nonetheless, it is difficult for the Cambodian youth to deal with. For example, Cathy shares that her relationship with her father "is kind of rocky at the moment." Cathy explains, "When I was younger, it was better—a father's love for a child is strong. When you get to a certain age when things have to be verbally communicated and when your needs are different, it becomes more complicated." Just as Gordon (1997/2008) theorizes about the complicated nature of life, Cathy discusses how her father's experienced during the Khmer Rouge era continue to shape his complicated relationship with money and with his children. According to Cathy, "My father comes from the state of mind kind of like the killing fields era. You live to work. People of our generation, however, work to live. So it's a part of what we do, but it isn't everything that we are." However, this gets complicated when children of refugee parents grow older and are able to make their own financial decisions. Cathy understands that "he is constantly worrying about how to survive, not be hungry, not be in need of money, or just be in need of very material things." In doing so, Cathy has found that her father overlooks the social and emotional connections that she and her siblings value. Every time Cathy and her father speak, he

only talks about his finances, and he also critiques his children for spending money on vacations and striving to just be happy. As a result, Cathy confesses, “I learned from my dad to contrast whatever he is because I hate what he is so much.” Despite her father’s protest, Cathy understands, “Whatever money I make or success I have, I will not take to the grave with me, so I will always try to be the best person and strive for happiness.” So while Cathy can rationally understand why her father is so obsessed about making money and acquiring material belongings, she does not share his viewpoints. As a response, she has settled with doing anything and everything is that opposite of what her father does. And of course, she still loves him because family is of utmost importance to her; she has somewhat come to terms with knowing that her relationship with her father is complicated.

Parent-Child Role Reversals and Other Responsibilities

Despite their already contentious relationships, most children of refugees must also act as a liaison between American institutions and their parents. Because of linguistic, cultural, or social barriers, parents frequently rely on their children to complete daily tasks that are usually the responsibility of adults: paying bills, answering phone calls, filling out forms, translating during medical visits, running the family business, and more (Park 2005:42). Such instances of parent-child role reversals are also common among other immigrant and refugee groups (see Jones and Trickett 2005; Kibria 1995; Park 2005; Sanders and Nee 1996; Zhou 1997). For this study though, I have found that children’s response to increased responsibilities bespeak a certain manifestation of transgenerational trauma. Although many participants

express a sense of frustration towards their responsibilities of explicit care-taking, they experience a deeply felt need for implicit care-taking that elicits sense of guilt when they cannot assist their parents who have already suffered so much—prior to and after relocation. In the literature I reviewed, I did not find this to be the case in non-refugee groups that also exhibit parent-child role reversals.

When Chenda's parents were able to save enough money, they purchased a liquor store in Long Beach. Although this store brought Chenda's family some economic stability, Chenda expressed frustrations about her responsibilities. She explains,

I hated the liquor store because I felt like it took away my social life in high school. I always have to be there. There wasn't any freedom. If I did hang out with my friends, in the back of my head, "Fuck, I should be watching the liquor store. My parents are there by themselves and you should be there to help them out, and just be there." Sometimes I think of my mom being there by herself, and she's usually by herself all the time. I feel guilty for not being with her. Because for one, it's dangerous. It's just hard to run the place in the ghetto by yourself. There is a lot of stuff she goes through. My dad too. My dad is super, super old.

Chenda reflects on the immense guilt she felt when she would give into her temptations to hang out with her friends—or in other words, act like a "normal teenager." She knew that she should help her parents because their job was both demanding and dangerous, but yet, she "hated" it. A few years ago, Chenda's parents sold the store and invested in a Chinese food place instead. During this time, Chenda had already moved about a hundred miles away for college.

Chenda would sometimes visit her family on the weekends, but sometimes she did not want to visit them because her parents "expected [her] to [go] every weekend

to help them out.” Because of these family obligations, Chenda has gotten into many arguments with her parents. She usually expresses, “I can’t come here all the time and come here to help you guys. I have midterms and finals.” Even though Chenda’s mother would tell her that she does not need to help them if she had homework, Chenda knew that her parents needed her help. Chenda shares, “Sometimes I feel like my mom’s forced to say, ‘Study for your test.’ Of course she wants education before everything but a small part of her will be sad.” Students like Chenda are sometimes forced to negotiate between what is best for the family and for themselves. In Chenda’s case, she was able to strike a balance—though sometimes tenuous—between her responsibilities as a child of refugees and a college student. That is why Chenda chose to attend a college where she was far enough to find freedom and independence but also close enough to go back to her hometown to help her family. When Chenda’s parents sold the Chinese food place because they could no longer manage it, Chenda warned them, “I don’t always have time to help you. Don’t always depend on me. Don’t buy something. I’m telling you right now. I can’t help you out.” It may sound selfish that Chenda is giving her parents such strict orders, but as a full-time student, Chenda needs to focus on her studies and not travel back and forth to help her parents. Partially, because Chenda’s parents were never educated, especially not in the United States or in college, they do not always understand the time it takes to complete assignments, read, and study for exams. They try their best to be supportive, but still, they often depend on Chenda and her older siblings.

Many others also find it immensely stressful to accommodate both their families' needs and their personal goals. Take my husband Ryan for example. He attended college "from eight in the morning to two in the afternoon," and then he worked a "swing shift from about five in the afternoon to one in the morning." The few hours between work and school were reserved for homework. However, when his family needed him to translate, he would have to set his homework aside and help them instead. Ryan shared, "While growing up, I had to deal with my parents' responsibilities, like calling credit card companies and dealing with grown up situations. At a young age, it was tough and still is difficult for me to have to be my parents' parent." This responsibility became particularly daunting when Ryan's father's identity was stolen. Ryan says, "When my dad got defrauded, I needed to call PayPal, Bank of America, and Transunion, and then I'd have to go to the police department." Ryan was very frustrated with his father because it was quite difficult for him to prove his father's identity to the authorities. Having lived through the Khmer Rouge, Ryan's father was immensely afraid of all government entities and did not want the government to be able to track him, so his father had purposely used different names on various documents. Ryan said, "I didn't know how to explain to the bank why none of the names on his bills matched. How am I supposed to convince them of his identity when nothing matches?" Moreover, it was particularly difficult for Ryan to perform these responsibilities because he felt that his parents did not appreciate the trouble he went through to help them.

In addition to assisting parents with work and translations, some students have had to single-handedly support their entire families. Jay, a full-time student, had to become the breadwinner and father figure in his family because he had no other choice. Jay explains,

In my situation, I gotta work and take care of my family. There's nothing I wouldn't do for them. If I'm able to work and put food on the table and keep them under a roof, I'm going to do it. My mom is really dependent on me. It's hard. I'm so young. I'm at that age in which I wanna check out parties but at the same time I wanna take care of my mom.

Since Jay's father abandoned the family when Jay was very young, he has had to support both his mother and his siblings. Jay explains, "I was always like the father figure of the house. It was hard on my part. I started working when I was fifteen." Jay works from four in the afternoon to two in the morning. Then he wakes up at seven to take his little brother and sister to school. After that, he has school from nine to three in the afternoon. He says, "Sometimes, I don't even do my homework. I have no time." As you can see, Jay is not just a college student. He has many responsibilities that sometimes make it difficult for him to pursue his college degree.

While Jay was doing all of this when he was in college, Cathy already had the day-to-day responsibilities of a household when she was in high school. When Cathy was eighteen years old, she got tired of the electricity going out every month because her mother would forget to pay the bills on time. She told her parents, "I'm going to collect the bills each month. And I'm going to write a check out to do it. All you have to do is give me the set of money." So that eighteen, she knew she could take care of her family. Cathy went on to join the National guard because she said, "The military

was the only stable thing in my life.” Growing up with refugee parents forces a child to grow up quickly.

Because Chenda, Ryan, Jay, and Cathy were responsible for their families, they sometimes had difficulty fully dedicating their time and energy to their studies. It is not that they were unmotivated, but when they had to work long hours, assist their parents, and take care of the family, completing homework or studying for an exam sometimes got pushed aside. Interviewees must negotiate between their responsibilities as the eyes and ears of their refugee parents and their responsibilities as good, hard working, and upwardly mobile people. Although the effects of parents’ war trauma is often latent, transgenerational trauma demonstrates how their parents’ realities (whether known or unknown to the younger generation) are articulated to the day-to-day realities of the younger generation. Implicit in this care-taking is a sense that the successive generation must never forget that they are children of refugees who lost everything—their history, name, language, culture, and way of life—to war, genocide, and relocation. They may not know much about their family history because of the conspiracy of silence, but they do recognize that the ghosts of the past constantly reappear as specters that linger in the present influencing their very decisions in life.

Among my interviewees and respondents, the affects associated with being second generation Cambodian American not only circulate and exist within their daily lives but also exist beyond individuals. Cambodian American affect formation consists of the transgenerational negotiation of parent-child-community relationships that create the positive (e.g., inspiration, awe, appreciation), negative (e.g., isolation,

frustration, resentment), and flat (e.g., withdrawal, as a matter-of-factness) affects. It is this formation that should inform sociologists about the identity construction and subjecthood of refugee figures. While the subsequent generations are affected by systems of inequality (e.g., racism and poverty), the feelings associated with their subjectivities can sometimes cause them to produce and reproduce those inequalities and perpetuate the system of disenfranchisement.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have provided data to give some background information about the conditions in which my participants were raised. Understanding that these contexts are interrelated to the war traumas that the first generation experienced, this study finds that trauma may be transmitted from one generation to the next via non-verbal communication. Negative affects such as anger and neglect and daily expressions of mistrust and overprotectiveness create commonalities across the younger generations. From survey data, I found that approximately 40% of respondents have both experienced intrusive thoughts about their family's experiences and had thoughts about how family experiences may negatively impact them. This shows that about a over a third of respondents express that their family's pasts continue to affect them. While these effects are not always visible or effable, they nonetheless connect the lived realities of the second generation to the pains of the first generation—revealing the ability of trauma to rupture linear temporalities. Latent traumas remain hidden and concealed but have the potential to produce and reproduce conditions in which the subsequent generations are surrounded by and

must negotiate. Some ways in which these latent traumas are articulated are via what I have identified as othering processes, ambivalence, and implicit desires and explicit needs for care-taking.

Participants in this study show how trauma from the first generation can be transmitted via certain affects such as despair and anger. However, it is primarily the latent articulations between parental mental health conditions and social realities that mediate the transmission process. Many participants discussed how parents tended to either be neglectful or overprotective. These types of child socialization stem from parents' inability to cope with traumas (including war trauma and trauma from resettlement) and pressures to gain financial stability. The overwhelming sense of mistrust that proliferates throughout the Cambodian community is also transmitted from one generation to another. Although most participants recognize how this mistrust has hurt the cohesiveness of the overall Cambodian community, they recognize that the roots of those feelings stem from a larger sociopolitical history. This recognition demonstrates how the macro-level processes that help shape and transform trauma interact with meso-level community interrogations of silences and pain and micro-level personal connections across generations. Trauma is, therefore, both *sui generis* and a social formation that is always being constructed and contested by an affect of trauma and circulating trauma narratives (both personal and culturally sanctioned ones).

For example, this mistrust has created a mediated form of guardedness and othering within the second generation. The proliferation of gang violence coupled

with the autogenocide has taught Cambodian American youth that certain Cambodian people are not to be trusted. Because my sample of participants are either pursuing college degrees or have graduated from college, their social position puts them in contrast to the majority of the Cambodian American population. I have found that because of these differences, the younger generations have begun producing and reproducing narratives that reproduce the “normal” versus “deviant” discourses. This is one of the ways in which transgenerational latent traumas are articulated in the subsequent generations.

Because of the ambivalent and conflicted parent-child relationships, participants have noted how difficult it has been trying to maintain positive relationships with their family members, especially with their fathers. Divorces and deaths within the family tend to exacerbate these conditions further. In addition to these complicated relationships, parent-child role reversals play a role in producing and reproducing the resentment that the younger generation has for their parents. While these role reversals have been well documented among other immigrant groups, Cambodian Americans are unique in that many of the challenges are uniquely tethered to needs that stem from war trauma.

The data offered in this chapter show how social trauma, like that of the Khmer Rouge genocide and autogenocide, bespeaks the phenomenon of trauma formation, one that is similar to that of a racial formation. An affect of trauma that is developed via personal, group, and national interactions is never stable and is always open for contestation—particularly about how individuals and communities should

feel about trauma. As such our understandings and conceptualizations of trauma are subject to discursive shifts that are mediated by changes in feelings about and approaches to traumatic events. I argue that these changes may be shaped by the caesuras and protractions of time that allow for the traumas of the present to coalesce with the traumas of the past.

Sometimes the younger generations are aware of their family histories, but at other times, the latent traumas are merely articulated as mundane life activities that become reproduced in the subsequent generations. When I speak about the productive nature of trauma, I am referring to the ways that trauma can exist in the present via verbal expression but also via non-verbal communication. While poverty may exacerbate refugee mental health conditions, I have found no significant relationships between social class and first or second generation trauma. That means that trauma affects everyone involved. Transgenerational trauma is distinct from first generation trauma because it is less likely to manifest as identifiable negative affects. That is why the MSTTS was somewhat ineffective in tracing the non-verbal and non-negative manifestations of transgenerational trauma. I argue that boundary making (I/me versus them/other), ambivalence, and increased responsibilities are some everyday manifestations of second generation trauma. They may produce and reproduce some inequalities, but they are not fantastic, exciting, or histrionic. Sometimes, the everyday is simply dull and ordinary. I argue that many mundane acts that happen throughout the day are the manifestations of trauma: How do Cambodian youth interact with others? How do children develop relationships with

their parents? What are the addition responsibilities that these students have? While I have focused primarily on the flat and negative affects of transgenerational trauma in this chapter, the next chapter, I turn to discuss the positive affect of trauma.

Chapter 5: The Positive Affect of Trauma and Identity Formation

...excuse me, Amerika I'm confused?
you tell me to lighten up
but what you really mean is whiten up
you wish to wash me out,
melt me in your cauldron
excuse me, if I tip your melting pot
spill the shades onto your streets
I DON'T WANT TO LOSE MY COLOR...
Anida Yoeu Ali, *excuse me, ameriKa*

The previous two chapters showed how time-image episodes, which denote the ability of trauma to not only transcend time but also extend the past, present, and future, can come in both verbal and non-verbal forms. In Chapter 3, I discussed the ways in which stories of survival, passing comments or statements, broken narratives, and silences can articulate latent traumas from one generation to the next, producing an affect of trauma that shapes refugee subjecthood. In Chapter 4, I gave examples of how non-verbal interactions, particularly negative and flat affects and mundane experiences, can also transmit trauma across generations. While the trauma of the first generation is rooted in personal wounding and survival and may manifest as somatic and psychic responses, transgenerational trauma in the subsequent generations are neither necessarily consciously linked to the original wounding nor identifiable as mental health “disorders.”

Affect formation for the successive generations is informed by a collective exchange of affect between the first and younger generations. An affect of trauma mediates trauma formation. The source of the children’s trauma comes from an

interaction/articulation of parental relationships, personal experiences, and social trauma. I argue that it is the circulation of latent traumas that create affective potentials for Cambodian American people to generate connections with one another. In Chapter 3 and 4, I spoke primarily about the macro- and meso-level constructions of trauma and the transmission of trauma from one generation to the next. In this chapter, I examine more fully the experiences of the successive generations. I find that their experiences are not simply a mirror of their parents, elders, but rather, their navigation of ethnic and racial identity reveals that against the available discursive narratives about their history (given to them through multicultural education and Asian American history), theirs is an inexact fit. To draw out the relationships between collective feelings and social experiences, I will speak about how Cambodian Americans, students in particular, come into recognition about their identities as refugee subjects.

Cambodian American experiences act as a site of articulation and becoming. Contrary to the claims made by classical constructivists like Robert E. Park, experience is understood not as “Truth” but as the practice and process of making sense—symbolically and narratively—of struggles over material conditions and meaning (Brah 2009). Experience is neither unified nor fixed; it is contextual, contingent, and fragmented. Hall elaborates,

...this concept of identity⁴³ does *not* signal that stable core of the self, unfolding from beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change; the bit of the self which remains always-already ‘the same’, identical to itself across time... [This concept of identity] accepts that identities are never unified and... increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourse, practices and positions. (1996b:3-4)

One person’s experience cannot be essentialized to act as an authentic representation of an entire ethnic group’s identity. Moreover, one person’s current identity is never self-evident and is always negotiated and renegotiated. In classical constructivist race theory, we assume experience as evidence so we need not question nor explore the nuanced differences produced through experience. Differences either become facts among individuals or differences become mapped as internally homogenous onto groups identified as different; this thereby reproduces dominant ideological systems (Brah 2009).

Even though these differences are often taken as self-evident and the marked bodies on which these differences are inscribed are often written out of history, merely making the invisible visible is not enough. By only introducing an additive element, we cannot critically examine the ideological systems and categories of representation that are reproduced through the writing of history and experience. Scott (1992:27) writes, “Talking about experience in these ways leads us to take the existence of individuals for granted (experience is something people have) rather than to ask how

⁴³ For Stuart Hall, identity is not something people are born with. For example, in Britain, Hall’s son had to go through a process of “learning to be Black, learning to come into identification” (2009:205). There is no true self until identity is learned through experience.

conceptions of selves (of subjects and their identities) are produced.” Rather than having individuals who have experience, it is subjects who are constituted through experience (Scott 1992). Scott details how specific conditions create subjecthood and identity based upon experience and discourse. She writes,

[Subjects] are not unified, autonomous individuals exercising free will, but rather subjects whose agency is created through situations and statuses conferred on them. Being a subject means being “subject to definite conditions of existence, conditions of endowment of agents and conditions of exercise.” These conditions enable choices, although they are not unlimited...Since discourse is by definition shared, experience is collective as well as individual. Experience is a subject’s history. Language is the site of history’s enactment. (1992:34)

Therefore, subjects are constituted through discourses, but this discourse is based upon shared collective experiences. Experience cannot be taken a face value because experience is always contextual. What we understand as experience is merely one articulation of becoming amongst a vast array of potentials that may be articulated at precisely that same moment where we register that a certain experience is happening, but is already displaced by some other potential.

Since experience is inherently fragmentary, it is the role of the writer to create tropes and emplotments that weave the various experiences together into a coherent story (Haraway 1988; Scott 1992; White 1995). By exposing this fragmentary and incomplete nature of experience along with the constructedness or mythical features of history and science, Haraway (1988:585) argues for “a doctrine and practice of objectivity that privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections, and hope for transformation of systems of knowledge and ways

of seeing.” Similar to the methodology of the oppressed (Sandoval 2000), Haraway’s concept of oppositional cyborg feminism celebrates difference critically, not as relativism, but as situated specificity.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY IN EDUCATION

I focused on Cambodian American students because the majority of scholarly research on this population has revolved around mental health struggles, gang participation, incarceration, and poverty. But by focusing on students, I want to avoid any claims that Cambodian American college students are simply a part of the model minority because there are many personal, familial, and social struggles that have made it tremendously difficult for students. With almost 40% of the overall Cambodian population with less than a high school diploma, narratives of the model minority fail to account for and even obscure the challenges faced by Cambodian American students. Nonetheless, I believe that it is necessary to also speak about the experiences of those who are or have pursued postsecondary education. Instead of simply categorizing students as either model minorities or failed model minorities, it is important to investigate the nuances of group-level and individual-level experiences. Through my research, I have found that students have attributed their goals and aspirations—their desires to strive for more—to their parents’ struggles. Instead of citing the culture of poverty to explain why students do not do well in school, we need to consider how “community cultural wealth” (Yosso 2005) has contributed to Cambodian American student aspirations and success.

In general, there are many challenges that arise for first generation college students, many of whom disproportionately come from disadvantaged racial, income, and gender groups (Lohfink and Paulsen 2005; McCarron and Inkelas 2006). In the context of larger educational stratifications that stem from unequal access to quality education (based on de jure and de facto discrimination), first generation college students experience an intersection of multiple sources of oppression (Lee 2002; Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000). From a Critical Legal Studies perspective, an intellectual precursor to Critical Race Theory, we can see how historically, there have been court cases and laws that have established legal segregation of students of color from predominantly white (and most often more well-resourced) schools. In addition to federal cases such as *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which established legal precedence for supposedly “separate but equal” facilities, state laws such as in the California Assembly Bill 268 (1885) mandated the establishment of segregated educational facilities that were solely designated for “Mongolians” (“The Chinese School” 1885). Although such decisions were “legally” reversed by cases such as *Alvarez v. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District*, *Lau v. Nichols*, and *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka*, educational disparities were and are still prevalent in low-income schools (which often have a student body consisting of primarily students of color). Because of inadequate funding to low-performing schools, first-generation college students often face additional challenges when they pursue higher education. According to Lohfink and Paulsen (2005), “Being the first in one’s family to experience the culture of college and lacking the intergenerational benefits of information about college also

make participation in college a particularly formidable task for first generation students.” In addition to equal access to quality education, there are also challenges of retention. Even for those who successfully apply for and enroll in college, graduation rates for first generation students are far below those of non-first generation students (Dennis, Phinney, Chuateco 2005).

Despite such structural challenges, however, Yosso (2005) has identified several forms of communities of color capital that can contribute to student-of-color educational success. For my sample, I have identified that Cambodian students have familial, aspirational, and resistant forms of community cultural wealth. Familial capital refers to the cultural knowledge (i.e., community history and memory) that is nurtured by kinship ties (Yosso 2005). Aspirational capitals refers to the community’s or families’ resiliency in striving for more despite real and perceived barriers (Yosso 2006). And resistant capital refers to the knowledges and skills developed via resistance against inequality (Yosso 2005). In addition to these, I posit that Cambodian Americans also have *affective capital*. Affective capital refers to the embodied connections that minority youth have to both their families and their community. This capital may not be consciously acknowledged, defined, or identified, but it nonetheless exists to produce a potential for Cambodian people to form deeply affective bonds. Affective capital can provide a foundation for which familial, aspirational, and resistance forms of community cultural wealth are built upon. Instead of reproducing deficit-based models of culture (based on race, ethnicity, and trauma), my theoretical

frameworks consider the possibilities of how trauma can produce affective capital among Cambodian American communities.

In the following sections, I will address the process of ethnic and cultural identity development, especially as related to Yosso's ideas of community cultural wealth. I argue that transgenerational trauma and the affective connections that can potentially generate connections between various groups of Cambodians (e.g., the older generation, different social groups). Community cultural wealth encapsulates the productive nature of trauma. Wealth most commonly denotes "the total extent of an individual's accumulated assets and resources" (Yosso 2005:78). While transgenerational trauma is not necessarily an asset or a resource, it does not mean that it can never be an asset or a resource. In this chapter, I focus on how ethnic and cultural identity development (which goes hand-in-hand, in the Cambodian American case, with trauma subject formation) can be painful but also produce positive affects of awe, inspiration, motivation, and gratitude.

CULTURAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

In hopes of bridging the gap between reductionism/essentialism and pluralism, Hall (1996a, 1996b) critiques the concept of identity (racial identity in particular) as something unified and original, but also objects to the fully deconstructive approach in explaining identity. Identity is always constructed discursively through splitting—the construction of the "other" by histories that are either told or silenced. For example, there is no English or American history without colonial history. Therefore, identity is strategic, positional and contingent because

identities are constituted within representation and produced in specific historical and institutional contexts. Hall (1996b:4) writes, “Identities are about questions of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’ so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves.” If “identities are points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us,” then Asian or Asian American, as an identity, is a historical, political, and cultural category (Hall 1996b:6). Ethnic identity is a socially, politically, and culturally constructed category because it is not grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories; there are no such guarantees in nature (Hall 1986/2008). Ethnic identity is rearticulated through a change of consciousness, a change in self-recognition, and a new process of identification.

For those reasons, instead of suppressing difference, it is important to engage with difference. Hall (1996a, 2003) refers to Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism (self/other) to argue that identities are constructed through difference. In terms of difference, Hall (2003:235) suggests, “[W]e need ‘*difference*’ because we can only construct meaning through a dialogue with the ‘*Other*’” (emphasis in original). All meaning becomes relative to one’s position in the world as juxtaposed with others’ multiple positions in the world. He writes, “*The Other, in short, is essential to meaning*” (Hall 2003:236 emphasis in original). Difference, however, is not just pure otherness. Identities may differ but the meaning of this difference is also deferred because identities are never finished nor completed.

The dialogic relationship between similarity/continuity and difference/rupture are central to the development of a cultural identity and ethnicity that is contingent upon colonialism, slavery, and diaspora—not particularly in this order because of the nonlinearity and contingent nature associated with memory and experience. Because meaning cannot be finally fixed, every ideological sign is therefore multiple. Rearticulation demonstrates the “continuous discursive ‘play’ or shifting of meaning within language,” creating the “condition of possibility of ideological contestation” (Hall 1993/2008:295).⁴⁴ Hall suggests that ethnicity must be decoupled from state violence and recoupled or rearticulated with a positive conception of ethnicity from the margins and of the periphery.

In order to understand how race is socially and political constructed through processes of racial formation, we must trace the ways race has been historically articulated through micro- and macro-level racial projects (Omi and Winant 1994). Rearticulation, therefore, gives us the opportunity to deconstruct and reconstruct more critical and positive conceptions of ethnicity, identity, and culture in relation to race. In terms of Cambodian Americans, first-hand and/or transgenerational trauma experiences can be rearticulated not only as individual suffering but a shared experience. For example, Eng and Han (2003:366) argue that there should be a “refusal to view identities under social erasure as individual pathology and permanent

⁴⁴ For example, Asian Americans were understood to be the “yellow peril,” a threat to American livelihood. They were rearticulated as the “model minority,” model American immigrants. Even though they are discursively rearticulated, significations of the yellow peril still exist to discipline those Asians who do not conform to the model minority myth.

damage” because the process of identity construction is an inherently social and historical phenomenon. Furthermore, Eng and Han (2003:366) have identified that among Asian Americans, there is a “communal appropriation of melancholia” that functions as a “structure of everyday life.” The multitude of losses (of the homeland, culture, language, status, and so) is not an individual but a group experiences that includes both similarities and differences and helps shape Asian American identities.

Among the vastly diverse Asian American population and even Cambodian Americans, individual ethnic identity development can differ drastically from one person to another. Generally, however, ethnic identity formation results from the negotiation between home culture and dominant culture. Generally, ethnic identity formation has been conceptualized as a linear process whereby adolescents move from the one stage (in which ethnicity is avoided and marginalized) to another (in which youth come to an internal resolution based on self-identity exploration and self-acceptance) (Young 1998). Through my research, however, I have found that this process need not be linear, and self-acceptance may still be out of reach for many. Young (1998) also identifies four typologies of Asian American children: the golden child, misfit child, obedient child, and hyphenated child. The Golden Child is expected to conform to the extremely high expectations of their parents and family. The Misfit Child follows the path of antisocial behavior. The Obedient Child is expected to uphold traditional values and be respectful of others. The Hyphenated Child struggles to find a balance between traditional and mainstream values in many ways. For my sample, it is unlikely for any person to fit perfectly into one social type.

Most straddle multiple categories. Also depending on one's social class and religion (e.g., Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity), parental "expectations" may vary greatly. In my sample, many Cambodian parents did not always have high expectations for schooling and education because in their minds, simple survival was always more important.

Although Young's conceptualization would benefit from more nuance, it nonetheless demonstrates the multiple possibilities for Asian American ethnic identity development. In terms of my research, I have found that most interviewees who are college-age are in the process of self-identity exploration. But even those who are older and more mature cannot fully identify as having self-identity acceptance. As stated by Stuart Hall, identity formation is always a constant process of engagement. I find that it is the coming into recognition of parents' histories, whether mediated by their pursuit of higher education, trips to Cambodia, or simple conversations, that allow interviewees to continue to grapple with who they are and their belonging in the United States. On the one hand, the narrative of ethnic belonging and identity manifests as an important vehicle for understanding parents, but on the other hand, it suggests the limits of Asian American identity discourse. To begin addressing these challenges, I begin to map some of the intersections between trauma, affect, and identity formation in this chapter—with an emphasis on the positive affects of transgenerational trauma.

POSITIVE AFFECT OF TRAUMA

Acculturation Without Assimilation

Acculturation is a dynamic process by which the “culture of a society is modified as the result of contact with the culture of one or more other societies” (Gillin and Raimy 1940:371). This process may happen via an individual or through a group (Teske and Nelson 1974). The level of acculturation can differ from individual to individual. Assimilation is “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups; and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life” (Park and Burgess 1921:735). Although acculturation and assimilation are similar, they differ in at least two specific aspects. While acculturation does not require acceptance from the dominant group, assimilation does require such acceptance (Teske and Neson 1974). Also, unlike acculturation, assimilation requires that a minority group foster positive feelings about the dominant or out-group. So in my study, I have found that many Cambodian Americans are acculturated to dominant American culture, but nonetheless do not identify as solely American because of the fact that they are marked with phenotypical differences. Also, it is impossible for them to break the nexus between family history, culture, and traditions that tethers them to their Cambodian backgrounds. They adopt American values, attitudes, and sentiments, but what is lacking is the acceptance from the dominant group. They have positive attitudes toward being “American,” but others will never view them as solely American because of perpetual foreigner and model minority stereotypes (see Espiritu 2000; Lowe 1996; Tuan 1998). Furthermore, the Cambodian Americans I have spoken to have also raised issues of conflict between

American culture and Cambodian culture. As a result, many in the older generation have trouble assimilating to or adopting positive attitudes about American traditions, views, and sentiments.⁴⁵

Most of my participants believe that it is the intersection between their Khmer background (e.g., history, culture, and traditions) and their American upbringing that generates a unique identity. For example, Daphne, a masters student in her mid-twenties, believes that for children of first-generation Cambodian refugees, it is of utmost importance for them to “balance two cultures.” Having to deal with “parents who have experienced the Khmer Rouge and may still suffer from PTSD,” Daphne believes that it is the responsibility of the younger generation, her generation, to “build a positive construct of Khmer people and family struggles by going to school and building a strong foundation to maintaining Khmer culture.” As you can see, there is a recognition of the traumatic past, but there is an active desire to avoid becoming entrenched in that trauma. The goal is to not deny that suffering but to acknowledge and use it as a source of articulation between the Cambodian culture and American culture.

On the individual-level, however, youth’s cultural identity development was sometimes fraught. It was not that the youth outwardly denied their Cambodian identity or background, but sometimes their parents’ expectations did not align with

⁴⁵ For an earlier study on Cambodian American identity, see Smith-Hefner (1998).

what children were learning at school or on television.⁴⁶ Having struggled with changes from adolescence to adulthood, Diana, a current masters student in her mid-twenties, reflected on her experiences and found many contradictions between her American and Cambodian identities. Diana shares, “When I was growing up, there was a culture clash. My mom thought my siblings and I were too American.” Diana said that her brother was even more Americanized than she was, but her mother could not see it because as a boy, her brother was given much more freedom and leeway. Diana discusses candidly about the gendered treatment of Cambodian girls, “As a girl, I had to stay home and do my chores and things like that, stay close to family or don't even go out. I couldn't even go to a slumber party. I always had to be home, staying close to my grandmother.” But having been so close to her grandmother, Diana feels that she is more grounded to her Cambodian culture than those of her fellow peers. Diana shares, “Growing up, it was hard for me to assimilate because I kind of resented American culture because I didn't go to a school where people looked like me or acted like me.” She goes on, “I definitely felt marginalized and isolated. But now I try to embrace being Cambodian.” Not able to identify as purely Cambodian or American, Diana claims that she is “something in between.” As a result of this recognition along with the contradictions and conflicts, Diana can more easily understand and live up to Daphne's calls for the younger generation to

⁴⁶ Such intergenerational conflict has been prominent among immigrant and refugee communities. See Kibria (1995), Ong (2003), Park (2005), and others.

give back to the community. Soon to be a school counselor, Diana wants to educate other Cambodian youth and bring more awareness about the culture and the history.

Like Diana, Katrina and Chanvatey also had trouble coming to terms with what it meant to be Cambodian American, especially given their experiences of displacement in middle and high school. Katrina, an undergraduate student in her early twenties, had always felt out of place while she was in school because she did not fit into the primarily Cambodian group (which she thought were “ghetto”), but she also did not fit into the “white-washed” Asian groups. She and her sister often felt like loners without a solid social group. She says, “That’s why I always felt out of place.” Unlike Katrina, Chanvatey was able to more easily weave in and out of the Cambodian and American categories. Chanvatey, an undergraduate student in his early twenties, says, “I claim Khmer more than American. I can't really deny the influence American culture has had on me. Even though everything else is American, my household is Khmer and my heart is Khmer.” So on the surface, Chanvatey may seem like he is well-aculturated, but he actually holds dear his Cambodian culture and history. Later in this chapter, I will further discuss how Chanvatey’s identity is deeply influenced by this feelings and understandings about his people’s traumatic history.

The complex and dynamic nature of this cultural negotiation and identity development can be summed up by Sok’s description of his self-identification of Cambodian “as something that is always fluid.” An undergraduate in his early twenties, Sok finds that his identity changes when his perspective change. To their

dismay, Sok's parents like many of my participants' parents see their children as more American than Cambodian. Sok acknowledges that this is mostly true because he is quite Americanized. However, being Cambodian is something that he identifies with great pride. Although he has acculturated, he will always see himself as Cambodian.

There are some parents, however, who lament that their children are too Cambodian and therefore, encourage their children to embrace their Americanness. For example, when Alyssa's parents were trying to figure out what to name her, they asked a friend and the doctor and came up with Anglo first and middle names. Alyssa, currently an undergraduate student in her early twenties, said that her parents did this because they "wanted [her] to assimilate." Beyond this naming process, Vanna's mother wanted English to be Vanna's first language. Because Vanna's mother struggled to learn English when she first resettled in the United States, Vanna's mother did not want Vanna to have any trouble with the language. As an undergraduate student in her early twenties, Vanna has a very proficient grasp of the English language but weak control of Khmer. Similar to Vanna's parents, Vincent's parents also encouraged him to stop speaking Khmer because as he says, "It's going to die out. There's not much utility to it." Because of this, Vincent's parents do not speak much Khmer anymore. Largely, Vincent and his parents feel that they are well-adjusted to American culture. But despite pressures to fit in and acculturate, participants still recognize the centrality of how war and the refugee experience shape their identities—who they are, how they feel, and what they do, especially as related to their aspirations from higher education.

In Pursuit of Higher Education

Even though many students in this study do not know the specifics of what their parents or family members experienced during the Khmer Rouge genocide, the majority of them assert that their parents' struggles to survive in Cambodia, at the Thai refugee camps, and in the United States that inspire them to achieve more than what their parents could have ever attempted. In this section, I provide a few examples of how transgenerational trauma is productive in ways that produce feelings of awe and inspiration among Cambodian American youth. I must note, however, that while some consciously use education to rectify the injustices caused by American militarism, the Khmer Rouge, and the lack of opportunities in the United States, others pursue higher education because it is just something that people do. This may not be true for all, but I would say that a majority assert that the quest for success demonstrates what Rousseau et al. (1999:1270) have found "as [an] overcompensation on the part of the children and grandchildren of the survivors of a massacre, who inherit the implicit obligation to succeed for the sake of those no longer among the living." But beyond just recognizing those who have passed, the students in this study express an obligation to succeed because of the struggles of those who are living—survivors of a traumatic past and a financially difficult present. While ethnic identity development and belonging literature credit the college years as a focal period in which youth are able to more naturally engage with their ethnic identity (Young 1998), this is even more pronounced among children of Cambodian American refugees. In addition to the negative affects discussed in the previous chapter, many

also express positive affect toward their familial experiences and trauma because they recognize that it is that experience which compels them to work hard to pursue higher education and a better life for themselves and for their families. The presence of resistant and familial capital is exemplified in the narratives of Chanvatey, Katrina, Chenda, and Alyssa.

When Chanvatey describes what it means for him to be a Cambodian person, he explains that it has to do with living with his family's history: "Being Khmer in my generation is to understand what our parents went through." It is this knowledge about the past that motivates him to do better for himself and his family. Chanvatey elaborates,

I honestly love my parents. I treat them with the utmost respect. I know despite all that they went through, they've sacrificed so much for us. I don't really know what I can do but get an education. I feel that my parents gave up everything to come here for us to get a better life.

Since Chanvatey's parents have sacrificed so much for the well-being of the children, Chanvatey expresses that it is his responsibility to pursue a better life and take care of his parents. Chanvatey explains that failure to do so would suggest that the Khmer Rouge influence has not ended and is continuing to hurt the Cambodian people. He calls for Cambodian people to

break out of whatever hole your family was put in during the reign of the Khmer Rouge. Maybe your parents weren't able to do it because of the time of their life. Bring your family out of that rut or that hole and make something of your life. Overcoming that barrier. Eliminate what [Pol Pot] did.

Pursuing higher education, something that was systematically denied to his parents, is a way for Chanvatey to not only attain the skills necessary to find a good job to

support his parents but also combat the atrocities and resist against the horrors that were inflicted on the Cambodian people, as a whole. By recognizing elders' struggles and by using that knowledge as inspiration, he believes that he and other Cambodian youth can combat the hurtful past that continues to create barriers for Cambodian people.

This history is what shapes Chanvatey dreams and aspirations and drives him to pursue his education. He shares, "I want to get out of where I am." Although he does not believe that he and his parents had a horrible life, he does feel that based on how hard they have worked and based on their piety, ethics, and morals as Mormons, they "deserve more than this." Because Chanvatey believes that he puts in more effort than most of his classmates, he feels that it should mean that he deserves more, but he understands that is just "not how the world works." That is why he has to work so much harder to make sure that he can "get [his] family out of where [they] are." It is imperative for Chanvatey to be able to secure a better life for him and his family. Comparing himself to his peers in college, Chanvatey recognizes how many merely pursue an education because their parents force them to. Chanvatey, however, shares, "I had different motivations for college. I have always kept my family in my mind." As a first generation college student and a child of refugee parents, higher education is not merely a means to an end (i.e., a job). While this is definitely one of the goals because students like Chanvatey believe that higher education will help them gain financial stability, a postsecondary degree, more broadly, symbolizes success and pride.

Katrina also stated that she has decided to focus on school because she has seen her mother struggle to make ends meet and struggle to survive in a foreign country. She describes how she has purposely stayed out of trouble in order to focus on maintaining the morals and values instilled in her by her mother.

It gets really heartbreaking because my mom tells me how she goes through it. It's just surviving. Pretty much trying to survive during the Khmer Rouge. Pretty much her entire life she just struggled. She didn't really have anyone to lean on. For me, that's why I guess I understand that they've been through a lot. And that's why I do not try to go onto the wrong path: stealing or robbing or you know, not focusing on school. Whatever choice I make, everything that I do, I think about my mom. Is it right for me to do it? If I make her worry about it, I think I shouldn't be doing that.

Katrina acknowledges how there are many ghosts that still linger from her mother's past. Influenced by her mother's bravery, she has decided to pursue higher education and focus on doing what is "right." Katrina does not take for granted the traumas of her family's history. She acknowledges the ghosts of the pasts and pushes on to pursue a better future so that she can do well for herself and her family. Once, Katrina asked her younger cousin why she was applying to college. Her cousin said that college was a way for her "to get away from her parents and stay away from her family." Shocked by her cousin's response, Katrina shares, "That wasn't a correct reasoning for why she should wanna go to college or a university. I would explain to her that there should be a different reason." For Katrina, those reasons should be based on one's family, values, and morals. Such aspirations and motivations, and I would also say their identities about who they are and how they should act, are largely shaped by the children's

recognition and understanding of parents' struggles. This familial capital that is born from suffering helps youth formulate their goals and aspirations for a better future.

Unlike Chanvatey and Katrina, Chenda, an undergraduate in her early twenties, has never really discussed the war with her parents. However, growing up, Chenda shared a room with her grandmother. She recalled, "When I was really small, I could see gunshot wounds on my grandma's back. I would mess with them. 'What's this?' She said it's a gunshot. When I was little, I didn't know. I didn't realize how serious it was." Although Chenda never got the specific details about what happened to her family, she learned about some details and the overall gravity of the war in a college course. In that class, Chenda discovered how lucky her parents were to survive. Their resilience not only as refugees but also as unskilled laborers inspire Chenda to complete her college degree. She says,

I'm going to school because my parents worked so hard, just a part of me has to go to school because they worked so hard to be here. I wanna make money and start working for them because they've been working for me my entire life. I want to give back to them.

At first, it was difficult for Chenda's family when she decided to attend college two hours away from home; her parents relied on her to help at the family business. But Chenda and her family ultimately knew that a college degree would provide her with more options in finding a good and stable job.

Like the others, Alyssa greatly respects her parents and all that they have done in ensuring that she has opportunities to pursue an education. It took many years for Alyssa to realize that her parents had experienced something tremendously hurtful

and tragic. When she was seven years old, she and her family went on a trip to Cambodia to visit their remaining family and to do a little bit of sightseeing. She remembers visiting the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, a former high school that was transformed into a prison and torture site by the Khmer Rouge. She was unsure why her parents had stopped there because they did not explain where they were going. But even still, she says, “I had a sense of what it was.” This sense, or affective connection, defied cognition and allowed her to have an embodied experience being amongst something so “stark and grim.” Despite not knowing where she was, her young body felt that she did not like being there. Even though it “freaked” her out, she described the museum as “surprisingly unimpressive because it was just like a dilapidated building.” This initial flat affect transformed into deeper attachments when Alyssa began learning about the Khmer Rouge. The visit generated an incipience that would later develop into an affective connection between Alyssa and her parents.

In retrospect, Alyssa shares, “Seeing my father was really powerful.” By juxtaposing her father’s presence and her fears at the prison, she imagined how “[t]hat could’ve been him.” Because she was so young, this scared her, and she actively tried to push these thoughts of death and suffering from her consciousness. But nonetheless, Alyssa was very much still articulated to these feelings that she had experienced. They were latent but always incipient and becoming. Perhaps it would have been easier if she had known where they were going and why, but Alyssa’s parents did not brief or debrief her of their visit. She explains, “My family is not very

expressive. So we just went there, looked at it, and left. No one really said anything.” As suggested by Chapter 3, this silence and the lack of communication are sources of trauma transmission.

Recognizing how weird this experience was when she was a child, Alyssa acknowledges that she has a “much better appreciation” of that visit now that she is older. She explains, “I can put that into perspective and understand the uniqueness of [my parents’] situation, the uniqueness of how I am here.” By developing this understanding and this ability to reflect and draw parallels between her parents’ experiences, her current situation, and larger socio-historical contexts, Alyssa expresses that she can better manage her schoolwork and other demands. Instead of viewing her family’s past as something that needs to be severed from her thoughts, Alyssa acknowledges that she will always be articulated to certain latent traumas. Because of the productive nature of these traumas, Alyssa shares,

It really helps when I am struggling through problem sets at school. It’s like, “Oh, I hate this. I don’t want to do this anymore.” Then you just remind yourself, like “Well, my parents survived a genocide, so I think I can do this.” So having a great perspective.

So while it is definitely possible for transgenerational trauma to manifest as a burden or something for which children much cope, it is also possible that the affects of trauma can function as inspiration for children to persevere when they experience certain pressures. Sometimes the latent articulations of trauma may be expressed as both burden and inspiration—simultaneously and contradictorily.

As young Cambodian Americans, many of my participants believe that obtaining an education is one of the few ways that they can give back to their parents and right the wrongs that have disenfranchised their families. In order to do so, it is very important for them to acknowledge the immense struggles their parents have faced—survival during the war and survival in the United States. As you can see, transgenerational trauma is not always debilitating or regressive. Instead of suppressing the anger and pain associated with war and genocide, some of the students in this study have learned to work with their families' traumas to create opportunities that address the disparities created and perpetuated by state violence and neglect. This resistant capital allows students to engage with their families' traumatic histories while striving for opportunities that were systematically denied to Cambodians by not only the Khmer Rouge but unequal access to higher education and a lack of institutional support for refugees. My participants' aspirational, familial, resistant, and affective capital show that despite low rates of educational attainment, Cambodian students have a wealth of community support. This support and wealth is most commonly born from collective suffering.

While macro-level processes such as refugee admittance and relocation policies have negatively affected the social outlook for children of refugees (e.g., quality of education and access to housing and jobs), meso- and micro-level experiences have allowed some Cambodian American students to develop a deep connection to their families' traumatic pasts, allowing them to use the pains for the past as motivation and inspiration in the present. Therefore, transgenerational trauma does not necessarily

have to manifest as regressive or pathological attachments. Instead, their affective connections (rather than political and identity-based ones) opens the space for children of refugees to engage with the traumas and the silences of those traumas and use those negative affects to produce aspirations and potential future outlooks. This again speaks to the futurity of trauma and the ability of trauma to become something else—both negative, positive, and mundane. As discussed in Chapter 3 and 4, transgenerational trauma can be transmitted in multiple forms, verbal and non-verbal. But I have also found that visits to Cambodia open up the possibilities of cognitive and affective engagement and attachment. In terms of trauma formation, visits to one's ancestral homeland articulates larger political and historical processes with one's personal biography and history.

Visiting Cambodia

Just as Alyssa was able to contextualize her parents' experiences after she visited the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, so too were many others able to finally come to terms with the secrets that their parents had been concealing and suppressing for so long after they visited Cambodia—with or without their families. 50% of my interviewees and participants have visited Cambodia. My data show that some families are still afraid of the political system that is in power in Cambodia, and others simply cannot afford the airfare and other expenses associated with “going back.”

When I discussed my interests about going to Cambodia during class at Sala Khmer, a non-profit community-run Cambodian language school, my teacher expressed so much excitement. He wanted me to not only visit Angkor Wat and the

surrounding temples but also go see Ratanakiri Mondulkiri, the remote rainforest. When I asked him what was his favorite location, he informed me that he had actually never gone to any of those destinations. When he was a young man, he was too focused on going to school and working, so he never made time to visit the wonders within Cambodia. During the Khmer Rouge era, his main focus was survival. Thereafter, he and his family escaped to Thailand where they later applied for resettlement in the United States. He deeply regrets that he never had the opportunity to see his home country. When I asked my teacher why he has never gone back to Cambodia, he shared that he would never go back unless the current government, the Cambodian People's Party, run by long-time Prime Minister Hun Sen, was overthrown. As an aging grandfather, he fears that this will not happen in his lifetime. He told me, "When I die, I hope to be reincarnated back to my home country, but as for right now, I will not go back." My teacher's apprehension about going back to Cambodia is shared by my in-laws and by other Cambodian parents who believe that it is still too dangerous for them to return, even for a visit. Many Cambodian refugees also cannot afford this luxury because as Melanie, a college graduate in her mid-twenties, details, it costs about \$10,000 every time her parents would visit Cambodia. The plane tickets were approximately \$5,000 and the rest was to be given to family members or used for other miscellaneous expenses. For how hard her mother works for that money, Melanie does not think it is a justifiable expense.

For the younger generations, there is an acknowledgement that Cambodia is a "Third World" country that is run by a corrupt person, but they do not share the

longstanding fears that their parents have. Contrary to a regressive analysis of trauma, my theorization of transgenerational trauma gives space to show how this mediated and collective form can produce possibilities of transnational and transgenerational engagement. Many enjoyed going to their parents' home country to get a better understanding of the context of where and how their parents were raised and what ensued to cause their parents to seek refuge in the United States. When Seatha, an undergraduate student in her early twenties, went to Phnom Penh—the capitol of Cambodia—with her family, her parents did not want to go to Tuol Sleng, so she went by herself. Seatha said that she hoped the museum would be more informative, meaning that it would describe “how the Khmer Rouge rose to power, including the important political players that led to their installment.” Seatha continues her critique, “I don't think it does anyone any good to see the place without really knowing or without really learning something.” Without context, the displays of the blood stains and torture devices merely become a spectacle and attraction for tourists. In addition to such institutionalized settings of public memorialization, there exists also an industry of memorialization (consisting of films, memoirs, and museums) that allows certain institutions to make money off of the spectacles of suffering (Parr 2008). Such museums and exhibitions make up a majority of the atrocity tourism that are prevalent in Cambodia. But even though these sites, such as Tuol Sleng, may not critically examine the political and social history of the Khmer Rouge, I have found that these visits often generate an affective connection between the second generation and the suffering and the pains of the past.

Hoping to gain insight and closure about her family's experience, Seatha felt that she needed to do more research to understand what happened to her family and other Cambodia people. Dismayed by the lack of information at Tuol Sleng but inspired to learn more, Seatha decided to return to Cambodia in the summer after her first year of college to work for a non-governmental organization. She collected interviews with native Cambodians about "education reform, community education, conflict-resolution, and arms removal." Through this process of working with other Cambodians, Seatha was able to learn more about the war and develop a stronger sense of being "more appreciative of family" and where she comes from.

This coming into awareness about one's traumatic past was also the case for Vanna who visited Cambodia with her parents after her seventh grade year. Although her mother felt that it was still too dangerous for their family to go back to Cambodia, they had family obligations that required their presence. Vanna's uncle was getting married, and since her grandparents had both passed away, her dad, the oldest of all the siblings, was going to act as the parent of her uncle. While in Cambodia, Vanna went to visit the area where her mother was from. She remembers, "We drove for a very long time. That's how I know my mom is from a rural area." Vanna and her parents were going to visit the burial sites for her mother's parents. She shares, "Honestly, I didn't really know it was a burial site. It was just like a barbwire-y fence and just mounds of dirt. You can't tell which was which." These trips create an opening for the younger generation to more candidly engage with their parents about the past. Parents cannot avoid talking about their pasts when the entire family goes to

visit an unmarked grave in the middle of the countryside. The visit was obviously sad and triggered negative feelings and emotions within Vanna and her family, but this trip was also informative and eye-opening. Positive and negative affects are not diametrically opposed but are instead connected and complementary.

Chenda, in particular, found that her and her family's trip to Cambodia was quite an eye-opening experience. She shares, "When I went to Cambodia last summer, I started learning a whole bunch of stuff. My parents would bring up stories that were intense." Despite the discomfort and the initial shock, my interviewees like Chenda believe that it is very important for them to find out where they came from, even if it is among the shadows of death and suffering. Although these trips help the subsequent generations learn about their family's pasts, some have not gotten the opportunity to do so because of parents' lingering fears and because of financial constraints. Without that physical (geographic) connection, they are still tied to their home country, but visits to Cambodia make it easier for children to understand their parents' perspective and their subsequent upbringing.

Transgenerational Trauma - Coming into Recognition

Very few actually had a full understanding of their parents' pasts and the sociohistorical and political events that contextualize their lives. Learning more about the Khmer Rouge genocide and Pol Pot (either on their own or through a class), many of my participants have become more aware of why their parents were the way they were. When some of them actively searched for documentaries, books, and college courses so that they could finally learn about what they had not been taught by their

parents or their compulsory education,⁴⁷ they were finally able to understand why their parents and other families members were different as compared to the family of their non-Cambodian peers. Gaps in knowledge have forced some to imagine what it would have been like to have aunts, uncles, and grandparents while others noted that they did not know what to mourn because they had never had extended family before and did not know how to “miss” something they had never known. Nonetheless, the coming into recognition about parents’ experiences has been very critical to the cultural identity development of my participants. Many of them formulate attitudes about their culture or their backgrounds based upon the suffering and survival of the older generation. It is the older generation’s pain that become the motivation for the younger generations to acknowledge their histories, work hard to take care of parents, and/or contribute to patching up the losses and pains in the community. Such aspirational capital stems from familial, resistant, and affective capital.

Unlike identity politics, trauma formation and refugee subjecthood is not based upon a singular politicized identity (i.e., identities based on loss, pain, and wounds) that entrench and inscribe its loss in politics that have no future, which triumphs over the loss, pain, and wounds (Brown 1993). There must be a recognition of those pains and wounds, but there exists a futurity to trauma that opens up multiple possibilities of engagement. As such, the Cambodian Americans in this study are always coming into recognition about their family’s traumatic pasts and working through those histories. They are not necessarily entrenched as wounded subjects that

⁴⁷ I have more on this topic but do not have room to fully explore it in this chapter.

are necessarily defined by their parents' legal status (as refugees). In the following section, I will first discuss how the processes of imagination create the possibilities for children to connect with their cultural and familial pasts. Then I will describe how youth remain invested in trauma narratives and how these narratives shape their identity construction.

Imaginariness: Feeling What Is Not There

The imagination, a central component of what makes up the time-image episode (as discussed in Chapter 3), is what allows for the subsequent generations to develop a close connection with their parents and other Cambodians. I argue that affective connections mediate the imaginary processes and vice versa. In addition to interacting with parents, Cambodian Americans also engage with the hauntings of social trauma. It is not the dead who haunt the living, but that which cannot be laid to rest that lingers. I argue that this seemingly melancholic contagion may produce what Kellerman (2001b) has identified as the second generation's abnormal attachment to death and morbidity, but it does not necessarily do so. Again, the affects of trauma can be positive, negative, and mundane or dull.

On the surface, Alyssa says that her parents "lead really normal lives: they have a child who is in college; they eat; they work." But Alyssa shares, "Despite my growing up in a seemingly normal life, my parents still, I don't know. I don't know how to describe it." Alyssa had trouble forming her thoughts into words that could clearly articulate the ways in which the trauma has affected her and her parents. To explain this, she went on to describe her parents' response to loud noises. She says,

My parents would always talk about how they never liked fireworks. They didn't like the sound; it brought back the bad memories. In their response to loud noises, it wasn't really obvious. It was like physical discomfort, but it wasn't like actual cowering or anything.

At first Alyssa thought it was weird, but coming into recognition about her family's experience and the events that ensued under Pol Pot, she was able to identify how vestiges of the war can be triggered by auditory and visual cues like fireworks. Alyssa said that her parents did not cower, but she "could almost feel" the discomfort that they experienced when her parents would hear those noises. That affective and embodied response shows how transgenerational trauma can manifest as a seemingly insignificant affect that is preconscious and is not based on a social reference. Her ability to feel and imagine her parents' experiences is what helps produce the subsequent-generation refugee subject. Such micro-level trauma formations show that there need not be conscious recognition nor engagement. Affects produce feelings that connect the younger generations to the older ones.

Such imaginaries of pain and of "what could have been" open up the space for children to try to understand what their parents experienced. For example, Sok would sometimes wonder what would have happened if his father had gone to school. He shares, "He might not have survived under the Khmer Rouge." Sok realizes that even people who needed glasses were categorized as intellectual, whether they were or not. At the time that Sok found out about this, he was not wearing glasses, but now as a glasses-wearing college student, he says, "I try to look at myself in that position, in that context. I don't think I would've survived." Having this deeply affective

understanding of the precarious nature of life, Sok has purposely tasked himself with learning about what happened to his parents and the Cambodian people. It was the imaginary that sparked his cultural identity development. In addition to Sok's imaginations, Susan, also an undergraduate in her early twenties, also imagines what her mother has gone through. She says, "I would probably be dead." Susan feels sad but also empowered because her mother is so strong. Coming into this recognition, Susan also understands, "This is why my community is the way that it is. It's not their fault. There is a lot of historical context." Happy that her mother is alive, Susan also feels alive and ready to take on the challenges in her daily life. Susan understands that Cambodian people may struggle with poverty, mental health challenges, and low educational attainment, not because their culture is inherently deficient but because of the atrocities they collectively experienced. Her recognition of this stems from her ability to imagine an alternative future. She does not get bogged down by the social conditions that Cambodian people have been subjected to but instead, she critiques the structures that have produced and reproduce certain inequalities.

While these imaginaries are empowering for Sok and Susan, they are a little bit more difficult for Melanie. When Melanie and her mother would watch documentaries about the Khmer Rouge or Vietnam War, Melanie found that it was always very difficult for her mother. Melanie says, "It was really hard watching it with her. Actors were re-enacting something that has happened in her life." For Melanie, it was difficult imagining her mother and other families going through those horrific events. Melanie recognizes that her perspective was quite superficial as compared to

her mother's because her mother's "whole world literally collapsed around her." After resettling in the United States, Melanie's mother, the oldest child in the family, had to take on the role of the sole breadwinner in the family. Melanie's grandmother passed away during the war and her grandfather stayed home to take care of Melanie's mother's younger siblings. Based upon these stories that Melanie replays in her head, Melanie shares, "Sometimes I feel bad because I don't work as hard as she does." While recognizing that her family has experienced great challenges, Melanie feels guilty because that she does not have to struggle like her mother did, and she did not suffer through the same fate. Ultimately, Melanie is grateful for her mothers' sacrifice. Overall, survey analysis showed a significant relationship between parental war trauma and the subsequent generation's appreciation for being alive (Spearman's $\rho=0.28, p<.05$). If parents had more war trauma, their children were more likely to feel lucky to be alive.

Melanie's gratitude and construction of her identity based upon her mother's experiences qualifies as a form of what I call *transgenerational survivor guilt*. Traditional survivor guilt is

a highly-individualized, interpersonal process involving the status of being spared from harm that others incurred, which is adversely experienced as distressing, manifested by diverse responses, and is driven by the context(s) from which it emerges. Survivor guilt is an attempt to maintain a relationship with the victim(s). (Hutson, Hall, and Pack 2015:30)

Unlike this traditional form, transgenerational survivor guilt, need not be "distressing." But because children feel "bad" or feel that their struggles do not compare to those their parents experienced, there still remains some level of guilt. So

this guilt is acknowledged but does not become entrenched, as a regressive attachment, into the identities of Cambodian American youth. Transgenerational survivor guilt actually demonstrates a forward-looking solidarity among Cambodian people that avoids the dangers of *ressentiment*, “the moralizing revenge of the powerless” (Brown 1993:400). Brown asserts, “Politicized identity thus enunciates itself, makes claims for itself, only by entrenching, restating, dramatizing, and inscribing its pain in politics; it can hold out no future—for itself or others—that triumphs over this pain” (Brown 1993:406). While there must be a recognition of the wounds, Cambodian American identities are not entrenched or purely inscribed in that pain. There is futurity in hauntings by the undead.

Death

In addition to the imaginaries and intergenerational recognition of the traumas of the past and present, death and the ubiquitous nature of it has played a role in the identity development of a couple of my participants. With the presence of death as a part of her lived reality, Vanna seemed to have always known what had happened to her family even though she did not have the exact details or the full stories. Despite her lack of concrete information, she felt connected to the events that brought her family so much pain. Vanna says,

I just knew that, I've always, yeah, I've always, well yeah, well the whole that could've been. I'm not exactly sure when I found out, but I've known for a long time. And partially because I'd be there when they talk about it. I guess in a way, I just always knew. The details came out later.

The confusing stories that are often truncated at random points but repeated over and over in other cases have generated a sense of what “could have been.” Although Vanna has trouble coherently articulating how and what she feels, she nonetheless recognizes that she feels and knows something that she never consciously learned about. Her development of these affects are often quite mundane and uneventful, but they are nonetheless articulations of latent trauma. These experiences shape her development of what it means to be a second generation Cambodian American. For Vanna, it is not important what the actual definition of refugee is; instead, she says, “Being a refugee is something difficult I come from.” That identity is closely tied to the affects of trauma and from knowing and not knowing.

While the weight of having an ever-present sense of death can be debilitating and may trigger post-traumatic stress symptoms, as suggested by Kellerman (2001b), the subsequent generation’s “obsession” and closeness do not necessarily have to be understood as purely psychopathological. Take Vincent for example. He shares,

I learned about death and those types of things really early in life. Out of my grandma’s fourteen children, only three are still alive. I felt like when I was a kid, I learned about death and things that other kids didn't really know.

When he heard about the babies who were killed by the Khmer Rouge, he said that he would “try to recreate the image” in his mind. This actually made it a lot easier for Vincent to deal with his grandmother’s passing when he was just a child. Having “been really close to death” his entire life, Vincent become more aware of death and dying. He recognizes that his family’s history will always be a part of him and how he deals with deaths and other challenges that he faces.

Trauma Through the Generations

Family stories and latent trauma have become quite formative of youth's identity. I argue that these attachments to family trauma are not regressive or pathological but instead productive. They are productive because they help produce Cambodian American identity. Again, not everyone has had the same experiences, and not everyone has an awareness about their pasts. But for those who do, they often define who they are by the struggles of their parents, families, and people. And even when these connections are not consciously recognized, they are affectively felt— affect creates the potential for engagement. I want to again share what Vanna said: “Being a refugee is something difficult I come from.” So in this sense, these connections are felt and the engagements are incipient. In this section, I will give more examples of such identity development, as related to transgenerational trauma.

According to Alyssa, “Family history is a part of who you are. You don't want to erase that.” Understanding how her current life is intimately shaped by her family history, Alyssa shares, “I think it's so very important to keep in mind what and where you came from, you know. When I have kids, I will absolutely tell them.” Alyssa tells me that she has seen a photograph of her father when he was a soldier prior to the Khmer Rouge takeover. Other than that single photo “that still remains,” Alyssa grandmother “buried all of the evidence that he was involved in the previous military and political system.” That photo, however, gave Alyssa a short glimpse into the seemingly normal life that her father had prior to the Khmer Rouge era. She said, “He was very young —15 or 17. His hair is close cut, and he is wearing a nicely

starched and ironed button-up shirt.” In sharing their perception of the photo, Alyssa also lamented that she doesn’t know much about her parents’ history. The photo, however, was a “tangible piece of evidence” that was literally dug up from the ground in Cambodia. All of the other photos were ruined, but this one remained when they freed it from the safety of the earth. Like the pain that Alyssa’s father and mother carry around, the photo is old, about to crumble, water damaged, and faded, but it still lingers as a sign of what it was like in the past.

Although most people do not have photographs of their families before the war, some have ones of their parents at the refugee camps or as newly arrived in the United States. For example, Alyssa has never seen images of her mother prior the war, but she has seen ones when “she first came here.” Alyssa shares, “She is wearing huge bell bottoms, really big hair, really big glasses.” When she noticed that her mother was so thin and short, Alyssa thought to herself that she was much taller than her parents—this was probably because Alyssa actually had food and proper nutrition. The photo allowed Alyssa to generate a embodied connection with her mother beyond that of the stories (or lack thereof) that her mother would tell her about starvation. Photos can act as a conduit of trauma transmission and mediate the process of time-image episode construction (Barthes 1981). This process is not necessarily crippling for the subsequent generations. Hirsch (2001:9) writes, “[T]he postmemorial generation...has been able to make repetition not an instrument of fixity or paralysis or simple retraumatization (as it often is for survivors of trauma), but a *mostly* helpful vehicle of working through a traumatic past.” Traumatic repetition through the

viewing of both personal photographs and those at archives and museums in addition to the transmission of “forbidden memories of death” via silences and fragments expose rather than shield the next generations from the trauma of their elders. The trauma lives on via an imagination that is produced in the subsequent generations.

As demonstrated by the postmemories that are still present in second and third generation survivors of the Holocaust, latent traumas are not likely to fade away. Having overheard his mother tell harrowing stories about survival, Chann believes that he will keep “those stories with [him] throughout the years.” He is forever connected to his parents and their past. However, Chann does recognize the challenges that other Cambodian American youth have in coming to terms with their history because Chann shares, “I don't think the people, especially the second generation, talk about it.” The second generation do not talk about what happened because Chann suggests, “their parents don't want to talk about it.” As a result, it is difficult for the younger generation to engage with those histories. As with Japanese Americans who displayed differential communication patterns about internment across generations (Nagata 2003), Chann sees similar patterns in the Cambodian American community. While Chann's parents have been quite closed and unexpressive to him and his siblings, Chann recognizes how his parents treat his nieces and nephews differently: “My dad never learned to love his kids the way that he showed the love with his grandchildren.” Perhaps it is this cross-generational familial communication and affection that will convey to the third generation Cambodian Americans the suffering that their ancestors experienced.

With a child of her own, Sophie, a college graduate in her early thirties, shares that it is of utmost importance to educate the younger generations of Cambodian Americans about their pasts. Sophie says, “Maintaining my Cambodian identity has everything to do with my daughter. I want her to experience it and be Cambodian, and continue to identify as Cambodian.” This process of coming into recognition of who she is and how she feels about being Cambodian, however, has been a constant process of becoming. In high school and college, Sophie had a lot of shame associated with being Cambodian: “To me, being Cambodian meant being poor, being on government assistance. It just felt really shameful. And so I kind of ran away from that.” However, when she was able to learn her history and come to terms with it, she began to embrace her culture, traditions, language, and history.

Unlike all of my other interviewees, Samboun is the only one who says that children of Cambodian parents do not experience any type of trauma. She explains,

Kids are not affected by it because they do not have first-hand experience of their parents. All they see is description and memory of what their parents went through. But they don't have that understanding themselves. They don't understand how their parents feel. So they aren't affected by it.

Even though Samboun claims that because American-born children do not have any “first-hand experience,” they are therefore not affected by the war, the interview with Samboun shows how she continues to be shaped by her parents’ experiences. While Samboun says that she “can feel sorry and sad” for her parents, she acknowledges that she does not “feel what [her] parents feel.” In part, Samboun is describing the exact nature of transgenerational memory. The memories and affective connection of the

subsequent generations will not be the same as those of the first generation. But nonetheless, the children of survivors are still tethered and linked to that history. Samboun does not think that the younger generations are capable of feeling her sense of sadness, but as demonstrated by Nagata (2003) and Hirsch (2001), the subsequent generations (even the third generation) are connected to the original trauma. I argue that this connection is based upon the affective exchange between the older and younger generations.

Cathy believes that the various generations are affected by various traumas, but she also recognizes how there are great generational differences among first-hand survivors, children of survivors, and children of children of survivors. When Cathy found out that her mother refused to leave behind Cathy's crying older sister, when they were fleeing towards the refugee camps, Cathy thought that it was just incredible the love that her mother had for her sister. Cathy shares, "In that manner, I really respect and admire the first generation. We didn't have to go through that. I truly, truly admire them." This admiration, however, is not necessarily present among all younger Khmer people. Candidly speaking, Cathy tells me, "I think the 1.5 generation feels it a lot more than the second generation." When I asked her to define 1.5 and second generation, she did not mention birthplace but instead said that the main difference is "emotional—the connection to the parents' suffering." Compared to the 1.5 generation, which is technically defined as those who were born either in Cambodia or the Thai camps, Cathy says that the second and third generation do "not feel the weight of their parents' burden as much." Cathy believes that it is up to

the 1.5 generation or the older individuals from the second generation to carry the legacy of the pasts and to take care of their parents because if not, she asks, “Who will?” According to Cathy, “Imaginary stories are always based on experience, either by transference (other people's experience and how you are touched by that) or by your own experience, and you are able to somehow put yourself in other people's shoes.” As a part of the 1.5 generation, she must be able to see and imagine stories from different perspectives. While she understands what it feels like to be victim (through her parents’ experience), she also wonders what it was like to be in the Khmer Rouge. The unique position of the younger generations is their ability to articulate the latent traumas that have haunted their lives for so long. Even though Cathy believes that the “parents’ pain and agony continue to affect their children,” the children are also not always fully seized or controlled by those latent traumas. The productive nature of memory allows the imaginary and the embodied nature of trauma to produce opportunities for individual and social engagement.

Children of the third generation or children with parents from the 1.5 generation will likely be more disconnected to the suffering. As a result, the daily haunting and trauma is not as present. However, the residuals of everyday loss that have been transferred from the first-generation to their children is still very much present. For example, Cathy explains, “Whatever happens to my parents happens to me. We are not separate but one.” The younger American-born children (approximately under 20 years old according to Cathy’s conceptualization), however, will “find their own way to connect to it.” It may not be the same as for the 1.5 and

older second generation, but they will nonetheless be tethered to that past. It is this affective capital that not only compels the younger generations to strive for more but also allows for trauma formation across generations.

Such counter-narratives that weave together first and subsequent generation experiences are important because they speak against the “majoritarian” stories that are told about Cambodian culture of poverty. Solorzano and Yosso (2002:28) assert, “Because ‘majoritarian’ stories generate from a legacy of racial privilege, they are stories in which racial privilege seems ‘natural.’” As a response to the proliferation of deficit-based frameworks and discourses that marginalize the experiential realities of subordinate communities, counter-stories were created as a method of telling the stories of people who are in the margins of society (Solorzano and Yosso 2002). I argue that the participants in the study help create and produce counter-stories that better capture the micro-level experiences that make up trauma formation. As discussed in Chapter 2, majoritarian narratives of trauma privilege the individual and psychopathological forms. But there exists collective traumas that cannot be captured by these methodologies and approaches.

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Giving Back to the Community

In addition to the educational opportunities and family stories (or lack thereof) that have allowed interviewees to develop their own perceptions and attitudes toward their culture and history, interviewees also highlighted the importance of non-profit local-serving organizations in shaping their perceptions of their identity. Such non-

profits were often able to bridge the gaps between the parents and the children, mitigating generational and cultural conflicts and opening up space for dialogue.

Sophie, Susan, and Leia all participated in after-school activities at a prominent Cambodian serving non-profit organization in the Santa Ana area. In addition to attending the Cambodian language and culture courses that were offered every Saturday, Leia, an undergraduate student in her early twenties, was socialized to recognize the importance of the relationships between Cambodian history, culture, and language. Through school supply drives and other volunteer activities, Susan learned the importance of schooling and investment in one's education. More personally, though, Sophie noted that the community organization functioned as a beacon into her family history. She shares,

Growing up in the youth program, I would hear stories from other people or other parents and what they went through. I think for me, it's kind of like, a secondary experience. I'm not directly affected, but yet I am living with the trauma of the people who are directly affected.

To find out more, Sophie "took it upon [her]self to do a lot of research" to find out what her family and other Cambodian people experienced. Living with her parents' trauma, Sophie has done all that she can to engage with the community that has invested (yet at times caused so much pain) in Sophie.

Having assisted in the planning and execution of the inaugural Cambodia Town Film Festival, having been active in the One Love Movement (which advocates for persons identified or at risk for deportation), and overall, having been immersed in the Southern California Cambodian community, Sophie is very proud of her ability

to raise awareness about certain issues and promote the Cambodian culture.

Whenever Sophie learns something new, she “brings it back and shares it with [her] Cambodian community.” For example, Sophie recently attended a strategy planning training hosted by the Southeast Asian Resource Action Center. She was able to better build awareness for her interests in the Cambodian community (e.g., outreach to youth, deportation awareness, and cultural awareness) because she was able to learn to better organize and mobilize the community.

Despite her parents’ mental health challenges and their rocky relationship, Sophie has found that her community work has triggered a process of healing between her and her father. This is another way in which trauma can be productive. It is productive not only in the sense that it inspires Sophie to work in the community, but also in a way that allows Sophie and her father to strengthen their relationship. When she showed a picture of herself in an article that highlighted her work in the Cambodian community in the local newspaper, Sophie said that her father finally realized, “My daughter is doing something important.” That was also the first time that he told her that he loved her. Sophie shares, “It was weird. He was really proud of me, and then I took it as a moment for me to heal.” Even though Sophie understands that she comes from a history of trauma, she uses the transgenerational trauma she has developed to inspire her community involvement.

Because parents are sometimes not physically or emotionally present, the larger Cambodian community has in part acted as a resource and a network for Cambodian youth. Take for example, the great work that has been done by the

Khmer Girls in Action (KGA). KGA, a community organization based in Long Beach, recently hosted a Yellow Lounge that would provide the opportunity for Cambodian youth to share their stories through art and performances. The theme of the event was “Like a Lotus, We Rise.” According to its website,

The lotus flower grows in muddy water, planting its seed at the bottom of the pond. Its vine must climb, rising above the murky water, until its flower can bloom in the sunlight. For Khmer Girls in Action, the lotus flower symbolizes struggle, strength and resilience.

So despite Cambodian people’s “murky” and shadowy pasts, the subsequent generations are learning to cope with and thrive under these conditions. Because of their individual and collective experiences, Sophie, Leia, and Diana have been involved in planning and attending events hosted by KGA.

Beyond community based organizations, conferences and educational summits also provide opportunities for intra- and intergenerational community engagement. Even without personally knowing certain persons, a few of my interviewees noted that they immediately feel connected to other Cambodians because they share a history of struggle and survival. For example, when Chann attended an education summit, he automatically felt very connected to one of the panelists. Chann rarely talks about his immigration status, but he felt completely comfortable telling this stranger. When he shared his fears about his immigration status, the panelist shared how she had lost a little girl during the reign of the Khmer Rouge. The girl would say, “Mom, I’m hungry. Mom, I’m hungry.” For Chann, this was such a hard story to hear, but he sympathized with the panelist. They were both dealing with loss and the possibility of

loss. Although he didn't really know what to say, the connection was clear. He shared his fears, and the panelist shared her pains. When I asked Chann why he thought that they made that connection, Chann tells me, "It's a hard way to connect to people but Cambodian people...I think about the story of my mom." Because Cambodians have a shared history, they can empathize and draw on personal and intergenerational experiences. In the case for Chann, he thought about his mother and her struggles to cope with her baby brother and other family members who passed away.

Even though Chann did not directly experience the war, he says, "I kind of had that experience before. It's hard." And by "that experience," I think he means loss. Even though Chann had just met this panelist, he formed an affective connection to her. They were tethered together by an intra- and intergenerational experience of loss. Chann had never experienced it first hand, but he knew how the panelist felt because he has heard so many stories from his mother about all the pain and suffering that was endured during that time. It is also important that the panelist parallels her experience in losing her daughter to Chann's immigration status. Both experiences cause pain and uncertainty, and both experiences can be traced back to the war or the aftermath of the war. In addition to this panelist, Chann has noted that he has been able to more easily connect to his Cambodian peers in college because he says, "When we talk about family, we know how exactly the other person feels or is thinking." This embodied connection or affective capital allows for an intragenerational or intracohort link among children of first generation Cambodian refugees. Because of these connections that Chann has forged, he says that after he

gets the degree, he would like “to help out with the Cambodian community,” working in the community to help other Cambodian youth work through their pains and challenges.

Whether or not participants were involved in a local Cambodian non-profit community organization, many find that it is very important for them, as the generation of Cambodians who have had access to schooling and other opportunities, to give back to the communities that they come from. Survey analysis showed that those who were more eager to listen to their parents (Spearman’s $\rho=0.52$, $p<.001$) and those who felt more lucky to be alive (Spearman’s $\rho=0.35$, $p<.05$) were more likely to feel empowered by what their family and people had experienced. Only those who were very busy with their schoolwork, jobs, or other obligations felt that Cambodians should not dwell on the past (Spearman’s $\rho=0.26$, $p<.05$). 78% of participants, however, felt that it was important to talk about and acknowledge the tragedies experienced by the Cambodian people. This awareness has prompted many to give back to their local communities.

In addition to Sophie and Chann who are actively involved in their local communities, Diana and Jane also find that it is critical they attain skills that can be reinvested in their local Cambodian communities. Diana, a Long Beach local, who recently earned her masters in counseling degree would love to be able to serve the community she grew up in. In particular, she is looking to address the mental health issues that are prominent yet often obscured or silenced. One way that she is able to address these silences is through the management of a website that collects oral

histories from Cambodian veterans. Another way is through her counseling work. Diana shares, “In our culture, expression verbally, sometimes we don't do that a lot in our families. So it would be interesting to integrate different types of strategies of coping intervention—which would work with Cambodians and families.” Although she recognizes that there are challenges, she is confident that she will be able to help develop and utilize specific strategies that are culturally appropriate for Cambodian families. Similar to Diana, Jane, who recently earned a masters in social work, finds that “mental health issues and recreational activities” are very important for the older population. In addition to being a part of the community, she learned about these needs through the Cambodian Community Development Incorporation located in the Bay Area. She says, “I helped them with surveying the Cambodian elder population to figure out what are some of their recreational activities.” She found that the elder had limited opportunities to socialize beyond “getting together, drinking, and gambling.” Overall, Jane believes that she wants “to definitely make change on a larger level and affect policies that really will make a difference for the community at large.” As demonstrated by her work in the community, she sees a need for direct services, but she also feels that there are more systemic issues that need to be addressed in order to be fixed.

While not all participants recognize that it is imperative that they give back to the community, many who have participated in local community organizations have said that that association affected them positively when they were youth. As a form of “passing it forward,” some have expressed that they will dedicate their lives work to

working in the community and championing for the rights and needs of the Cambodian people. But just because I have detailed the ways in which many subsequent generation Cambodians have dedicated their life's work to addressing the needs of the Cambodian community does not mean that every person whom I have interviewed or surveyed has done so. Some, like Chanvatey and Alyssa, recognize how they are shaped by and inspired by their traumas but do not choose to work in the community. Also, some recognize their cultural history and identity but are also well-acclimated into the dominant American society in which they have been raised. Unlike Cambodian nationals, Cambodian Americans straddle a unique position that encapsulates their positions both as refugee subjects and American citizens.

CONCLUSION

Similar to many youth people of color living in the United States, Cambodian American youth must negotiate between cultural expectations and American ideals. I have found that like the Hmong Americans in Vang's (2014) study, the participants in this study still identify as Cambodian even though their day-to-day cultural practices and language use have largely privileged American values and English. Despite this acculturation, however, Cambodian Americans are still deeply connected to and affected by the Khmer Rouge genocide and their parents' war and migration experiences.

In addition to the negative affects of trauma that I addressed in the previous chapter, I have provided examples of positive affects and outcomes of trauma in this chapter. Instead of becoming too entrenched in the political identities of trauma, the

Cambodians in this study have used their traumatic pasts as sources of inspiration to get to know their parents better, aspire for higher education, and give back to the community. Contrary to culture of poverty and deficit-based frameworks that identify Cambodians to be failed model minorities, a community cultural wealth framework has allowed us to identify and analyze the various forms of capital (e.g., aspirational, familial, and resistant) among the Cambodian American community. More specifically, I have identified ways in which familial trauma not only produces an affect of trauma but also affective capital. Contrary to the solely negative and pathological constructions of intergenerational trauma, affective capital refers to the deeply felt and embodied connections that circulate between Cambodian American youth and their families and community. While this type of capital may not be consciously identified or acknowledged, I argue that an affect of trauma produces the potentials for Cambodian people to form affective bonds that shape certain goals and aspirations that are based upon the pain and suffering experienced by their families and communities.

Despite these “positive” outcomes of trauma, I must continue to acknowledge how many have been negatively by parents’ physical and emotional absence. Some participants have had both types of experiences, and their identities are constantly being developed by these contradictions. Responses to trauma are varied—from the negative to the positive, from the fantastic to the mundane. While these experiences contribute to their identity construction, the Cambodian Americans in this study are not singularly defined by them. I argue that these experiences must be incorporated

into wider analyses of trauma formation: how an affect of trauma produces certain refugee subjects who then negotiate and renegotiate their identities based on their lived and felt experiences with collective trauma.

As demonstrated by my interviews and other data, there need not be conscious recognition of one's family's traumatic history for those experiences to yield collective or public feelings. I argue that it is the affect that subsequent generations experience, which creates the condition for trauma to become collective and social in nature. The sense of "what could've been" is so strong among the subsequent generations that it opens the present into the past and allows for an imagining of a different future (one that is not wholly shaped or define by pain and suffering). Sometimes this imagination can create a future that replicates and reproduces various challenges within the community but other times, as discussed in this chapter, it can create positive affects that produce a foundation for community engagement and affective bonding. As Scarry posited, it is the imagination that allows for us to remake a world that has been destroyed by pain. These imaginaries, just like the stories themselves, are what create the subsequent generation refugee subject.

Like a racial formation, a trauma formation (particularly one based upon transgenerational trauma) is socially constructed and contested. The mental health struggles experienced by the first generation can manifest as negative affects in the subsequent generations—but not necessarily so. As social sensations, feelings, and emotions, affect of trauma is subject to discourse politics that can shift interpretations and understandings of trauma from pathology and celebration. I argue that these

polarities can never fully map the complexity of trauma, but they nonetheless reveal a complexity in the ways in which trauma can be conceptualized, understood, and felt. As with all discursive politics, it is necessary for us to always critically examine who or what projects help shape these ideas about and discourses of trauma. This chapter's emphasis on the positive affects of trauma shall not negate the prevalence of the challenges that exist simultaneously. However, by recognizing the possibilities for us to work with and through trauma, we can see how trauma can be used to organize and politicize an entire community (starting from interpersonal interactions to addressing larger structural issues that exacerbate social inequalities).

Chapter 6: Encountering Memory and Trauma

Having married into a Cambodian family as a Chinese American who had little to no understanding of what Cambodian people experienced, I found myself feeling perplexed about my husband's family. At first, it was difficult for me to pinpoint, but I knew that my in-laws were somehow different from other Asian and Pacific Islander parents. After educating myself about the war and the horrors and atrocities that the Cambodian people faced, I developed a certain empathy for my mother- and father-in-law. Despite this, however, I admit that it is difficult for me to fully respect them as responsible and supportive parents. As young parents who were not well-socialized or adjusted due to war, they did not know how to be good parents—being emotionally available, providing a balanced home environment, and so on. Because of these experiences, my husband Ryan still expresses flat affect when he is “forced” to talk to his parents on the phone. He used to get frustrated because his parents would tell him about their problems, but they would never listen to his opinions or thoughts. Or his parents would lecture him about something that was completely out of context. Having learned to never give his parents advice and to never try to correct them, no matter how wrong they are, Ryan simply sits on the phone for upwards of an hour, saying “Uh-huh” over and over again, minimally listening to his father talk about what oftentimes seems like nonsense. It is these simple and mundane moments that I find to be most revealing about the nature of transgenerational trauma. While trauma can be debilitating for the first and successive

generations, it need not always be that way. It can also be dull, fantastic, and awe-inspiring.

In Chapter 1, I offered a detailed history about the Khmer Rouge (auto)genocide that would later provide context to show why so many Cambodians experience a high prevalence of psychosomatic illnesses such as PTSD and depression. I then argued for a critical intersection between Critical Race Theory and Critical Refugee Studies. As Asian Americans, Cambodian American refugees and their children are radicalized by disciplinary discourses such as the model minority myth and the culture of poverty. As “underachieving minorities,” Cambodians are often assumed to be welfare dependent, lazy, and criminally-oriented. While it is important to raise awareness about the educational and economic disparities, particularly between East Asian Americans and Southeast Asian refugees, I also find that it is necessary to speak against the stereotypes to assume all Cambodians are welfare queens or gang members. By purposely interviewing and surveying Cambodian American college students and graduates, I want to show some of the motivations and aspirations that students have for pursuing higher education.

In order to combat some of the essentializing stereotypes, it is necessary to read against the grain of officially sanctioned narratives—particularly about the United States’ military investment in Southeast Asia, especially Cambodia. I provided this historical genealogy in Chapter 3 to show that the United States was intimately connected to the atrocities that were committed against the Cambodian people, but yet they never formally acknowledged the extent of their involvement in perpetuating

violence and silencing the international quests for justice. In future projects, I plan to critically juxtapose (Espiritu 2014) the incidences and prevalence of trauma in nations and countries that were affected by United States military intervention. Unfortunately, there is not shortage of sites and cases to consider, particularly in Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East.

As for my theoretical inquiries of trauma, I provided an conceptual mapping that categorized trauma theory into two major camps: individual and collective-based trauma. Individual-based trauma frameworks are most often investigated via psychological and medical methods of study that tend to privilege pathological manifestations encapsulated within individual bodies and psyches. The collective trauma frameworks are most often considered by cultural and literary theorists who privilege an analysis of the discursive constructions of trauma. Informed by theory and research from the aforementioned fields, I proposed to use an affective approach to trauma to engage in a theoretical and empirical discussion about the ways in which trauma can be circulated among structures and individual bodies, within and across generations.

Alexander (2003) suggests that in order for trauma to be considered “cultural trauma,” those who suffer or experience the trauma must have the “competence” and ability to discursively construct the trauma as a central part of that group’s culture and identity. I, however, challenge Alexander’s assumptions about a group’s intentionality and “decision” to make a certain trauma into cultural trauma. I argue that trauma may be a collective experience despite a group’s lack of “competence”

and power to have its trauma be socially or widely recognized—as public discourse and commemoration or through historical accounting in textbooks. Also, I argue that the lack of narration about trauma via a proliferation of silences does not necessarily negate the ability of trauma to transcend beyond specific individuals.

In Chapter 3, I begin to engage with these theoretical inquiries by using concrete historical examples and empirical data. While tested trauma inventories such as the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire were helpful in documenting and identifying first-generation war and relocation trauma, I found that these tests were largely inaccurate for measuring trauma in the subsequent generations. Transgenerational trauma can be more subtle and complex than that which is measured by psychopathologically based tests and measures. To provide context for the quantification of “traumatic events,” I presented narratives and failed narratives that help recount the traumas of the genocide. These narratives came from former captives of the Khmer Rouge, first generation survivors, and those from the subsequent generations. I argue that the subsequent generations’ accounts of what really happened are what I call time-image episodes. The concept comes from Lauren Berlant’s concept of “episode” and Deleuze’s concept of the “time-image.” An episode is “a space of action leaking into pasts and futures at its borders while stretching out the present moment in a drama of adjustment in lieu of confidence about the event” (Berlant 2012). And unlike an action-image, a time-image is not a coherent narrative. A time-image is a matter of images (the depth and surfaces of an image that defy language and produce potentials for affective engagement) (Deleuze

1989). Ultimately, I conceptualize a time-image episode to be presently-situated imagined accounts of history and memory that are made up of a circulation of (failed) narratives and affects associated with the process of capturing traumas that extend the present into that of the past. Because of this time expansion, the past is necessarily also connected to the future—there are potentials of trauma to be transmitted and to be re-imagined. These time-image episodes, however, are not always coherent stories. Sometimes, it is the silence that carries with it an affect of trauma, which includes the emotions and sensations that result from grief, pain, and depression. For Cambodian American refugees, however, this silence carries with it a different valence—based upon their racial and legal status and western approaches to mental health.

In Chapter 4, I explicate how trauma functions as a social and collective formation that is akin to that of racial formation. Trauma formation emphasizes the social and collective nature of trauma, both the presence and absence of sources of wounding, the dynamic manifestations of trauma across generations, and the intersection between politics, history, racism, and legal status. Trauma formation is mediated by sociohistorical processes that denote the multiple ways trauma is narrated, treated, experienced, and transmitted. Because of trauma's ability to generate effects and affects across generations, it has the ability to transcend time and space, creating a protracted present that is always tethered to the suffering in the past.

The discursive formation of the refugee subject has circulated primarily around that of the welfare queen, police subject, and legal subject of deportation. I

propose, however, through the concept of latent articulations of trauma, we can better understand how personal, social, cultural, and transgenerational trauma are articulated (read: connected) but may remain hidden until certain circumstances or encounters allow for the latent traumas to swerve into a moment or moments of affective attachment. For example, parents' unexplainable anger can function as latent trauma that manifests when triggered by (non-war related) sources of conflict or pain. Although parents do not always acknowledge that their negative affects, such as rage and neglect, are caused by underlying issues of war-related trauma or PTSD, an affect of transgenerational trauma is nonetheless transmitted to the children. The negative affects such as anger, neglect, and mistrust that are present in the first generation, however, do not exist in those forms in the successive generations. Instead, transgenerational trauma is wholly different from parental or first-hand trauma. Through interview and survey data, I show that transgenerational trauma can manifest via process of othering, ambivalence, and parental care-taking.

In Chapter 5, I turn to a discussion about Cambodian American youth's navigation of ethnic and cultural identity, especially before and during college. While I focused primarily on the negative affect of trauma in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 directly addresses the ways in which trauma can elicit positive affects such as awe and inspiration for subjects to become better individuals and for some, to give back to the community. As such, literature on Asian American identity construction is informative but does not necessarily consider the seemingly incommensurate nature of the contradictions that exist as an affect of trauma, including positive, negative, and flat

affects associated with being a part of the Cambodian diaspora. I found that the identity formation for my set of participants will forever be articulated to trauma, but their parents' trauma (from war and genocide) will not and cannot fully articulate (i.e., fully express) refugee identity.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD

This study widens the sociological understanding of subjecthood and affect—not just via theoretical interventions but through data driven analysis of interviews and surveys. While post-hoc literary analysis of trauma and affect are theoretically rich and informative, this study provides additional methods to validate and provide sociological perspectives and inquiries to a field dominated by disciplines in the humanities. However, in traditional (i.e., functionalist) sociology, the subject is often taken for granted as unified, individual and rational; it is simply understood as something that is governed by social interactions such as family, school, church, and so on. I consider but challenge the unidirectional relationship between structures and subjects. For example, I argue that a person experiences certain feelings or affects not because this person identifies as a refugee but instead, it is the feelings associated with growing up as a child of refugees that produces the refugee subject. Therefore, refugee subjecthood (i.e., the quality of being a refugee subject) does not require discursive utterance or identity naming. Instead, it revolves around an affect of trauma—the positive, negative, and neutral feelings, emotions, and sensations that are elicited in the daily lives of refugee subjects.

Furthermore, instead of just theorizing that trauma reaches beyond the individual who has suffered some sort of catastrophic event, this study provides evidence that better informs individual-based medical and psychological research. By explicating trauma as a formation, I posit that trauma is not stable or discrete and is always subject to discursive and affective rearticulation. Trauma is therefore inherently social and collective because it references structures and people at the macro- (e.g., laws, policies, and war), meso- (e.g., community and groups), and micro- (e.g., families and individuals) levels. The claim that trauma is collective is not only a theoretical assertion but also a political and practical one. Politically, it is necessary to acknowledge the collective nature of trauma and its ability to be transmitted within and across generations and spaces (e.g., transnationally) because such trauma that has resulted from international militaristic intervention (both by French colonization and American militarism) has been obscured and denied international recognition and justice. Denoting the ways in which an official declaration of the end of war does not in fact mean that all the damage has been contained is a political and practical move. It is political because those who are responsible must acknowledge how trauma cannot be easily contained, and certain measures should be taken to identify and relieve challenges associated with the sources of trauma. Practically, government entities must provide the resources that are necessary for people who experience the

very felt effects and pains of violence.⁴⁸ The effects of trauma can be felt not only in terms of mental health but also economic disenfranchisement and educational attainment.

Lastly, this research speaks to a specificity of the Southeast Asian diaspora/refugee experience, one that is both raced and classed. Different from claims that argue that all people are in one way or another traumatized by the stresses of modern life, refugee trauma highlights the need to 1) read against the grain of officially sanctioned narratives about war and suffering, 2) investigate the intersections between trauma and other forms of marginalization and disenfranchisement, and 3) identify the complex and even contradictory affects that manifest as an affect of transgenerational trauma. While other groups such as Jews who survived the Holocaust or Japanese American internees during World War II can rely on cultural narratives of justice and reparation, Cambodians have been systematically denied this option for the last forty years. This, however, does not mean that their experiences with trauma are any less traumatic and have any less of an impact on successive generations. That impact, however, is qualitatively different from that of the aforementioned groups. This speaks to the discursive and affective qualities of trauma formation and the unique nature of Southeast Asian American refugee trauma.

DIRECTION OF FUTURE RESEARCH

⁴⁸ Examples of strategies for overcoming, resisting, and preventing structural violence associated with intergenerational trauma were highlighted by a report on First Nation groups by Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth, YMCA Calgary and Family and Community Support Services (“Intervention” 2012).

Although related to my dissertation research, my future research implements a comparative framework that extends beyond Cambodians. I will develop a study that uses extended case method (ECM) and quasi-experimental design to investigate the politics of memory and trauma among people who have experienced grave losses due to United States military involvement in international and civil wars, particularly Cambodians, Lao people, and Salvadorans in the Northeast. I will develop theoretical and methodological approaches that bridge the humanistic social sciences and the hard social sciences. ECM requires multi-site and extended qualitative data collection to investigate different cases of related actions for various groups (Burawoy 2009). Quasi-experiments are similar to traditional experiments but do not use random assignment. The proposed study will be a “nonequivalent groups design” in which a treatment and comparison group are given a pretest and a posttest after the experimental treatment. Although this project is nascent, I propose that treatment groups will include second generation survivors of social or cultural trauma who know about their cultural history. Control groups include those who do not know about their cultural history. Participants’ knowledge level will be assessed prior to experiment. Treatment and control groups will then be randomly assigned to one of two conditions: the screening of a trauma-related documentary and a non-trauma-related documentary. A secondary trauma survey will then be used to assess the relationship between parent communication, schooling, media, and transgenerational trauma. Ultimately, I want to generate sharable data regarding the causal inference between trauma and social inequality.

Cambodian, Lao, and Salvadoran diasporic peoples make good comparison groups for studying the affective and political contours of military-related trauma because the source of the traumas experienced by these groups can be traced to United States political and military intervention. In addition to the bombing of Cambodia, the United States also dropped more than two million tons of ordnance on Laos from 1964 to 1973 during the Secret War in Laos (Legacies of War 2015). Such bombings were used to support the Royal Lao Government in its fight against the communist Pathet Lao. After the United States formally withdrew its forces from Southeast Asia, it again interfered with the political powers in other nations, particularly in Central America. Despite widespread opposition from the American public (Sobel 1989), the United States provided military aid to the military-led government of El Salvador to fight against the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), a coalition of five left-wing guerrilla groups (CJA 2014). This civil war between the Salvadoran government and the FMLN lasted from 1980 to 1992 (Uppsala Conflict Data Program 2015). Extreme violence proliferated during this time, including the clandestine refinement of the death squad, disappearance of hundreds of non-combatant civilians, and the death of over 75,000 civilians (CJA 2014; Martin-Baro 1989).

The Cambodian, Lao, and Salvadoran people who sought refuge in the United States symbolize a sort of “trauma coming home.” My future research engages in a “critical juxtaposition” between Cambodian, Lao, and Salvadoran experiences around war, relocation, displacement, and transgenerational trauma.

Critical juxtaposing is the “deliberate bringing together of seemingly different historical events in an effort to reveal what would otherwise remain invisible” (Espiritu 2014:47). Overall, I plan to further develop my methods and theory about an affect of trauma and trauma formation, while identifying contents, limits, and afterlives of United States imperialism and military involvement.

Appendix A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. When and where were you born? Where did you grow up?
2. What was your community or neighborhood like? (demographics, socioeconomic status, etc.) How do you think your community has shaped the person you have become?
3. Were there any differences between you and your friends? (other Khmers and ones who are not) Are your childhood friends still your friends now? Why or why not? Did you get to go out as a kid? What did you do? What do you do now? Do you have more freedom now? What are your interests and hobbies?
4. Where do you live now? If with parents, why? Could you move out if you wanted to?
5. How many siblings do you have? Are you the oldest, youngest, middle? Do you think you grew up with different responsibilities compared to your siblings? Why? Do you and your siblings get along? Why or why not?
6. Is family important to you? How so? How's the relationship between you and your family? How's the relationship between you and your parents? Is it different with your mom versus your dad? Do you feel like you can talk to your parents about things—like everyday life, school, relationships, etc.? If no, why? What do you talk about then?
7. What do your parents do for a living? What other jobs have they had before? Did your parents struggle? How could you tell?
8. Do your parents understand English? If no, have you ever had to translate or help them out when dealing with mail, healthcare, bills, school, work, etc.? If yes, how did they acquire the language? Do they have good control of it? Do they mostly speak English or Khmer?
9. Do you know about your family history (meaning, how your family ended up in the United States?) Are these family narratives important to you? How did you find out about the Khmer Rouge and the genocide in Cambodia? How old were you? After learning about it, were you interested in learning more about it? Why or why not?
10. Do your parents ever talk to you about the Khmer Rouge explicitly? How about implicitly? If yes, what do they say? It's been well documented in the Khmer community that elders tend to keep very silent about their pasts. Is this true for your family? How so? Can you tell if it's painful for them to recount those stories? If no, why do you think they never talk about it? If they do tell you, how do you respond after they tell you?
11. How do you think your parents' experiences with the Khmer Rouge have affected them? This may range for the day-to-day, the mundane, and more substantial things like work, home ownership, employment, etc.
12. Do you think that knowledge and those feelings follow you and inform the person you have become?
13. When you think about the genocide, what kinds of thoughts come to mind?
14. How do you think the genocide has affected you?
15. Have you ever felt uncomfortable or experienced any kinds of fears associated with government surveillance, persecution, etc.? Cambodians have often "had trouble" with the law because of gangs, drugs, etc., why do you think this is so?
16. Have you been keeping track with the Khmer Rouge Tribunals? Why or why not?

Appendix B

ភាពយឺតវី មិនទ្រុឌទ្រួល
Encountering Memory and Trauma:
Cambodian American Family History and
Resilience Survey



Primary Investigator: Yvonne Y. Kwan



University of California
Center for New Racial Studies
A MULTI-CAMPUS RESEARCH PROGRAM



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SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

YVONNE KWAN, M.A.
PhD CANDIDATE

Email: yykwan@ucsc.edu

Dear Cambodian American Community Member,

My name is Yvonne Kwan, and I am a PhD candidate at UC Santa Cruz. I am conducting my dissertation research (UCSC IRB Protocol #1904) on Cambodian American history, identity, and coalition building through a lens of transgenerational transmission of trauma, memory, affect, and silences. This questionnaire addresses Cambodian American experiences with **family history, culture, and education**. This information will be used to help improve the dearth of literature on Cambodian American experiences. It will also inform mental health and education advocacy at the state and federal levels. If you find any questions upsetting or irrelevant, please skip them. The responses to the questions will be kept confidential.

After you complete the survey, indicate **your name and email** on the **last page** of this booklet and tear it out. **Return the survey to the survey collection bin and the raffle entry into the raffle entry bin.** By doing so, you will enter into a raffle for either **one \$100 Amazon gift card or one of two \$50 Amazon gift cards**. Your responses and your raffle entry will be kept separate to maintain your anonymity. Email is requested just in case you leave the conference before the raffle. Also, if you are interested in a follow-up interview (**with a \$10 cash incentive guaranteed and to be scheduled for a later date**), please indicate **"yes"** on your raffle entry.

There is also a subsequent **"Refer a Friend"** raffle for those who did not make it to KSCC. If you refer friends to take the survey, they will enter your name and email address on a separate form. You will be entered to win **one of three \$50 Amazon gift cards**. The more friends you refer, the higher the chance you will win! Your friend will also be entered to win **one of three \$50 Amazon gift cards**. There are **six additional gift cards** available for raffle after this conference. See attached flyer for more information.

I started this work as an undergraduate at UC San Diego. I interviewed students at UCSD and Cal State Long Beach about their aspirations for higher education. Because there were so few books and resources available on the Cambodian population, I wanted to research and write about the unique experiences of Cambodian people living in the United States, especially the 1.5 and second generation. There are some older texts that discuss what happened with refugees when they first sought asylum in the US, but there are few that talk about the current implications of war and relocation on **mental health and educational opportunities**. Also, literature on the second generation is often limited because they tend to overpathologize and critique Cambodian refugees' experience with gang participation and other "deviant" behaviors. I find that Cambodian people's strength and willpower transcend the limited scopes of available research texts.

Having married into Cambodian American family, I have seen the many ways in which instances of war manifest. I am interested in how the later generations can still feel the trauma and aftermath of war and genocide. This is despite a prevalence of silence among the old generation, including parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. But to do this work, I need your help. **Please fill out this survey, refer a friend, and/or volunteer for an interview.**

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please email me if you have any questions, concerns, or would like to participate. My email is yykwan@ucsc.edu. **KEEP THIS PAGE FOR YOUR RECORDS.**

Best regards,
Yvonne Y. Kwan, PhD Candidate of Sociology
MA in Sociology (UCSC), MA in Education (UCLA)
UCSC Statistical Consultant for the Center for Statistical Analysis in the Social Sciences

FAMILY HISTORY

The questions in this section refer to your knowledge about your family's history. They may pertain to your father and mother in particular and/or your family in general.

1. Please answer these questions that pertain to your knowledge about family history. *Circle only one response per row.*

	Definitive Yes		
	Somewhat		
	Not at all	↓	↓
a. Do you know about your family's migration history?	1	2	3
b. Do your parents voluntarily tell you about their migration history?	1	2	3
c. Do you ask your parents to tell you about their migration history?	1	2	3

2. Please state to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements. *Circle only one response per row.*
"In terms of my family's migration history..."

	Not applicable				
	Strongly agree				
	Somewhat agree				
	Somewhat disagree				
	Strongly disagree	↓	↓	↓	↓
a. my MOTHER is eager to tell me about her story."	1	2	3	4	8
b. my MOTHER has trouble conveying her experiences."	1	2	3	4	8
c. my MOTHER says, 'It happened in the past. Let us move on.'"	1	2	3	4	8
d. my FATHER is eager to tell me about his story."	1	2	3	4	8
e. my FATHER has trouble conveying his experiences."	1	2	3	4	8
f. my FATHER says, 'It happened in the past. Let us move on.'"	1	2	3	4	8

3. Please indicate whether you know/have heard that your parents or family members have experienced any of the following events. *Check all that apply.**

Please check (✓) here.		Please check (✓) here.	
a. Lack of shelter		i. Rape	
b. Confiscation or destruction of personal property		j. Serious injury from land mines or other combat situations	
c. Ill health without access to medical care		k. Forced labor	
d. Lack of food or water		l. Extortion or robbery	
e. Combat situation		m. Brainwashing	
f. Forced evacuation under dangerous situations		n. Forced to hide	
g. Beatings		o. Improper burial of bodies	
h. Torture		p. Forced isolation	

4. Please state to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements. *Circle only one response per row.*
“When my parents talk about their migration experiences...

Not applicable (because my parents never talk about their experiences)					
	Strongly agree				
	Somewhat agree				
	Somewhat disagree				
	Strongly disagree	↓	↓	↓	↓
a. I am eager to listen.”	1	2	3	4	8
b. I feel empowered.”	1	2	3	4	8
c. I feel that I am lucky to be alive.”	1	2	3	4	8
d. I feel compassion and empathy for my parents.”	1	2	3	4	8
e. I feel eager to give back to my ethnic community.”	1	2	3	4	8
f. it is difficult for me to listen because heritage language is weak.”	1	2	3	4	8
g. it is difficult for me to listen because I am limited by my relationship with my MOTHER.”	1	2	3	4	8
h. it is difficult for me to listen because I am limited by my relationship with my FATHER.”	1	2	3	4	8
i. I feel uncomfortable.”	1	2	3	4	8
j. I feel sad.”	1	2	3	4	8
k. I feel that there is no point in dwelling on the past.”	1	2	3	4	8
l. it is difficult for me to listen because I am too busy.”	1	2	3	4	8

5. Please state to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements. *Circle only one response per row.*
“When I think about the genocide in Cambodia...

Strongly agree				
	Somewhat agree			
	Somewhat disagree			
	Strongly disagree	↓	↓	↓
a. I am not sure what happened.”	1	2	3	4
b. I am angered by what happened.”	1	2	3	4
c. I am saddened by what happened.”	1	2	3	4
d. I feel that there has not been proper justice sought on behalf of survivors and victims.”	1	2	3	4
e. I am knowledgeable about the Khmer Rouge War Tribunal and its prosecution of perpetrators.”	1	2	3	4
f. I think there should be an official apology to victims.”	1	2	3	4
g. I think there should be monetary compensation to victims.”	1	2	3	4

6. The following are symptoms that people sometimes have after experiencing hurtful or terrifying events in their lives. Please indicate whether or not **either of YOUR PARENTS** have **ever** displayed such symptoms. *Check all that apply.**

Please check (✓) here.		Please check (✓) here.	
a. Recurrent thoughts or memories of terrifying or hurtful events		k. Avoiding activities that remind them of the traumatic or hurtful event	
b. Feeling as though the event is happening again		l. Inability to remember parts of the most traumatic or hurtful event(s)	
c. Recurrent nightmares		m. Less interest in daily activities	
d. Feeling detached or withdrawn from people		n. Hopelessness – feeling as if they don't have a future	
e. Unable to display or feel emotions		o. Bodily pain	
f. Feeling jumpy, easily startled		p. Poor memory	
g. Difficulty concentrating		q. Guilt for having survived	
h. Trouble sleeping		r. Difficulty trusting family	
i. Feeling on guard		s. Difficulty trusting others of their own race	
j. Feeling irritable or having outbursts of anger		t. Difficulty trusting strangers	

7. The following are mental health illnesses that people sometimes have after experiencing hurtful or terrifying events in their lives. Please indicate whether or not **either of YOUR PARENTS** have **ever** displayed such illnesses. *Check all that apply.*

Please check (✓) here.	
a. Post-traumatic stress disorder/syndrome – flashbacks; bad dreams; reliving the traumatic experience(s); emotionally numb; avoidance via guilt and depression; feeling tense or on the edge; inability to sleep	
b. Somatization – long-term (chronic) condition in which a person has physical symptoms (real pain) that involve more than one part of the body, but no physical cause can be found.	
c. Insomnia – Difficulty falling asleep; waking up often during the night and having trouble going back to sleep; waking up too early in the morning; feeling tired upon waking	
d. General anxiety – Can't seem to get rid of concerns, even though anxiety is more intense than the situation warrants; can't relax, startle easily, and have difficulty concentrating; trouble falling asleep or staying asleep; physical symptoms include fatigue, headaches, muscle tension, muscle aches	
e. Depression – Persistent feeling of sadness, hopelessness, emptiness; loss of interest; physical symptoms include overeating, insomnia, thoughts of suicide	

10. Please select the category that best describes how you think and feel about the event(s) above. *Complete the items below even if you could not think of a family member who had a negative experience. If you were unable to identify someone above, you may use your own experience.***
“In terms of this negative experience...

	Very Often				
		Often			
		Not sure			
	At times				
	Rarely/Never	↓	↓	↓	↓
a. I force myself to avoid certain thoughts or feelings that remind me of (person above)."	1	2	3	4	5
b. I find myself avoiding certain activities or situations because they remind me of their problems."	1	2	3	4	5
c. I have difficulty falling or staying asleep."	1	2	3	4	5
d. I startle easily."	1	2	3	4	5
e. I have flashbacks (vivid unwanted images or memories) related to their problems."	1	2	3	4	5
f. I am frightened by things that he or she said or did to me."	1	2	3	4	5
g. I experience troubling dreams similar to their problems."	1	2	3	4	5
h. I experienced intrusive, unwanted thoughts about their problems."	1	2	3	4	5
i. I am losing sleep over thoughts of their experiences."	1	2	3	4	5
j. I have thought that I might have been negatively affected by their experience."	1	2	3	4	5
k. I have felt "on edge" and distressed and this may be related to thoughts about their problem(s)."	1	2	3	4	5
l. I have wished that I could avoid dealing with the person or persons named above."	1	2	3	4	5
m. I have difficulty recalling specific aspects and details of their difficulties."	1	2	3	4	5
n. I find myself losing interest in activities that used to bring me pleasure."	1	2	3	4	5
o. I find it increasingly difficult to have warm and positive feelings for others."	1	2	3	4	5
p. I find that I am less clear and optimistic about my life than I once was."	1	2	3	4	5
q. I have some difficulty concentrating."	1	2	3	4	5
r. I would feel threatened and vulnerable if I went through what the person above went through."	1	2	3	4	5

*Questions modified from Mollica, Richard, Laura McDonald, Michael Massagli, and Derrick Silove. 2004. "Measuring Trauma, Measure Torture: Instructions and Guidelines of the Utilization of the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma's Version of the Hopkins Symptom Checklist-25 (HSC-25) and the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ)." *Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard.

**Questions modified from Motta, R.W., Hafeez, S., Sciancalepore, R. and Diaz, A.B. 2001. "Discriminant Validation of the Secondary Trauma Scale." *Journal of Psychotherapy in Independent Practice* 24:17-24.

LANGUAGE, CULTURE, and EDUCATION

The questions in this section refer to your educational and cultural background.

11. Please state to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements that pertain to your language proficiency. *Circle only one response per row.*

	Not applicable				
	Strongly agree				
	Somewhat agree				
	Somewhat disagree				
	Strongly disagree	↓	↓	↓	↓
a. I can hold conversations with elders from my ethnic community.	1	2	3	4	8
b. I can read in my heritage language.	1	2	3	4	8
c. I can write in my heritage language.	1	2	3	4	8
d. I understand melodramas that are in my heritage language.	1	2	3	4	8
e. I speak my heritage language frequently.	1	2	3	4	8
f. I speak my heritage language proficiently.	1	2	3	4	8
g. I speak English frequently.	1	2	3	4	8
h. I speak English proficiently.	1	2	3	4	8

12. Please state to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements that pertain to your hometown. *Circle only one response per row.*
"In my childhood hometown/neighborhood..."

	Strongly agree			
	Somewhat agree			
	Somewhat disagree			
	Strongly disagree	↓	↓	↓
a. I feel or felt safe."	1	2	3	4
b. I was allowed to play with my friends in the streets."	1	2	3	4
c. there were other families that shared by ethnic background."	1	2	3	4
d. there were grocery stores that catered to my ethnic background."	1	2	3	4
e. there were restaurants that catered to my ethnic background."	1	2	3	4
f. there was gang activity."	1	2	3	4

13. Please state to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements that pertain to your cultural identity. *Circle only one response per row.*

	Strongly agree			
	Somewhat agree			
	Somewhat disagree			
	Strongly disagree	↓	↓	↓
a. Most of the friends I have now belong to my same ethnic group.	1	2	3	4
b. I am proud to be a person from my ethnic group.	1	2	3	4
c. I enjoy interacting with others from my ethnic group.	1	2	3	4

14. Please state to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements that pertain to your culture. *Circle only one response per row.*

	Not applicable				
	Strongly agree				
	Somewhat agree				
	Somewhat disagree				
	Strongly disagree	↓	↓	↓	↓
a. I listen to music from my ethnic culture.	1	2	3	4	8
b. My parents or I make offerings to ancestral spirits.	1	2	3	4	8
c. I participate in holidays, traditions, and celebrations (e.g., New Year, Pchum Ben Festival, etc.).	1	2	3	4	8
d. If I were to get married, I would prefer a traditional ethnic wedding.	1	2	3	4	8
e. When greeting elders, I usually "sompeah" them ("sompeah" is a Khmer word that means putting your hands together, placing them just below and close to your nose, and bowing).	1	2	3	4	8
f. I use an age-appropriate title when greeting people who are older.	1	2	3	4	8
g. Children are obligated to care for their parents when the parents can no longer provide for themselves.	1	2	3	4	8
h. My idea of "family" includes mother, father, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and others who also live in the same household.	1	2	3	4	8
i. I know what greetings and gestures to make at the temple.	1	2	3	4	8

YOUR BACKGROUND

The questions in this section primarily collect demographic data.

15. What is your age? *Fill in below.*

--

16. What is your gender? *Fill in below.*

↓ Please check (✓) here.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Female
<input type="checkbox"/>	Male
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify):

17. What is your martial status? *Check all that apply. For example, if you had a previous husband/wife who passed away, and you remarried, select "Widowed" and "Remarried."*

↓ Please check (✓) here.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Single
<input type="checkbox"/>	Married
<input type="checkbox"/>	Domestic Partnership
<input type="checkbox"/>	Separated
<input type="checkbox"/>	Widowed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Remarried
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify):

18. What is your nationality/national background? *Check all that apply.*

↓ Please check (✓) here.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Khmer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cham
<input type="checkbox"/>	Khmer Krom (Vietnamese)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify):

19. What is your country of birth?

↓ Please check (✓) here.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Cambodia
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thailand
<input type="checkbox"/>	USA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify):

20. What city and state do you consider to be your hometown? *If more than one, please fill in as many as you would like.*

--

21. What city and state do you currently reside? *Fill in below.*

22. Have you ever visited Cambodia? *Fill in below.*

↓ Please check (✓) here.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

23. How many siblings do have? *Fill in below.*

24. Please state to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements that pertain to your relationship with your sibling(s). *Circle only one response per row.*

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable
	1	2	3	4	8
a. My sibling(s) and I can emotionally confide in one another.	1	2	3	4	8
b. My siblings(s) and I speak often.	1	2	3	4	8

25. Do you currently live or have you in the past lived with the following people? *Check all that apply.*

↓ Please check (✓) here.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Aunts
<input type="checkbox"/>	Uncles
<input type="checkbox"/>	Grandparents
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cousins
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nieces and Nephews

26. What are your political views? *Check one only.*

↓ Please check (✓) here.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Extremely liberal
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat liberal
<input type="checkbox"/>	Moderate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat conservative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Extremely conservative

27. What is your highest education level (completed)?	
↓ Please check (✓) here.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than high school
<input type="checkbox"/>	High school diploma or its equivalent
<input type="checkbox"/>	Some college
<input type="checkbox"/>	Associates degree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bachelors degree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Masters degree – MSW, MA, MS, etc. (please specify):
<input type="checkbox"/>	Advanced graduate degree – PhD, MD, DDS, etc. (please specify):

28. What is your current education level?	
↓ Please check (✓) here.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not currently enrolled
<input type="checkbox"/>	High school
<input type="checkbox"/>	Community college
<input type="checkbox"/>	4-year college – 1st year
<input type="checkbox"/>	4-year college – 2nd year
<input type="checkbox"/>	4-year college – 3rd year
<input type="checkbox"/>	4-year college – 4th+ year
<input type="checkbox"/>	Masters program – MSW, MA, MS, etc. (please specify):
<input type="checkbox"/>	Advanced degree program – PhD, MD, DDS, etc. (please specify):

29. What is the highest level of education you aspire to achieve?	
↓ Please check (✓) here.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than high school
<input type="checkbox"/>	High school diploma or its equivalent
<input type="checkbox"/>	Some college
<input type="checkbox"/>	Associates degree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bachelors degree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Masters degree – MSW, MA, MS, etc. (please specify):
<input type="checkbox"/>	Advanced graduate degree – PhD, MD, DDS, etc. (please specify):

30. Have you used or will you need financial aid to pay for your education? *This includes need-based grants, scholarships, loans, work-study, etc.*

↓ Please check (✓) here.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

31. What is your current occupation? *Fill in below. If unemployed, student only, or a homemaker, please state so below.*

YOUR FATHER'S BACKGROUND

If your father is deceased, please answer to the best of your ability as it relates to your relationship before his passing.

32. Is your FATHER living or deceased?

↓ Please check (✓) here.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Living
<input type="checkbox"/>	Deceased

33. What is your FATHER's nationality/national background? *Check all that apply.*

↓ Please check (✓) here.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Khmer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cham
<input type="checkbox"/>	Khmer Krom (Vietnamese)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other <i>(please specify):</i>

34. What is your FATHER's country of birth?

↓ Please check (✓) here.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Cambodia
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thailand
<input type="checkbox"/>	USA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other <i>(please specify):</i>

35. If your FATHER immigrated to or sought asylum in the USA, what year did he immigrate? *Fill in below. Please estimate if necessary. Leave blank if not applicable.*

36. For the question above, how accurate were you in identifying your FATHER's year of migration? *Leave blank if not applicable.*

↓ Please check (✓) here.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete guess
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat confident
<input type="checkbox"/>	Very confident

37. What is your FATHER's occupation? *Fill in below. If unemployed or a homemaker, please state so below.*

38. What is your FATHER's highest education level (completed)?

↓ Please check (✓) here.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than high school
<input type="checkbox"/>	High school diploma or its equivalent
<input type="checkbox"/>	Some college
<input type="checkbox"/>	Associates degree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bachelors degree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Masters degree – MSW, MA, MS, etc. <i>(please specify):</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Advanced graduate degree – PhD, MD, DDS, etc. <i>(please specify):</i>

39. What is your FATHER's marital status? *Check all that apply. For example, if your father had a previous wife who passed away, and he remarried, select "Widowed" and "Remarried."*

↓ Please check (✓) here.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Single
<input type="checkbox"/>	Married
<input type="checkbox"/>	Domestic Partnership
<input type="checkbox"/>	Separated
<input type="checkbox"/>	Widowed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Remarried
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other <i>(please specify):</i>

YOUR MOTHER'S BACKGROUND

If your mother is deceased, please answer to the best of your ability as it relates to your relationship before her passing.

40. Is your MOTHER living or deceased?	
↓ Please check (✓) here.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Living
<input type="checkbox"/>	Deceased

41. What is your MOTHER's nationality/national background? Check all that apply.	
↓ Please check (✓) here.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Khmer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cham
<input type="checkbox"/>	Khmer Krom (Vietnamese)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify):

42. What is your MOTHER's country of birth?	
↓ Please check (✓) here.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cambodia
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thailand
<input type="checkbox"/>	USA
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify):

43. If your MOTHER immigrated to or sought asylum in the USA, what year did she immigrate? Fill in below. Please estimate if necessary. Leave blank if not applicable.	
--	--

44. For the question above, how accurate were you in identifying your MOTHER's year of migration? Leave blank if not applicable.	
↓ Please check (✓) here.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete guess
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat confident
<input type="checkbox"/>	Very confident

45. What is your MOTHER's occupation? Fill in below. If unemployed or a homemaker, please state so below.	
---	--

46. What is your MOTHER's highest education level (completed)?

↓ Please check (✓) here.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than high school
<input type="checkbox"/>	High school diploma or its equivalent
<input type="checkbox"/>	Some college
<input type="checkbox"/>	Associates degree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bachelors degree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Masters degree – MSW, MA, MS, etc. (please specify):
<input type="checkbox"/>	Advanced graduate degree – PhD, MD, DDS, etc. (please specify):

47. What is our MOTHER's marital status? Check all that apply. For example, if your mother had a previous husband who passed away, and she remarried, select "Widowed" and "Remarried."

↓ Please check (✓) here.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Single
<input type="checkbox"/>	Married
<input type="checkbox"/>	Domestic Partnership
<input type="checkbox"/>	Separated
<input type="checkbox"/>	Widowed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Remarried
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify):

48. Which of the following describes your relationship with your PARENTS? Check all that apply.

FATHER		MOTHER	
↓ Please check (✓) here.		↓ Please check (✓) here.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strict	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strict
<input type="checkbox"/>	Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	Good
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sentimental	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sentimental
<input type="checkbox"/>	Loving	<input type="checkbox"/>	Loving
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-existent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-existent
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tumultuous	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tumultuous
<input type="checkbox"/>	Respectful	<input type="checkbox"/>	Respectful
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify):

The survey is complete. Thank you for your time and participation. Please turn to the next page for raffle entry instructions.

TEAR HERE

RAFFLE ENTRY: One \$100 Amazon Gift Card or One of Two \$50 Amazon Gift Cards

The information you provide below will be kept separate from your survey responses. Identification will only be used for raffle purposes—unless you specify that you would like to be contacted for a follow-up interview (**\$10 incentive guaranteed**). After completing this page, tear it out. **Turn the booklet into the “survey collection” bin and this form into the “raffle collection” bin.**

Name: _____

Email address: _____

Are you interested in being contacted for a follow-up interview—to be schedule for a later date?

(\$10 incentive) _____ Yes _____ No

--- **TEAR HERE. Keep cover letter and portion below for your records and to “Refer a Friend.”**

Thank you for your participation in Encountering Memory and Trauma: Cambodian American Family History and Resilience Survey (UCSC IRB Protocol #1904). If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Yvonne Kwan (yykwan@ucsc.edu).

OTHER CHANCES TO WIN \$\$

There is a subsequent “Refer a Friend” raffle for those who did not make it to KSCC. If you refer friends to take the survey, they will enter your name and email address on a separate form. You will be entered to win **one of three \$50 Amazon gift cards**. The more friends you refer, the higher the chance you will win! Your friend will also be entered to win **one of three \$50 Amazon gift cards**. There are **six additional gift cards** available for raffle after this conference. See flyer below for more details.

ភាពយឺតវី មិនប្រុងប្រយ័ត្ន
**Encountering Memory and Trauma:
 Cambodian American Family History and
 Resilience Survey**

ប្រវត្តិសាស្ត្រ សតិ គ្រួសារ
history memory family

**Are you Cambodian?
 Are you interested in sharing your story?
 Want a chance to win several \$50 Amazon gift cards?***

**Fill out this survey to contribute to research that addresses
 issues of Cambodian mental health and higher education!**

*Enter <http://tinyurl.com/khmersurvey> into your browser. Fill out the survey. After you submit your responses, click on the additional link provided, enter your email, and submit in order to enter into a raffle for one of three \$50 Amazon gift cards. This process helps maintain your anonymity. If someone referred you, you may also enter his/her name and email so that he/she may be entered into the “refer a friend” raffle for another one of three \$50 Amazon gift cards. Thank you and good luck! If you have any questions, please contact Yvonne Kwan at yykwan@ucsc.edu.

<http://tinyurl.com/khmersurvey>

University of California **Center for New Racial Studies** **UC/ACCORD** ALL-CAMPUS CONSORTIUM ON RESEARCH FOR DIVERSITY UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA **SANTA CRUZ**

Appendix C

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

BERKELEY • DAVIS • IRVINE • LOS ANGELES • MERCED • RIVERSIDE • SAN DIEGO • SAN FRANCISCO



SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

Name: Yvonne Y. Kwan, PhD Candidate
Department of: Sociology
Address: UC Santa Cruz
Sociology
College 8 Faculty Services
Santa Cruz, CA 95064

Title of Research Project: Encountering Memory and Family Histories: Transgenerational Transmission of Memory in Second Generation Cambodian American Refugees

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Introductory section: You are invited to take part in a research study conducted by Yvonne Y. Kwan from the department of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Before you decide whether or not to participate in the study, you should read this form and ask questions if there is anything that you do not understand.

Description of the project: This study documents and analyzes issues of family history and memory among second-generation Cambodian Americans. It will reveal how youth understand their family histories, bearing witness to their parent's migration and relocation, whether consciously or not. This research will not only identify how youth negotiate the complexities of assimilation, but also the conflicts and demands of parents and elders. Like many minority children, Cambodian youth often act as linguistic and cultural translators for elders, not only translating documents but also hurtful silences that are ineffable yet felt. This study brings to light to the family histories and hidden memories of Cambodians living in the US. Youth are no longer physically connected to their parents' home country, but they are affectively and emotionally connected. Through this study, I will identify how transgenerational transmission of memory and family history contributes to both negative and positive social outcomes in the Cambodian American community.

What you will do in the study: If you decide to take part in this study, here is what will happen: The researcher will conduct interviews with the aid of a digital voice recorder. If you prefer not to be recorded, please let the researcher know. The researcher will ask questions regarding your experiences with war, refugee camps, relocation to the US, and transgenerational relationships.

Time required: Participation will take approximately a half-hour to two hours.

Risks or discomfort: There are no anticipated risks in this study.

Benefits of this study: Although there may be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study, the researcher may learn more about the silences of war that have become so common and prevalent in the community. Perhaps, this may help start a conversation so that Cambodian youth may begin to explore their family histories and hidden pasts.

Confidentiality: The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your name will not be used in any report. Pseudonyms will be used.

If completing surveys/questionnaires, your responses will be assigned a code number. The list connecting your name to this code will be kept in a locked file. Only the researcher will have access to the file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list will be destroyed.

If interviewed, with your permission, I would like to tape this interview so that I can make an accurate transcript. Once I have made the transcript, I will erase the recordings. Your name will not be in the transcript or my notes.

Because of the nature of the data, it may be possible to deduce your identity; however, there will be no attempt to do so and your data will be reported in a way that will not identify you.

Your part in this study is confidential within legal limits. The researchers will protect your privacy unless they are required by law to report information to city, state or federal authorities, or to give information to a court of law. Otherwise, none of the information will identify you by name. All records will be saved in a password locked external hard drive only accessible to the researcher.

With your permission, the researcher would like to keep your data for use in future research studies that involve Cambodian Americans, war, and memory. If you agree, the researcher will file your interview responses confidentially and apply them to future research studies as applicable.

Decision to quit at any time: The decision to take part in this study is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate. Even if you decide at first to take part, you are free to change your mind at any time and quit the study. Whatever you decide will in no way hurt or affect you.

Rights and Complaints: If you have questions about this research, please contact Yvonne Y. Kwan, PhD Candidate, primary researcher, (626) 374-9406, yykwan@ucsc.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Compliance Administration at the University of California at Santa Cruz at 831-459-1473 or orca@ucsc.edu.

Signature:

Signing this document means that you understand the information given to you in this form and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the research described above.

Signature of Participant

Date

Typed/printed Name

Please sign both consent forms, keeping one for yourself.

Appendix D

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

BERKELEY • DAVIS • IRVINE • LOS ANGELES • RIVERSIDE • SAN DIEGO • SAN FRANCISCO



SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE ADMINISTRATION
TEL: (831) 459-1473
orca@ucsc.edu

SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA 95064

RE: Encountering Memory and Family Histories: Transgenerational Transmission of a Memory in Second Generation
UCSC IRB Protocol # 1904
UCSC Principal Investigator: Kwan, Yvonne
Exempt Determination Date: 7/31/2012

Dear Investigator:

The Office of Research Compliance Administration has reviewed the proposed use of human subjects in the project referenced above and has determined that the project is exempt from further IRB review.

Please note that you should consult with the Office of Research Compliance Administration if you have any plans to make changes to your study. Additionally, if an adverse event or unanticipated problem occurs during the research, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB immediately.

The UCSC IRB operates under a Federalwide Assurance approved by the DHHS Office for Human Research Protections, FWA00002797. Our DHHS IRB Registration Number is IRB00000266.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alice Kindheart".

Alice Kindheart
Office of Research Compliance Administration
(831) 459-1473
orca@ucsc.edu

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