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"A Good Citizen is What You'll Be": Educating Khmer Youth for Citizenship in a United States Migrant Education Program

Citizenship education is a complex and multidimensional construct. This article adds to the discussion of citizenship education by examining, ethnographically the ways the "vision" of a US Migrant Education Program is circulated through the program's discourse practices to Khmer American children of migrant agricultural workers. The article does not discuss the formal legal status of citizenship, but the program coordinators' beliefs about the skills and dispositions needed for the Khmer youth to become "good citizens." Within the coordinators' visions, the fixing of the youth's perceived deficiencies drive the curriculum, and as such the full participation of the youth as active citizens is not achieved.

And if you do your part:
Obey the rules, respect authority
A good citizen is what you'll be.

We're kids for character
Here we stand, we're unified
Side by Side
Let's get together while we can…
(Music by Joe Phillips, for a children's' TV show featuring Barney. Topic of the show was Citizenship, 1996)

1 Introduction

Every afternoon 150 Cambodians (ethnic Khmer), Vietnamese and Chinese, children of migrant agricultural workers, sing the lyrics from the song "Kids for Character" as part of the curriculum of a summer Migrant Education Program. Taking place in an urban public middle school during summer weekdays and school year Saturday mornings, this US Migrant Education Program is both instructional and ideological. The use of such songs represents a subtle, hidden agenda, a model of citizenship education that focuses on teaching students the skills and dispositions needed to become "good citizens," and it also reflects the programs' beliefs about what constitutes good citizen-ship.

According to Fischman & Hass (2012), "creating

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citizens, as well as the curriculum and practices of citizenship education, requires a vision of what type of subjectivity is desired as well as what is unacceptable" (p. 177). Commonly the development of a "desired" and acceptable citizen involves shaping poor immigrants, such as the children of migrant agricultural workers, into White-American "mainstream" ways of being. Assimilationist in nature, these types of institutionalized education programs often challenge youth's notions of self and identity, especially poor immigrant or refugee youth, whose lived realities involve alternate social structures (Fischman & Hass, 2012; Olsen, 1997). However, there are important arguments for alternative, more transformative visions for creating citizens who work for social change within and across boundaries of nation-states (Abu El-Haj, 2008; Fischman & Haas, 2012; Ong, 1999).

In this article, I add to the discussion of citizenship education as a complex and multidimensional construct by examining ethnographically the ways in which a particular Migrant Education Program circulates a specific vision of citizenship through the program's discourse and literacy practices to Khmer American children. I explore how program ideologies, or put differently how the program's ideological assumptions of what makes a good citizen, are enacted through texts and forms of discourse by analyzing constructed, formalized and consciously controlled messages embedded within the day-to-day practices of the program (Fairclough, 1992). I discuss how the discourse practices assert particular social relations of power, and privilege the perspective of assimilation characteristic of white American cultural hegemony (Fairclough, 1989,1992).

In addition, I provide an analysis of the Khmer youth's responses to the meanings and messages embedded in the literacy and discourse practices of the program. I examine the youth's worldviews, which are created by their situations as children of refugees/migrants, by their cultural/religious values and beliefs, and by their families' socioeconomic status. The research presented in this article, therefore, builds upon Ong's (2003) idea of looking closely at "the interconnected everyday issues involved in shaping poor immigrants ideas about what being American might mean" (p. xvii). In my discussion, I consider how the daily experiences of the youth as poor, urban immigrants and as young people constrain their access to formal and public opportunities for participation in society (Lister, 2008; Wood, 2002). More

critically, I elaborate on a notion of citizenship education, which focuses on developing the self-confidence and sense of agency needed by youth to become reflexive and participatory citizens (Banks, 2008; Lister, 2008).

2 Citizenship education as a complex process

Increasingly regimented curricula in US schools exert a dominant discourse that has a narrowing, constraining, and homogenizing influence on cultural diversity and related educational practices, including ideas of citizenship education. At the same time modern immigration patterns have broadened the cultural diversity of student populations in US schools and influenced the need for global awareness. (Levitt & Waters, 2002: Suaraz-Orozco & Qin-Hillard, 2004).These intricacies of a global world challenge young immigrants' identity construction and the relationships between, citizenship, identity and power. Several researchers argue that simple notions of citizenship as a nation bound legal status with expectations for a national identity need to be reconsidered (i.e. Abu El-Haj, 2009; Banks, 2008; Fischman & Haas, 2012; Ong 2003). Instead they argue that citizenship or the "guarantor of rights" needs to be disentangled from the "expectations for assimilation to a particular national identity" (Abu El-Haj, 2009, p. 279). Overall, these researchers maintain that citizenship education for full participation in a globalized world must be transformed so that all students learn to reflect upon and challenge both local and global structures that limit equality (Abu el-Haj, 2009; Banks, 2008; Levinson, 2005).

3 Citizenship education and the US educational context

Historically, within the US there has been a link between democracy, schooling and citizenship (Borman, Danzig & Garcia, 2012; Perry & Fraser, 1993; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's pushed the boundaries of democracy to include more inclusive education policies for non-White citizens (Banks, 2008; Perry & Fraser, 1993). Multicultural education programs were developed to provide curriculum that addressed the voices and identities of the ethnically and linguistically diverse student populations of the US public schools. Though no formal policy exists, school districts are encouraged to adopt policies that support all students "for full citizenship in a multiracial/multicultural democracy" (Perry & Fraser, 1993 p. 16), and to adopt policies that provide education for equitable outcomes and therefore informed, democratic citizens (Borman, Danzig & Garcia, 2012).

However, while the hope was that multicultural education would support struggles against cultural hegemony, US schools continue to function as White mainstream institutions (Banks, 2008; Duffy, 2007; Perry & Fraser, 1993). Hence, citizenship education within US public schools continues to focus on narrow conceptions of citizenship. Students are asked to develop commitments to the nation-state and to US mainstream culture (Banks, 2008). For example, Duffy (2007) describes how the rhetoric of the public schools in Minnesota offered Hmong refugee students curricula and materials that encouraged them to "think American" and identify with the values taught in US schools. He explains how the literacy practices of the public schools involved teaching Hmong refugees "the ways of thinking, speaking, writing and acting practiced by members of the majority culture…diminishing Hmong-language practices of the home and supplanting these with the 'ways with words' privileged in schools" (p. 138). Duffy (2007) viewed these practices as ideologically narrow, assimilationist and "builders of national identity" (p. 138).

Embedded in the ideology of the narrow focused citizenship education of US educational institutions is a wider notion about poor immigrants or refugees whose supposedly primitive cultures are socially determined to be undesirable (Ong, 2003, p. xviii). Cambodians, one of the largest and the poorest refugee groups living in the United States, are part of a larger panethnic Asian American label, and hence positioned in relation to other more successful Asian Americans who have been perceived within the US as "model minorities" (Lee, 1996). The "model minority" myth portrays Asian Americans as smart and successful, quiet and obedient, and thus "good" citizens (Reyes, 2007; Tuan, 1998). In contrast, a pervasive discourse exists within the US categorizing Cambodians as "less successful exemplars of the Asian "race," less model-minority material, and more underclass in orientation" (Ong, 2003, p. 85).

This type of discourse has followed the children of refugees into the institutional spaces of schools where the terms, "Other Asian" (Um, 2003) and "Bad Asian" (Lei, 2003) emerged as descriptors of Khmer youth – terms that infer the youth are underachievers, lacking in potential, gangster, and are generally "at-risk." Chhuon (2013) points out that these beliefs transmitted to Khmer youth in schools can shape the way youth learn about belonging in school and in US society. He argues that US educational institutions promote a national identity based on hegemonic mainstream white ideals, which further perpetuate the idea that there is one "correct" white middle class identity for citizens. For many marginalized youth these hegemonic practices exert exclusionary feelings and challenge their sense of belonging to an "American" identity, including citizenship (Abu El-Haj, 2008; Chhuon,, 2013; Duffy, 2007).

In this article, when I focus on the citizenship education of a Migrant Educations Program, I am not discussing the formal legal status of citizenship, but the "infrastructure of immigration" discussed by Gordon, Long & Fellin (2015) in the introduction of this themed issue, or put differently, how the program coordinators use their beliefs about the skills and dispositions needed for youth to become "good citizens" to mold their subjects into exemplars of the desirable categories of citizenship (Ong, 2003). I will also share how the Khmer youth examine their own identities that are a result of their positioning within an urban US context. The complexities include not only multiple feelings of inclusion and exclusion across ethnicity, race, gender, and socioeconomics, but also a range of encounters with racism, stereotypes, and anti-immigration sentiments. Therefore, I will also argue that

more transformative citizenship educational programs are needed where youth are provided spaces to critically examine how their citizenship identities are formed within local and global social communities.

4 The Khmer youth and the Cambodian American context

I came to know the Khmer youth and their families through my work in the Migrant Education Program. They live in a northeastern U.S. city where the parents and sometimes the youth are bused to regional farms outside the city to pick fruit. Most of the families are among the third or even fourth waves of refugees, arriving after 1980 through the mid 1990's. The refugees in these waves were among the poorest and least educated. The migrant education families came from farming backgrounds and had little to no education. Upon their arrival, according to Toan, a migrant education coordinator and Cambodian refugee, "the first thing they focus on is working in fields, like picking berries, fruit, apples, stuff like that" (Toan, Interview, 2/24/99).

The Khmer youth and their families were part of waves of Southeast Asian refugees who were produced by various political upheavals, war and persecution. Many of the families found themselves beginning a process of unplanned and rapid adjustment to a new life. They had lived through the terror of the Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese invasion. They had lived in refugee camps and resettled in a new country - the United States. Hein (2006) asserts that this process of resocialization not only involves the refugee's history, politics and culture of their homeland, but also involves coping with new identities and inequalities following migration. Cambodian refugees and immigrants living in the US hold "interpretive frameworks of how they make sense of the world around them" (Smith, 1994), of how they engage with US society and culture.

As members of a Cambodian refugee community, the history of the youth and their families includes the Khmer genocide under the Pol Pot regime. The reign of the Khmer Rouge began in 1975. During its reign, it has been estimated that more than one million people died. Those who were not killed outright through torture or murder, either died from starvation or illness while living in work camps. Others died fleeing into the woods, by stepping on land mines, or being caught (Chandler, 1991). With the invasion of the Vietnamese in 1979, the people of Cambodia had some hope, but during this time severe food shortages occurred (Chandler, 1996). Due to food shortages, continuous fighting, and distrust of the Vietnamese approximately six hundred thousand Cambodians fled to the Thai border. Thousands of Khmer refugees stayed in Thai refugee camps.

This traumatic experience continues to cause post-migration stress within the Cambodian community (Nou, 2006). Socioeconomic deprivations are another aspect affecting Cambodian refugees in the United Sates (Chan, 2004; Hein, 2006; Nou, 2006; Ong, 2003). As noted earlier, with a poverty rate of 21.6%, the Cambodian American poverty rate is among the highes of all Asian groups (SEARAC, 2011), and their rate is only slightly below the poverty rates of African Americans, and Hispanics (Macartney, Bishaw & Fontenor, 2013), thus indicating that Cambodian Americans are disadvantaged economically (Quintiliani, 2014). Ong, (2003) further elaborates and explains that as exploited Asian workers, like migrant agricultural workers, there is little room for improving one's socioeconomic status within the United States' neoliberal market economy.

As migrant agricultural workers the families I worked with had moved several times in search of work and lower-cost housing. Their more recent migratory movements brought them from rural poverty to impoverished inner-city neighborhoods. These poverty-stricken neighborhoods were located in highly segregated neighborhoods, affecting the kinds of schools the children attended, the kinds of English the youth were exposed to, their access to jobs, and the influences of youth gangs. In fact many of the Khmer youth in this study attended urban schools that had been labeled as "failing" by state officials. That is, the neighborhood high schools have low academic standards and high dropout rates and are characterized by high violence (Reyes, 2007).

Hence, while the Khmer youth I worked with for this research, middle school aged children of migrant agricultural workers, were too young to have been born during the reign of the Khmer Rouge or the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, the youth have experienced the stressors of their parents, including cultural adjustments and socioeconomic deprivations. More notable, according to Wright & Boun (2011) in their policy report documenting survey and focus group data of Southeast Asian students living across the United States, *Southeast Asian American Education 35 Years After Initial Resettlement: Research Report and Policy Recommendations,* the challenges that the Southeast Asian community face have not changed over the course of these thirty-five years [with] issues of poverty, low educational attainment, linguistic isolation, and parents' lack of familiarity with the U.S. school system. More specifically, the research participants noted experiences of feeling of loss of their cultural identities, being misperceived by teachers, being compared to higher Achieving Asian students, and feeling invisible (Wright & Boun, 2011). Finally, participants in Wright & Boun's (2011) research expressed continued experiences of racism and stereotyping, being told to "go back to their own country" even though they were born in the United States, and thus US citizens. They note often being treated as an "Other" or as a "foreigner." These feelings reflect a larger "forever foreigner" stereotype prevalent within US racial discourse (Reyes, 2007).

5 Methodology

This article draws from my larger, five-year (1997-2002), multisited ethnographic study, and from a (re) visitation to the community during the summer of 2010, that explored the intersection of identity, literacy and discourse practices within urban public middle schools, the

homes and communities of Khmer American youth and a Migrant Education Program. Using the ethnographic approaches of the New Literacy Studies that examine language and literacy as aspects of social practices, (Barton, 1994; Gee, 1990; Street, 1995), my larger study looked at both the day-to-day practices of the Khmer youth, and the social, cultural and ideological contexts in which these practices were embedded. The data presented here was collected in the Migrant Education Program serving the Khmer youth and their families. More specifically, I discuss curriculum choices of the Migrant Education Program, and the role the language, literacy and discourse practices within the curricula served to promote certain ideas of what makes a "good" citizen.

To get an in-depth picture of the complex relationship among literacy, discourse and citizenship educational practices, I combined several data-collection methods over the course of the study: participant-observation, interviews, audiotaping, photography, and review of archival materials. Data sources were coded and categorized based on the theoretical framework and grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). More specifically, because discourse practices imply certain ideologies, and these ideologies are circulated and sustained through the language and texts presented in Educational institutions, such as the Migrant Education Program, Fairclough's (1992) social theory of discourse, provided an avenue that allowed me to look at the ways that discourse practices contribute to the program's "vision of a good citizen." In my analysis, I coded texts and speeches for instances of intertextuality, Fariclough's (1992) notion of how varying texts and genres such as, songs, program brochures, handouts, lectures, assimilate or echo similar information, and how they produce "chains of communication" (p. 66). Taking each text separately, I coded broadly for overarching themes and coded more specifically for key terms related to citizenship. The combination of ethnographic approaches and critical discourse analysis helped me to document and analyze patterns of textual distribution, consumption, and knowledge production and how these practices served to create and sustain subject positioning within the Migrant Education Program.

6 The migrant education program

The United States Migrant Education Programs are federally funded programs under Title I Part C of the Elementary and Secondary School Act. The purported goals of the Migrant Education Program are to help children of migratory agricultural workers experience success by diminishing the effects of the interruption of education experienced because of the frequent movement of families. More specifically, because each state in the US has different education requirements, the US Migrant Education Program serves to help ensure that migratory children who move among the states are not penalized in any manner due to disparities among states in curriculum, and that their educational needs are met. The goal set forth by the US Migrant Education Program is to ensure that all migrant students reach challenging

academic standards and graduate with a high school diploma (or complete a GED) that prepares them for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment" ("Migrant Education," 2013).

In the Northeast city where the data was collected, the Cambodian community was emerging and "Cambodian" blocks were dispersed throughout differing sections of the city. These sections, which were once predominantly white working class neighborhoods, had seen a shift to include Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Chinese (Fujaniese) families. The Migrant Education Program discussed in this article was established in this city to serve the increasing number of South East Asian and Asian families, who lived in this North Eastern urban community, but were bused to regional farms to pick Blueberries. To qualify for the program, the students' parents must have worked in agriculture or in poultry plants, and the students must have moved with their families across school district boundaries in the previous three years. Approximately 150 students in grades K-9 attended Saturday and afterschool programs during the school year; the summer program had some 250 participants. The majority of students were Cambodian (ethnic Khmer); the second largest group was Vietnamese. Other students were Chinese, Laotian, Somali, and Mexican. With the increase in Bhutanese and Karen refugees to the community, the Migrant Education Program's student population shifted over the years to include them (fieldnotes, June 4, 2010). In fact, each year, as new families moved into the district and families out, the numbers changed. Over the last several years, while the student population has grown and changed, the program goals have remained primarily the same (fieldnotes, July 5, 2010), and through a recent review of affiliated program materials it appears that many of the Migrant Education Program's texts I describe in this article have not been updated

Based on federal program goals, the objectives set by the coordinators of this North Eastern United States urban program centered on building school skills and on providing students a safe place. Each summer the program also focused on selected themes. Throughout the years the themes have included gang prevention, antiviolence, and conflict resolution. Organizations and guest presenters were invited to the migrant education program to lead projects and lectures that fit into these themes. Although the purposes of the Migrant Education program contained multiple dimensions and contradicttions, there was an underlying agenda focused on the individual student's internal motivation to work hard in school and to resist peer pressure. In previous work, I have discussed how overall the discourse of the program positioned the youth as needing to learn mainstream ways of being (McGinnis, 2009). In the following sections of this article, I illuminate how the program established a vision of a "desired" citizen and what is considered "unacceptable" behavior. I also present a contradictory example of a program that was more transformative in its ideology, called "Global Leaders of Tomorrow."

7 "Vision" of a good citizen within the Migrant Education Program

Both Lister (2008) and Wood (2012) note that citizenship education for young people tends to focus on the adult educators' perceived vision of the youth's future potentials as "good citizens." This "adult centric" idea was an inherent part of the Migrant Education Program's practices. In addition, to being young people, the Khmer youth were also young people who were children of refugees and of migrant agricultural workers, and ultimately young people living in poverty. The language embedded within citizenship education programs for people living in poverty, like the Khmer youth, often reflects a discourse of "Othering" (Lister, 2008). The key terms used to refer to the Khmer youth by program coordinators included, "self-destructive," "hopeless'" "at-risk," and "vulnerable." This discourse called for educational practices which focused on changing perceived "unacceptable" behaviors and attitudes of the students. For example, the following is an excerpt from a brochures of an outside educational program hired by the Migrant Education Program as part of their summer's theme on gang prevention, "the [program] envisions and works towards a society in which all young people have the opportunity and desire to choose a positive and productive path to adulthood, rather than a life of violence and/or self destruction." The overall message carried throughout the brochure and enacted within their educational program was the view of poor, migrant students as "self-destructive," "hopeless," "at-risk, " and "vulnerable" (mission statement, brochure). This recurring discourse reveals an ideology of 'Othering" and signifies "a dualistic process of differentiation and demarcation by which a line is drawn between "us" and "them" and through which social distance is established and maintained" (Lister, 2008, p 7).

Similar dualistic practices in the Migrant Education Program centered on the perceived deficiencies of the youth, which needed to be corrected for their potentials as good adult citizens to be achieved. These educational practices were lecture driven presentations by various organizations and guest presenters with little to no opportunity for the migrant education students to respond. Each presenter had a different focus, but the messages were clear, and often times printed on handouts with phrases such as: "Accept responsibility for your life, " "You control in your own hands how far you can go," and "Be strong in the face of adversity." These phrases point toward the "vision" of what is believed will make a 'good and successful citizen." Examples of unacceptable behaviors were perceived as "laziness," "bending to peer pressure," and ultimately "ending up hangin on the corner." An underlying theme of the ideology of what makes a good citizen is the idea of working hard. And for young people like the Khmer youth the expectation was that working hard in school "now" would enable them to attend a University and this would lead to economic success and upward mobility – attributes of a "good American citizen." This places

blame on the individual youth instead of recognizing the systemic barriers.

More specifically, in addition to the song described in the introduction of this article, the Program's 'Kids for Character" curriculum included assemblies for all the Migrant Education Students, grades K- 9. At such assemblies, the students were provided both handouts and discussion on the meaning of "A Person of Character." "A Person of Character was defined as:

"is a good person, someone to look up to and admire. Knows the difference between right and wrong and always tries to do what is right. Sets a good example for everyone. Makes the world a better place. Is trustworthy, respectful, responsible, fair, caring and a good citizen." (Handout, Character Counts, Summer 2000).

Listed on the handout are the following criteria for what makes a "Good citizen:"

Scrupulously following organization rules and policies.
Playing by the rules (no cheating or taking short cuts)
Respecting authority
Obeying the law
Paying your taxes (whatever is lawfully owed)
Performing civic duties (voting, jury duty)
Doing volunteer community work
Conserving our resources and protecting the environment (Handout, Character Counts, Summer 2000)

This list reflects a passive notion of citizenship where students are asked to follow rules and to obey laws. The list also adopts adult centric notions of citizenship, asking students who are not fully enfranchised to perform civic duties such as voting and jury duty. Overall through the juxtapositioning of the handout with the song described in the beginning of this article, the program extends to the youth a sense of responsibility and duty associated with the ideological assumptions of US citizenship. Such a concept of citizenship leaves out notions of empowerment or any political paradigm that embraces identities or advocacy.

In combination with the lecture presentations and the circulation of handouts, the Migrant Education Program planned a trip for the middle school students to take a tour of an expensive suburban private university. At the university we walked through the student union where only white students were studying; they stopped what they were doing and looked up at the Khmer youth. Most simply used only their eyes and did not move their heads. No one smiled as we passed by. Sophear, a female 8th grader, leaned over and whispered to me, "I feel we're not welcome here." At that moment, Sophear's first trip to a university, she derived from the situation that she was not really being invited into that world. Therefore, instead of inspiring Sophear to believe in her future opportunities as the trip was set up to do, for her it reinforced her feelings of difference and ultimately notions of exclusions from white, American ways of

being – from normative white assumptions of good citizenship.

The educational agenda put forth by the Migrant Education Program to focus the students on the individual and intrinsic traits of what makes acceptable behavior, and a "good citizen," disregarded the lived realities and the exclusionary experiences of the Khmer youth. Sovanna, another student in the Migrant Education Program, describes her experiences living in the American urban context:

"I see racism in my school. I am afraid because they [neighborhood youth] tell me to go back to my country. If not they will hurt me. As a young child I grew up with violence and prejudice. My parents would remind me to stay home because its safer than anywhere else. They want me to remember my culture always. I have to respect the elderly at all times, even some that I don't know. Many kids who refuse to listen to their parents run away from home, and some join gangs. Then many crimes begin, because they start trouble for other people, and rob people's houses. It's always the innocent people who end up dead. These people become Americanized too quickly by wanting to be with the wrong crowd, and do the wrong things, just to be part of the crowd" (Personal Interview, 9/2/02).

Sovanna's statement reveals two key points about assimilationist, adult centric notions of citizenship educational discourse. First, she points out the anti-immigration sentiment that is not only prevalent at her school, but is also a dominant national sentiment. This sentiment positions youth, like the Khmer youth, as outsiders to the dominant national identity, and cannot be separated from their identity construction. In fact, many of the Khmer youth note receiving derogatory comments like, "You Chinese should go home." In response to these comments, they form themselves into a collective identity. To distinguish their identity as Khmer, they mark folders, T-Shirts, hats and other items with the words Khmer Pride. One boy admitted, "the hardest thing is that we are different;" however, the multimodal markings of "Khmer Pride" are meant to distinguish their difference from other Asian youth, and more importantly to demonstrate their pride in their Khmer cultural heritage, their language and their traditions. In essence, their multimodal practices serve as a mediation of the self, and of the collective self within their urban context (McGinnis, 2007).

Today's generation of Khmer American youth are also growing up in communities with more access to digital technologies than in the past. As newer technologies shift the materials, media and spaces afforded to these newer generations of Khmer youth, one can see their expressions of the Khmer experience, and their identifications as Khmer, circulate more widely across social networks and national boundaries. For example, there are now websites where youth like Rithy, a migrant education student, discuss their "Khmer Pride" and build a virtual Khmer community with other Khmer youth living around the United States using digitally designed texts (fieldnotes, June, 2, 2010).

The second point Sovanna raises in her statement, is the question for many Khmer families about what "being/becoming American" means to them. An elder in the community stated, "culture is the soul of each nation. Elimination of culture is an elimination of the nation" (Personal Interview 9/27/99). With the youth's exposure and choosing the ways of their urban American peers, values, music, ways of speaking and clothing styles, many Khmer parents, religious figures and community elders fear the youth will not learn the Khmer traditions nor continue to pass them on to future generations. These Khmer traditions and cultural practices, for them, are not only an expression of Khmer identity, but also a way to reclaim the social ideals of Khmer society. As a result, there is struggle within the community of what it means to be "American" – to be a good American citizen.

Thus, the pedagogical practices of the Migrant Education Program, which reduce the notion of citizenship to a set of dispositions and skills that can be delivered through lecture format ignores the network of complexities the Khmer youth encounter in their daily lives. According to Fischman & Hass (2012) this type of practice results in ineffective programs of citizenship education, particularly in the 21st Century of globalization. They contend that effective citizenship education programs "link student lives, both in and out of school, through active participation in authentic democratic activities" (p. 186). In the following section, I discuss how one program sponsored by the Migrant Education Program offered a more active and relevant approach to citizenship education.

8 Alternative vision, "Global Leaders of Tomorrow"

"Global Leaders of Tomorrow" was a program presented to the students in the Migrant Education Program by an outside educational foundation. The title of the program, Global Leaders of Tomorrow, suggests a view of youth as resources to cultivate into leaders of a globalized world. The coordinator of "Global Leaders of Tomorrow," a former journalist from Nigeria, looked more critically at the use of language and stressed, "information is power." She explained to students that it was because information is power that she chose to go into the field of journalism. As an immigrant and woman of color, she told the Khmer youth, she did not like what White Western journalists were writing about her people, so she wanted to speak for her people, to have a voice in what was being written. She asked the students, "Do you like what is being written about your people?" One girl, Samaly emphatically said, "No!" The woman explained to her, "Then it is up to you to tell about and write about your people" (fieldnotes, 7/10/2001). This provided the youth a space to develop counter narratives to the pervasive negative discourse of Khmer youth. Overall, the coordinator's hope was to provide the students with the knowledge and capacity to view writing as a resource to construct their own representations and to achieve change

More specifically, the goal of the program was to have students design and produce a newspaper called, *In Our Own Voices.* The central theme of the journalistic approach was to challenge the voicelessness and power-lessness often identified with refugees, and with people living in poverty. The coordinator also emphasized that the title reflected the voices of "you, the people" – a right associated with US citizenship – "we, the people" (Fieldnotes, July 11, 2001).

Students became engaged in working together on sections of the paper. Chamroeun wrote a political piece questioning the amount of money spent on space explo-ration when many US citizens were living in poverty. Samaly and her friend worked on exploring why youth join gangs. Sophear chose to write and design a section of the newspaper on fashion, particularly the fashion of Khmer urban girls. She and her friends worked together taking photographs of the clothes they wore, and wrote articles about the style of the clothing. While not a political piece, it was what she and her friends had interest in, and it represented their world. Sophear noted that she really liked the program, because she liked the creativity the project afforded (personal conversation, July 24, 2001).

Unfortunately, due to lack of funding by the Migrant Education Program, the sessions were limited in number and the paper was never produced. The ideal of having the students' voices heard was not realized. That is, the potentials of the program, Global Leaders of Tomorrow, as one that enlarged the students' ideas of citizenship and encouraged a critical exploration of the power of language and voice was not accomplished. Instead the realities of educational funding for youth living in impoverished urban areas ended up being an exclu-sionary element, and limiting the students' opportunities to expand their agency beyond their community.

9 Conclusion

The Khmer youth attending the Migrant Education Program find themselves negotiating complex US urban communities, public schools and cultural practices. However, they are categorized and viewed within the Migrant Education program as perpetual victims and refugees whose struggles with gang activities and welfare dependency is something they need to overcome. As such, the examples of discourse practices discussed in this article show how within the Migrant Education Program the Khmer youth are viewed through a deficit perspective. This perspective leads to curricula, language and texts whose thematic threads involve an overall desire to develop acceptable citizens, where the youth are shaped into White-American "mainstream" ways of being. More specifically, the key ideas presented to the youth by educators and guest presenters remained focus on telling youth to follow rules, how to behave, to be responsible, and to accept responsibility.

My research echoes the findings of Hall's (2002) research on citizenship and education among Sikh youth in Great Britain, and of Abu El-Haj's (2009) research with Arab Americans and their experiences of becoming citizens in post 9/11 US. The Khmer youth are cultivating multiple identities, which include the negotiation of class, race, religion, ethnicity, and gender – a complex negotiation often not addressed within narrow frame-works of US citizenship education practices, like the one within the Migrant Education Program. Therefore, a key implication of this research is how citizenship education that focuses on "fixing" the perceived deficiencies of youth ignores many of the lived realities described above, and does not respond to their feelings of exclusion or provide for their full participation, because they are viewed as objects to be acted upon or as "forever foreigners." In fact, the conception of the youth as "deficient" led to a lack of faith in the Khmer youth's abilities and behavior, and as such created a relationship where the full participation of the youth as active citizens was not possible. Thus, the overall outcome of citizenship education for the Khmer youth was both limiting and ineffective.

Serious and financial commitments to programs such as Global Leaders of Tomorrow, where youth are engaged in active citizenship practices, is called for if we want young people to fully participate in local and global communities. A transformative citizenship education pro-gram focuses on engaging youth in active ways, such as developing their voice through the use of counter narratives, and encourages youth to critically examine their lived realities and the social structures that exclude and silence them. It is through this active and critical examination of the existing social structures and social relations, both locally and globally, that youth can begin to cultivate citizenship practices that build on a sense of belonging and a sense of agency (Abu El-Haj, 2008; Lister, 2008). Ultimately, when developed with a focus on inclusion and action, education for citizenship can play a crucial role in preparing youth to be citizens in the full sense of the word, to challenge exclusionary elements and encourage a critical awareness of the workings of our society (Lister, 2008).

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