Article

Journal of Contemporary Ethnography
2014, Vol. 43(2) 176–201
© The Author(s) 2014
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0891241613516630
jce.sagepub.com

The Tensions of Diasporic 'Return' Migration: How Class and Money Create Distance in the Vietnamese Transnational Family

Mytoan Nguyen-Akbar[1]

Abstract
Propelled by the globalization of work opportunities in the Global South, thousands of *Viet Kieu* (overseas Vietnamese) 1.5- and second-generation migrants are "returning" to Vietnam to find skilled work. Through a global ethnography in urban Ho Chi Minh City, this article illustrates how these diasporic "returnees" negotiate their contentious relationship with their nonmigrating, often poorer extended family. My research contributes to the migrant gift giving and reciprocity literature by examining the many ways that "return" migration can create tensions and ambiguity within existing transnational family remittance relationships across borders. The increased presence of diasporic "return" migrants also prompts scholars to reconsider the durability of transnational family ties across the generations, as face-to-face encounters reveal how class, generation, age hierarchy, and gender can create micro-level axes of difference and distancing.

Keywords
return migration, extended family, 1.5 and second generation, global ethnography, ambiguity

[1]University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison, WI, USA

Corresponding Author:
Mytoan Nguyen-Akbar, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 8128 William H. Sewell Social Sciences Building, 1180 Observatory Drive, Madison, WI 53706-1393, USA.
Email: mnguyen@ssc.wisc.edu

Introduction

Research on contemporary diasporic "return" migration (Lesser 2003; Long 2004; Tsuda 2009; Lee 2009) suggests that changes in the global economy are shifting the classic migration story, from the assumption that migrants move from poor to rich countries and stay there permanently, toward one where migrants and their children move between their countries of legal citizenship and their ancestral homeland throughout the course of their lives (Levitt 2002; Smith 2006). This article extends the research on migrant gift giving and reciprocity by including "return" migration and the many ways that "return" can create tensions and ambiguity within families that have long, existing transnational remittance ties across borders. Through the empirical case of the overseas Vietnamese—known as the *Viet Kieu*—it focuses upon the tensions of money and class guilt within the Vietnamese diasporic extended family network upon the "return" migration of the growing numbers of 1.5 and second generation of Vietnamese Americans to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Within the Vietnamese diaspora in the developed countries of the Global North, many from the 1.5 and second generation have increasingly looked to the commercial hub of Ho Chi Minh City as an exciting postcollege destination to live for several years to obtain valuable work experience and reconnect with their parents' ancestral homeland. The steady rise of "return" migrants over the past decade and massive influx of 500,000 *Viet Kieu* going to Vietnam for short-term tourist and family visits or for more permanent residence in the year 2010 prompted me to investigate the consequences of these diasporic "return" migrations on close-range relationships with nonmigrating family members.

My research points to an extended family tightrope (Kibria, 1993) navigated by these 1.5- and second-generation Viet Kieu "returnees," who negotiate the obligations of monetary support to family with the need for separation to create more social distance and physical space between local extended relatives and themselves. Viet Kieu are already embedded in long-standing remittance relationships: Overseas remittances to Vietnam constituted 7 percent of gross domestic product in 2009 and 71 percent of the remittances still originate from North America, with 17 percent originating from Europe and 7 percent from Oceania (Migration Policy Institute, 2011). In some small villages of Coastal Vietnam, up to 60 percent of residents have a relative abroad who fled by boat—and according to Small (2012, 162), in parts of Quy Nhon village, big houses owned by previously poor fisherman now dot the shoreline, a physical testament to the benefits of remittances. In this article, I examine how these more permanent diasporic "return" migrations affect the

durability of extended family relationships, and what this looks like within preexisting webs of filial obligations and perceived expectations of gift giving and migrant reciprocity. Through a fine-grained ethnographic account of the diasporic "return" migration of the children of Viet Kieu, I show how the face-to-face encounters with local extended relatives helped to maintain as well as strain existing tensions within transnationally maintained family relations.

Literature

Transnational Care Relationships: Obligation and Expectations

Transnational family research has primarily emphasized the relationships between nuclear family members—children, parents, and siblings—yet the intergenerational ties between the offspring of migrants and their grandparents, aunt, uncles, and cousins are less understood. In addition, family separation for refugee families has intrafamily political consequences distinguishing them from families separated by economic migration. Glick-Schiller and Fouron (2001, 4, 61) found that for many Haitians, patterns of obligation and family comprised a claim to political membership in a community that stretches beyond the territorial borders of a homeland. Such loose ties are important between highly unequal developing countries where remittances are heavily relied upon and kinship networks beyond the nuclear family are central to household and village economic survival strategies. In contrast, Small (2012) shows that Viet Kieu remittances have been exacted as a moral duty, helping as well as straining the maintenance of Vietnamese family networks across nation-state borders.

Sociologists have shown how long-standing remittance relationships have the potential to shape power dynamics within families separated by borders. Conventionally, family members who outmigrate send back monetary remittances, symbolic gifts, letters, cards, and photographs to loved ones in their sending country, and are able to maintain these relationships through phone calls, return visits, and even through second-hand information and gossip (Glick-Schiller and Fouron 2001; Parreñas 2001; Levitt 2002; Parreñas 2005; Thai 2012; Dreby 2006). Family separation has also reshaped varieties of care and compensation in the absence of the migrant. Parreñas (2001) describes financial support and material goods sent to children as a means of overcompensating for the physical absence of the mother and a symbolic penance to purify their consciousness of a sense of guilt (Skrbis 2008, 238). Methodologically, these works have expanded studies of migration beyond a nation-state territorial framework toward a transnational and multisited

ethnographic approach, yet have also allowed for the agency of social actors at the margins in shaping the networks and flows themselves (Gille and O'Riain 2002, 275).

Money is typically a currency of care (Zelizer 2000) and a demonstration of filial piety in the maintenance of family relations, especially for families separated across nation-states (Thai 2012). Scholars have noted three principal types of care practices: 1) routine care, day-to-day care; 2) ritual care, marking special events like birthdays and anniversaries; and 3) crisis care, key event caring, involving unexpected and unanticipated events or times of increased need (Baldassar, Baldock, and Wilding 2007). Migrants' burden of obligation can strain relations with family in the ancestral homeland, and the unequal distribution of remittances and gifts can create enmity between relatives who receive support and those who do not (Glick-Schiller and Fouron 2001, 84–85). These studies stress the emotional and material consequences of outmigration on both migrants and stayers.

However, studies of transnational families have not explored the social psychological and emotional consequences of separation (or reunification) with other family members such as aunts and uncles, grandmothers, and cousins, often viewed as members of the immediate household.[1] Furthermore, they have not explored how class and national privilege reconfigure and at times inhibit genuine, nonmonetary interactions between extended families and, in particular, those separated by forced migration due to the legacy of war and political divisions. For refugees whose families have been separated by the aftermath of war and political unrest, persecution, and exile, monetary overcompensation can become a means to make up for survivor guilt, a theme seldom discussed in sociological research. The psychological literature suggests that unconscious processes are at least partially involved in the intergenerational transmission of trauma (Rowland-Klein and Dunlop 1997), suggesting that survivor parents may "transmit emotional messages concerning the history and fate of relatives" and that children of survivors may "share an anguished collective memory reflective of their parents' traumatic experience" (360).[2] Are the experiences of Viet Kieu shaped by similar psychological desires to overcompensate for absence through material support? What role, if any, does survivor guilt play in the ritual and crisis support and gift-giving practices of the Viet Kieu, some of whom experience survivor guilt transmitted from their parents? I suggest that status, lifestyle, and class guilt can exist alongside survivor guilt, together forming the underpinnings of multiple logics of care toward nonmigrating relatives. To illustrate the importance of co-presence and closely examine how filial expectations and obligations unfold during face-to-face encounters, I look to the return migration literature.

Diasporic "Return" Migration and the Viet Kieu Case

More recently, high-skilled migrants are finding work opportunities in the developing countries of the Global South as these so-called late industrializing countries become more integrated into the international economy; meanwhile, labor markets in their respective countries in North America and Western Europe are characterized by a shrinking middle class in a postindustrialized hourglass economy. For the adult children of immigrants, the 1.5 and second generation who may have the resources and mobility to do so, many look toward their parents' ancestral homeland for middle management and skilled jobs. While the economic value of remittances have contributed to economic and social advancement within developing countries, return migrants from the family members in the remittance sending countries are also transforming transnational family dynamics within a localized setting. Diasporic return migration to the parental ancestral homeland has been shown to occur for both ethnic and economic motives, with ethnic return migrants defined as the "later-generation descendants of diasporic peoples who 'return' to their countries of ancestral origin after living outside their ethnic homelands for generations" (Tsuda 2009, 1). Diasporic return migration from the Global North to destination countries in the Global South can reveal how geopolitics and the global economic order not only filters down to the individual level but also plays an instrumental role in shaping the incorporation of these diasporic subjects by residents and state governments in less affluent host countries.

For the Viet Kieu in my study, there are family and extended relative ties linking the U.S. family with Vietnamese relatives, decades of economic remittances, and the varied historical experiences with the Vietnamese Socialist state and mutual hostility toward former refugees/exiles that served as a unifying factor for the overseas politicized diaspora. Increasingly, the anti-Communist sentiments of the Vietnamese American refugee community—especially in Orange County, home to the largest concentration of Vietnamese Americans and any Vietnamese descendants living abroad—has retreated in its militancy and the younger generation born abroad with U.S. citizenship has a greater willingness to learn about Vietnam with more emotional distance. This sets the stage for those Viet Kieu with cultural and economic resources to work in Vietnam. Though my data relies primarily on observations and interviews from Vietnamese Americans, some aspects of the Viet Kieu "returnees" who originate from Australia, Canada, and Western Europe can be included in the term "Vietnamese diaspora" because of the history of post-1975 refugee outmigration that characterized the majority of migratory flows from the homeland. The diasporic Vietnamese Americans

and Australians in particular share more commonalities, as Carruthers (2008, 71) suggests that they share roughly "the same vision of diasporic identity and participate in the same public sphere, for instance over the Internet, in popular cultural products such as music videos produced in California"; a further similarity between the two is that they both were situated in immigrant receiving societies opposed to Ho Chi Minh in the Vietnam War/American War. Geopolitics of sending and host countries in these migratory flows continues to play an instrumental role in shaping the reception of these diasporic subjects.

In general, migration flows from sending states in the Global North to receiving states in the Global South have prompted governments to relax their immigration or temporary visa provisions toward highly skilled migrants for development related goals (see Migration Information Source 12/3/2007). Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004) and Smith and Bakker (2008) posit that the extension of legal benefits to migrants is contingent on both home and host country policies which limit or allow for their border-crossing activities to happen. Just as China and India have, the Vietnamese state has relaxed an array of laws and social policies toward its diaspora, their children and spouses, in order to attract and retain high-skilled Viet Kieu and their resources. The Vietnamese Communist Party established a coordinated strategy toward Viet Kieu living abroad and for integrating those Viet Kieu who have returned, spelled out in subsequent revisions to Resolution NQ-36/2004.[3] Since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, relations among Viet Kieu diasporic communities and the state have shifted from mutual hostility and suspicion toward strategic engagement on the part of the Vietnamese government to attract remittances, foreign direct investment (FDI), and now skilled labor in order to fill short-term middle-level management and executive staff shortages.

Many economic, political, and legal changes have shaped the "return" of the Viet Kieu. The Vietnamese government's 1986 adoption of "*Doi Moi*" policies of economic change and restructuring would best be characterized as market socialism with state guidance.[4] In 1994, the normalization of U.S.–Vietnam relations allowed for more Viet Kieu from the United States to visit their families in Vietnam on short trips. Gradually, more Overseas Vietnamese have returned: 152,672 in 1993; 380,000 in 2003; and 485,194 in 2005 (COV 2010). The Committee on Overseas Vietnamese (COV), a division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), figures have estimated there are four million Viet Kieu scattered across 104 countries, the majority of whom left during the 1970s–1990s because of the Vietnam War and its aftermath. In 2007, Most Viet Kieu were eligible and able to apply for the Viet Kieu visa exemption, created through Prime Ministerial Decision 135/2007/QD-TTg

which allowed overseas Vietnamese to enter Vietnam visa-free for 90 days per visit (as of 2010, two hundred thousand Viet Kieu visa exemption certificates had been granted) (COV 2010). In 2008, dual citizenship for foreigners and the descendants of Viet Kieu living overseas became legal; however, during my fieldwork, I did not locate any cases among my interviewees, perhaps because of a legacy of government mistrust by the parents filtering to the adult children of Viet Kieu. The COV estimated that nearly five hundred thousand Viet Kieu entered Vietnam in 2010 and overseas remittances exceeded US$8 billion in 2010 (or 7.5% of US$106.4 billion GDP in 2010).

I chose Ho Chi Minh City as an important hub for examining U.S. diasporic "returnees" because more than thirty-eight years after the widespread refugee outmigration and resettlement to Western countries, the returning population was composed of influxes of highly educated white-collar professionals, distinct from their Vietnam-born parents who for the most part lacked college credentials and English language fluency. Hoang (2011) characterized it as an "emergent international city" rather than a new global city (Sassen 2001) as it is "part of the peripheral zone in the global capitalist market, where processes of transnationalism from above and practices of transnationalism from below shape the socioeconomic structure of the city" (Hoang 2011, 369). My trips to both Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi confirmed my expectations that there was a smaller and less visible Viet Kieu presence in the North. Differences in the "returnees'" perceptions of where they were more politically and culturally welcome as migrants had to do with historical and political reasons: the South was where most refugees fled, starting in the 1970s, whereas the North was where the majority of support for the Communist regime that expelled the refugees resided.

The Extended Family Tightrope between Vietnam and the United States

The children of Viet Kieu in my study inhabited multiple social worlds: once settled in Ho Chi Minh City as diasporic "returnees," many worked and socialized with different nationalities within cosmopolitan expatriate "bubbles," and during holidays and weekends, shared traditional Vietnamese family meals with their extended relatives either in Ho Chi Minh City or regionally in South and Central Vietnam. Many had experienced a similar dualism during their adolescence growing up in the United States; as second-generation youths, they had to negotiate private Vietnamese family obligations, while attending school and juggling other facets of public life in America (Zhou and Bankstown 1998; Pyke and Johnson 2003). But once they arrived in Vietnam, competing family expectations magnified the tensions they understood as a dichotomous

rivalry between individuality and their perceived ideas about collectivism and Vietnamese family survival strategies after refugee resettlement. Vietnamese families were transformed by migration to the United States, and new experiences created tensions over the returnees' perceived adoption of a Western emphasis upon self-reliance and experiences of more egalitarian relationships within the family between older and younger family members and male and female. This was according to the more traditional Confucian models, formerly characterized by the assertion that the family is the fundamental unit of Vietnamese society, which stresses family institutions and kinship networks as central to individuals' lives and the foundations for the entire society (Barbieri and Bélanger 2009, 10–11). The concept of filial piety, the respect owed to one's parents and ancestors, continued to be a central virtue instilled among Vietnamese American youths. Pyke (2000, 249) found in a study of both Korean and Vietnamese second-generation youths that with regard to the issue of filial care, most respondents positively evaluated their family's collectivist commitment to care and expected to begin financially supporting their parents prior to their elderly years; others expected to live nearby them.

In many societies, traditional kinship ties act as a social welfare safety net in developing countries with weakened healthcare and social security programs. Haney and Pollard (2003) suggest that families in Vietnam have developed alternative strategies of elderly support in response to their changing environment, in keeping with firmly rooted values of elderly care by their immediate family. When still young, and presumably healthy enough, ageing parents follow or join their adult children moving out. For those who are too old or fragile to follow their migrant children and especially those left without co-residing children, intergenerational support takes the form of remittances (Barbieri 2009, 159). These were not immigrants just seeking to send back remittances to nonmigrating families. These circumstances are laid bare by the Viet Kieu asserting limits upon the burden of obligation to remit money and other currencies of care. This experience does not apply to Western expatriates who do not have kinship ties in Vietnam. Kirk, for instance, who is an American, but is not Viet Kieu, said that unlike his Viet Kieu friends who are "inhibited by their family duties" and expectations in Vietnam, he does not have any and feels freer to do what he wants.

Methodology

This article is based upon a larger project composed of eight cumulative months of ethnographic data collected in Ho Chi Minh City in the summers of 2004 and 2008 and all of fall 2010. During this time, I also interviewed 44 Viet Kieu in 2010 that were obtained with written consent. I obtained an

additional 26 interviews with key informants composed of local elites, Western expatriates, local and national government officials and human resources managers.

It has been said that ethnographers, "by locating themselves firmly within the time and space of social actors"—in this case, these actors being the Viet Kieu who are "living the global," by shuttling between the United States and Vietnam—can "reveal how global processes are collectively and politically constructed, demonstrating the variety of ways in which globalization is grounded in the local" (Gille and O'Riain 2002, 271). I did intensive fieldwork using participant observations at large and semiprivate gatherings of Viet Kieu including business mixers, house parties, restaurants, coffeeshops, and for a subgroup, during their extended family visits.

The Viet Kieu research participants were between the ages of 25 and 42, were evenly split between male and female, and held national passports from the United States, Australia, France, Germany, and Holland. A small handful of participants were multiracial, oftentimes with the mother being Vietnamese, and reported that their phenotype sometimes but not always affected their visibility as foreigners in Vietnam.[5] By sending region of origin in the United States, there was an even spread between West Cost, Midwest, and East Coast, with many having reported making secondary career and college moves in the United States. These participants demonstrated concomitant economic reasons as well as a desire to reconnect with the country of their parents' birth as motivations for their long-term stay in Vietnam. They worked in middle-management positions at transnational corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and media/arts jobs; they visited their extended families to whom their parents may have sent remittances; and lived and socialized within the rapidly changing cosmopolitan high-rises of Ho Chi Minh City. My predominantly post-1975 South Vietnamese refugee interviewees avoided discussion of Vietnamese politics and unlike many of their aging parents, have no direct memory of the Vietnam War and its aftermath.

Half my interviewees were born in Vietnam and left at an early age as refugees and boatpeople, placing them in the "1.5" generation and were in their early thirties to early forties, while those in the younger subsample in their midtwenties who would be "second generation" were each born in countries abroad where their parents were admitted and resettled as refugees under programs including the Orderly Departure Program (ODP). The use of the term "1.5 generation" refers to immigrants who come at a young age and retain their ability to speak, if not always to read and write, the ancestral language as well as Asian values and norms (Chan 2006, xiv). In an edited anthology of essays titled *The Vietnamese American 1.5 Generation*, Chan writes that "they often act as cultural brokers, regardless of whether they wish

to do so, between their grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, on the one hand, and the younger, usually American-born members of their family, on the other hand." The concept of generation posed an analytic classification challenge, as it implies that migration occurs in one direction and does not take into consideration multiple migratory journeys to and from the United States.

My analysis was based upon the emergent patterns in my field notes, which structured how I later on coded interview transcripts using NVivo qualitative software. These ethnographic accounts were filtered through my sociological lens as someone who shares a similar social location to the people I study—I am a 1.5-generation Viet Kieu child of refugees, close in age to my research participants, and was raised in a bicultural Vietnamese household in the United States. My identity as a Viet Kieu female researcher from the United States facilitated the network sample for my in-depth semistructured interviews through word-of-mouth referrals; at the same time, as Vo (2000) points out with doing community ethnography, while being North American Vietnamese afforded me *entré* to diasporic networks—this social location did not guarantee instant researcher rapport. Ho Chi Minh City was for many an intimate social arena for younger Viet Kieu and it was a space where gossip could quickly spread; thus, I had to go to great lengths to show the care I put toward protecting my informants' privacy and anonymity. All names and places used in this study are pseudonyms, with Vietnamese and Anglo-American names chosen appropriately.

In addition to my research field notes, I kept a separate personal journal about my family visits. Because I also had local extended relatives in Ho Chi Minh City, the patterns that I uncovered while doing fieldwork about the lives of other overseas Vietnamese embedded in familial networks became a part of an iterative process of fieldwork, self-discovery, and theory. For instance, I was subject to impression managing between my mother and my maternal aunt and uncles who lived in the sprawling metropolitan outskirts of Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta region. I conveyed information between my mother in the United States, as well as messages and news "on the ground" about everyday life from my relatives to my mother, who had sent regular remittances to all our living relatives since emigration beginning in the early 1980s. Some of these interactions, though not most, involved monetary and gift transfers. During weekly online Skype phone calls with my mother in Northern California, I was delicately advised to impression-manage my relations with my uncles and aunts: "Be careful that if you give away your electric bike [used for fieldwork] to your youngest cousin in Cai Be, that you don't tell Fifth Uncle, since he and his children might be jealous that you are giving it to your Aunt's family." My mother wanted to give the appearance that resources from the Viet Kieu family were being evenly distributed, so as

not to give the impression that she was favoring any siblings' family over another branch of extended relatives, even though the distribution of monetary remittances and gifts was in fact skewed toward those whom she had maintained better relations with. Many conversations I had with research participants and informants reflected similar experiences. Being the transnational family "interlocutor" to my extended relatives made me sensitive to the social milieu within which other Viet Kieu operated.

How the Legacy of Refugee Departure Shaped Present-Day Money, Gifts, and Visits

Viet Kieu often wrestled with expectations over how much to give, how gifts were conferred, and the performance of hospitality for rural countryside-dwelling relatives. The ritual support for grandmothers was a crucial anchor in the transnational family, and so was survivor guilt as the logic for unquestioned infusions of cash and gifts in the care chain. Grandmothers are leading the recipients of gifts and money; they are often the matriarchs who knit together transnational family relations for the Viet Kieu. Beyond the show of filial piety, most Viet Kieu know that a weakened and fragile social welfare system in post–Doi Moi era Vietnam meant that families privately had to shoulder the burden of the elderly and retirees' living and health care necessities. Tuan, a Viet Kieu age thirty-nine, said: "when my grandmother was alive, I saw [my relatives] a lot more. I saw her a lot more. After my grandmother passed away, I still saw my Aunts but not very regularly. There's sort of a disconnect. I don't feel as much connected to them." Vincent, age thirty-two, did not see his relatives regularly, but made it a point to give his grandmother US$100 at least twice a year. When his hundred-year-old grandmother in Cam Ranh, an eight-hour bus ride from Ho Chi Minh City, broke her hip during a fall in 2010, the year he moved to Vietnam, Vincent was the first American relative to be called. Vincent immediately took the next available regional long-distance bus out to Cam Ranh, sacrificing a day's work. Vincent's mother in the United States had not even been notified, and he did not tell her until he visited his injured grandmother. At that point, he had assumed a crisis caretaker role, a duty beyond being a mere family interlocutor. Even though he was not close to his Vietnamese cousins, taking care of his elderly grandmother in Vietnam was a demonstration of filial piety—a role that Viet Kieu migrants often assumed.

On her maternal side, Thu, a twenty-six-year-old Viet Kieu, would give US$200 per month, split US$100 each way to her maternal and paternal grandparents: "This was when my grandmother on my maternal side was still alive. When she passed away while I was in Vietnam, I spent nearly US$2,000

to pay for part of her Catholic burial plot and tomb. This doesn't include the expenses I would incur when I would travel to Central Vietnam. The flight there was cheap, but these gifts made the travel much more expensive." The care for grandparents, including monetary care, and the funds in contributing to the passing away of grandparents, especially for Catholic Viet Kieu, was part of helping families that were poor.

Many Viet Kieu noticed that among their parents' generation, younger aunts and uncles were expected to accept money and gifts. Bearing witness to the interplay of money and family politics was another aspect of being a younger-generation Viet Kieu caught in the middle of U.S. parents and Vietnamese local family discord. My-Anh, age thirty-two, had relatives who accepted cash but who did not seem to need contributions from her parents in the United States. About one-third of my interview participants said that extended relatives were upwardly mobile civil servants but, nevertheless, who had benefited from migrant remittances. Her émigré parents sent a lot of money home from the United States over the course of three decades, and in return for the generosity, her mother expected her siblings to listen to her. In practice, however, this did not always happen. Acceptance of cash transfers led to arguments between local relatives and her parents over power and decision making within the transnational family, with My-Anh caught in the middle; her parents' bumpy ties with her mother's relatives in Ho Chi Minh City was a constant source of intrafamily tension related, most of the time, to money and the micro-family politics of age-hierarchical sibling influence. My-Anh's local family had attained what My-Anh proclaimed as a level of self-sufficiency and middle-class status she described as "doing pretty well for themselves"; her local extended relatives accept the money with the strings attached out of deference to the older Viet Kieu sibling. For some families affected by transnational migration, there needed to be an active renegotiation of power and status differences between family members in order for "norms of bounded solidarity and enforceable trust" to "hold sway across borders" (Levitt 2001, 201). In the absence of this, there remains an imbalance of power and status, typically leaning in the direction of the migrants.

Undoubtedly, many positive sets of interactions occurred between the migrants and their extended relatives—this article tries to capture a partial image of the tensions and ambiguity surrounding the Viet Kieu and their relations with relatives. The extended local family was not merely passive recipients of money, either. Viet Kieu were offered guidance by family members from being "ripped off" at the wet markets, as they were easy targets of the dual economy of price inflation for foreigners and less effective in haggling down prices. In addition, some Viet Kieu learned an alternate account of their family history and reported being given original, sepia-tone portraits of their

family during prewar days, including pictures of their grandparents and other relatives (if deceased) and given heirloom documents such as birth certificates. Through family dinners on special occasions, these younger-generation Viet Kieu were reminded about Vietnamese cultural practices and customs, particularly during the Lunar New Year and Autumn festivities, when it was expected that younger Vietnamese return to their ancestral village to pay their respects. These more nuanced, nonmonetary relations counter the frame that nonmigrating relatives were merely passive recipients of money and gifts—they, too, asserted their agency in structuring the transnational family network.

When asked about life abroad, many of the 1.5- and second-generation Viet Kieu also painted a less romantic portrait of their family life in the United States than their first-generation Vietnamese parents conveyed in letters and telephone calls home to relatives during the earlier years of refugee resettlement. This countered the belief by local Vietnamese families of emigres that their Viet Kieu relatives abroad were living affluent, comfortable lives in the United States. These assumptions might have been generated by photographs and letters sent in the early years of refugee resettlement, sent by first-generation refugees to show their upward mobility, often masking the challenges of occupational downgrading, acceptance of welfare and government assistance, and, for some, racial discrimination and hostility directed toward Southeast Asian Cold War refugees after the United States withdrew from its military involvement.

Survivor guilt was named as well as talked about implicitly. Some Viet Kieu expressed a sense of their connectedness to the legacy of war and refugee outmigration as a matter of circumstance. Hung, age thirty-three, a Viet Kieu from Germany, helped his cousin who lived in a rural village with hospitalization fees; the cost was US$3,000. In justifying this large expense, he had a different mindset: “I always wondered what would have happened had I stayed behind. It’s a small price to pay.” Hung felt that his nuclear family and him were in the “right time and place” to make their escape decades before, and their outmigration allowed them to lead upwardly mobile lives in Germany. Helping out served to ease their guilt for their improved lifestyle obtained after migration (Rowland-Klein and Dunlop 1997).

Thu stated: “Had I remained in Vietnam, I would have been in poverty, married younger, etc.” However, she framed things in terms of class differences by suggesting that her guilt also had to do with her relative earnings being so much higher than her local Vietnamese family’s earnings:

> I feel guilty that I make so much compared to them. A meal at Sushi Bito in Saigon would be $50 and it’s a drop in the bucket for me, but a lot for them. I

> also felt guilty that I would spend $100 per night on an elegant hotel when I went out to visit my relatives.

What seems to be named as class guilt where Thu contrasted her life with those of her relatives is actually recognition of social inequality and different opportunities between her immediate family and the lives of her nonmigrating relatives. Yet the decision to eat lavishly and stay in upscale accommodations was a decision Thu had control over, discussed in the next section.

A handful of Viet Kieu I interviewed wanted to help alleviate disparities between urban and rural areas and to do development work as nongovernmental organization (NGO) staff. Many preferred to help out through more institutionalized channels to ad hoc, person-to-person forms of assistance. Thanh, a Viet Kieu venture capitalist from Holland, believed in purchasing gifts for his family that would create new opportunities, such as giving cousins educational scholarships, rather than merely cash and consumer electronics.

Viet Kieu articulated different ideologies in philanthropy. Some link their ideas to filial piety, others about duty and overcompensation for absence, and still others wanted to have broader impact beyond a one-time enjoyment of a gift or experience, which might also reflect their underlying perceptions of income distribution and development. Gifts and money were remitted in different forms. In contrast to Thanh's approach to giving, Vincent knew from experience that relatives would physically save up cash in a secure location of the house—typically not in a bank, due to institutional mistrust and concerns about local currency exchange rate fluctuations—so instead, he chose to treat them out to a nice meal at an air-conditioned, dine-in restaurant. When he factored in the cost of cases of beer and bottles of hard liquor consumed by his male relatives during this "treating," it typically amounted to several hundred U.S. dollars. Some meals came to more than one million Vietnamese *dong* (in other words, close to one month of paid work in the rural villages). "This way, [by treating them to an experience], they can have a good time and enjoy your hospitality [instead of saving it for the future]" explained Vincent. Vincent's logic of "treating" his family to lavish meals involved a display of masculinity through footing the bill. This dovetailed with an unwritten norm that the emigrant had the resources to pay for everything, even if this was not true. Especially in the case of Viet Kieu males, Vincent's payment had to do with "saving face" as well as abiding by patriarchal cultural norms in Vietnam. Though money and gifts were crucial to maintaining kinship ties for the "return" migrant, the symbolism behind the manner of the transfer of resources conveyed economic, cultural, and even political significance across the generations.

The Burden of Obligation: Concealing, Compartmentalizing, Distancing

Viet Kieu wrestled with the social meaning of giving money and gifts beyond their dollar value—the giving conveyed respect, carework, and constituted a means of maintaining family relations. But many Viet Kieu who arrive expecting to help out their extended relatives as part of their filial duty, over time, became less engaged with their Vietnamese extended relatives. Money, gifts, and excessive helping out became a source of anxiety that led some Viet Kieu to shield their assets and/or to distance themselves from relatives in Vietnam. For some, this had to do with guilt over class differences, for others, this had to do with not wanting to be socially monitored and evaluated by relatives. These tensions also revealed the struggle between what relative wealth was for different family members, as some poorer relatives thought the Viet Kieu had a lot to spare, while the Viet Kieu believed their salaries were not that great. Most Viet Kieu who reported hiding certain aspects of their material assets did not feel wealthy by comparison to their American peers, as the majority in my study earned less than US$36,000 to $48,000 per year. Nonetheless, this was far more than most of their rural-dwelling relatives could earn.

Physical Distance

While many Viet Kieu were uncomfortable about the contrast between their relatively comfortable circumstances and those of poor local relatives, some local families were well-off—a situation that sometimes created a different kind of tension. Tara, a Viet Kieu, age twenty-five, eventually had to move out of her Vietnamese Aunt's home because this relative, who was relatively affluent, imposed a curfew and was overprotective. Tara stated:

> When I first came here, I started living with my local aunt. My parents were mad worried that I was coming to Vietnam. I wasn't allowed to ride a motorbike. I had a motorbike chauffeur. It was just the worse.
>
> I had two maids [in that] huge house. My family is very elitist. They aren't like a poor Vietnamese family. They are very French influenced, they are kind of colonial. The maids are basically like slaves. There was this one night [my Aunt] was throwing knives at the younger maids. . . . I had a horrible time living in that house, I had to be home by like 10.
>
> It was already hard growing up in [a big city in the United States] with a strict Vietnamese family, but this was ridiculous. I don't think it's ridiculous for

> Vietnamese standards, *but I'm not even Vietnamese in that kind of way*. It was tough to live like that up until [I went to college out of state], where I just let out and became who I am today. . . . And it's really hard to listen to elders when you think they are ignorant. It's hard to accept someone who hasn't been anywhere, and *I'm very impressed with Vietnamese kids who can just listen and not argue*.
>
> She [my aunt] was just the devil. She was so difficult. And she was gossipy. [author's italics]

Tara's case illustrated the cultural expectations of being home by 10 P.M. as a young, unmarried female, and restrictions on her mobility to transport herself made staying with this particular local relative even more limiting on her independence. Moreover, Tara saw her aunt's mistreatment of paid domestic servants as a remnant of Vietnam's French colonial influence. Lastly, Tara's negative reaction toward her aunt's rigidness and strictness reminded her of her parents' strictness growing up on the West Coast and perhaps of gendered differences in her childhood. The hospitality of Tara's aunt produced friction instead of intimacy.

Most Viet Kieu spent their first few weeks during shorter visits with a local extended relative, but most Viet Kieu who came to "back" for longer-term work opportunities moved out to a place of their own in Ho Chi Minh City. As a strategy for maintaining peaceful family relations, Vincent lived in the Jasmine Towers. The living space that many Viet Kieu who elected to live in high-rises constituted a protective, Westernized residential bubble that was, for the most part, foreign to their local extended relatives.

Vincent rarely invited his relatives to visit his apartment in the high-rises: "If I take them here, they'll assume that I do really well." Vincent was renting a two-bedroom unit for US$800, paid each month in crisp U.S. dollars, since merchants only accepted new or unworn currency. He wanted to conceal this residential lifestyle from his relatives because it might give the impression that he was "doing really well," and if that truly were the case, it would also signal that he was not being a good cousin or grandchild because he was not "helping out enough." Vincent was acutely aware that relatives might expect help, saying "once you start giving too much then they start demanding a lot."

Other Viet Kieu also shared stories about selectively revealing their living arrangements and salaries. Thi, an Australian Viet Kieu, age thirty, who also lived at the Jasmine Towers, made up a story about her decision to move to a high rise when her nonmigrating relatives asked her how much she paid for rent. "My company pays for this," she replied, masking the fact that she had a choice in the matter. The monthly rent for her apartment was nearly double the amount that the average Vietnamese civil servant family earned in a month,

and she did not want to feel guilty about her lifestyle choices when she had chosen a modest two-bedroom apartment at the Jasmine Towers, rather than the more luxurious options she could have rented on her expatriate salary.

For both Vincent and Thi, the desire to conceal their physical living space amenities revealed a mismatch between wanting to "help out" versus the desire to avoid being taxed by family obligations and demands. On the one hand, they experienced guilt living in a Third World country where they provided care and could in practice do more to help out their relatives; however, they had drawn the line in terms of how much of themselves and their resources they surrendered to be virtuous in order to secure their own version of upward mobility and middle-class standing. These individuals faced a delicate balance of competing goals—of wanting to get in touch with their family history and ancestral roots, and concerns such as wanting to accumulate personal savings and career advancement.

Ambivalent Hospitality

The topic of hosting extended relatives often became a window into dealing with complicated tensions of intrafamily class divisions. Sharing candid details about my personal experiences with extended family with my Viet Kieu research subjects prompted several threads of unanticipated perspectives about micro-level strategies to negotiate relationships with local extended Vietnamese family. A Viet Kieu, Thu, age twenty-seven, her coworker from Hanoi, Hoa-Anh, age twenty-five, and another Viet Kieu coworker Thuy Anh, age twenty-seven, and I were sharing a meal together, when I mentioned that I would be hosting my maternal Aunt, age thirty-seven, and male cousin, age eleven, from the Mekong Delta, for the weekend in Ho Chi Minh City. The topic of hosting extended relatives triggered a variety of opinions. We spent the afternoon interpreting how our actions had the potential to offend or be culturally inappropriate. Putting herself in my extended relatives' position, Thu pointed out that that my actions to host family in my high-rise apartment could trigger unfavorable reactions rather than establish good will:

> If you showed them the Jasmine Towers where you live, then they might be very reluctant and feel very out of place and uncomfortable, mainly because they are very poor, and the expat areas [such as where you live] are spaces they would feel inferior and low class at.
>
> However, your decision to have them stay there in your home in Ho Chi Minh City would also raise questions about how rich or poor you actually are—if you've been staying there this entire time, *why couldn't you help out even more*?

> At the same time, in choosing food venues, if you choose a street food place, then they might determine that you're not treating them very well when they came all the way out there [from the outer lying provinces] to spend time with you. *In the end, it's not a win–win situation at all.* In fact, it's not a healthy dynamic. [my italics]

The thorny issue of hosting rural Vietnamese relatives in Ho Chi Minh City elicited another response from other 1.5-generation Viet Kieu: "Why don't you put them up in a hotel?" one asked me. Her rationale was that separating your living space from visiting relatives could raise less questions about lifestyle differences. Thu's advice mirrored the sentiments of others with regard to masking living standards and living space and warding off future demands. These sentiments gave the impression that the personal boundaries were intended to minimize the material artifacts of class and social differences between the Viet Kieu themselves and their relatives. Thu's advice urged me to *shield* the details of my high-rise apartment living experience, to avert any possible misunderstandings or suspicions that I could more generously provide for my local relatives than I had.

Certainly, even my urban relatives who lived in Ho Chi Minh City's outerlying District 10 and District 11 did not seem to feel comfortable in my secured and slightly sterile high-rise neighborhood with swimming pool, gym, elevators, doormen, and twenty-four-hour corporate taxi cab stands. As civil servant workers and state-owned enterprise employees, my aunt's and uncle's income paralleled my rent. Our monthly salaries, once converted into U.S. dollars, were vastly different. Compared to Fifth Uncle's household monthly income of US$400 as Vice President of a joint venture Taiwanese light manufacturing facility, my U.S. graduate fellowship stipend meant that I was living very well compared to his family.

They were not poor—in fact, they were part of the Vietnamese middle-middle class—but they lived different amenities and customs: sleeping on bamboo mats on cool tiled floors, an upgraded house that they had lived in for nearly fifty years but that still lacked screened in windows despite mosquitoes swarming around the house, and electric fans, rather than air conditioning, for cooling. The unreliable flushing toilets they installed were a 2002 addition, an upgrade paid for by my mother's remittances. At night, it was not uncommon for rats to scurry about across their living room floor, and the sounds of the neighborhood could be heard in every direction because homes lacked glass-paneled windows, and the metal gates for external protection from invaders nevertheless lacked insulation from the harsh dialogue of husbands and wives arguing vigorously next door. These lifestyle differences magnified perceived class differences, which made hospitality decisions a source of stress for many Viet Kieu.

Fewer Visits

Over time, some Viet Kieu visited their relatives less or chose not to visit them at all, because of legacies of the Vietnam War and their family's pre-migration history. Thu's returnee experience was unique because she came to the United States later than other 1.5-generation Viet Kieu in my study did—in the early 1990s—as a teenager. Thu had direct memories and experiences of living through this family betrayal. She remembered how poor her mother and father were in the 1980s as she was growing up in Central Vietnam. Typically, children of South Vietnam collaborators and officials did not get to attend university easily. Thu's paternal grandmother had two sons, and one was a Communist Party official, which had driven a wedge in the family; the paternal grandmother tried to report Thu's father, a former South Vietnamese official. Her father was, like many other South Vietnamese officials, forced into reeducation camps after reunification.[6]

In 2010, Thu returned to Vietnam to work at a U.S. technology start-up company based in Ho Chi Minh City. Thu would pay visits to her maternal grandmother's family home in Central Vietnam at least once every two months, yet these visits had more to do with wanting to visit the Central Highlands as a place, rather than her relatives per se.

> I've done [the trip] by myself once during the two years I lived in Vietnam, but it was only for one day. I am not comfortable with going there or visiting relatives by myself. I just don't know what to do, what my roles are, and my purpose in being there. I also don't like hearing all the family drama that goes on and I get fed up to my ears.

When Thu was asked to elaborate upon why she decided not to visit her paternal relatives after her return to Vietnam, she responded:

> Everyone on my Dad's side was either a communist or leaning towards communism or too young to make a decision and my Dad was the only person who didn't believe that [communism] would work. Everyone on my mom's side was anti-communist. He, and in turn my family, endured a lot of hostility from his family for his decision [to migrate]. From my mom's stories, our immediate family was often treated poorly after the war at family events, treated like second-class citizens. I felt it when I was there among my cousins of the same age.
>
> It was only after we left to go to the US and had that door open for us, and returned [to Vietnam], that it was different and we were treated better. I guess this is one of the important reasons for why I am not comfortable visiting my Dad's relatives. I know and remember how they treated us [prior to migration].

Thu remembered vividly how her nuclear family in Vietnam was very poor and maintained their distance from that side of the family after the family betrayal: "If we were to look at this politically, then the reason why our family was so poor [in Vietnam] was because after my dad got back from 7 years of reeducation camp, he was shunned from Vietnamese society and legally prohibited from having a position in society." When Thu's father left prisoner reeducation camp, his livelihood comprised taking photographs of foreign tourists in historic landmarks of the Central Highlands for US$1 per photograph. Her father finally got approval by the Humanitarian Orderly Departure Program managed by the U.S. government to safely leave Vietnam, and brought his wife and two children to the United States with him. In the United States, her parents battled to raise the family. Thu explained that part of why she was so proud was because in the United States, she and her parents, who were low-wage workers, had always been poor while she was growing up and they lived in places that Thu described were "like the projects in the US." Though Thu identified feelings of class guilt when she ate at fancy sushi restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City, as mentioned previously, she also wanted to justify her family's outmigration. Her re-encounters with family were colored by bitter memories of mistreatment by extended relatives. Her family's changed class position before and after migration made her diasporic return with more economic and cultural capital a source of validation; she would boast explicitly about her comfortable lifestyle both in the United States and her new lifestyle in Vietnam, where she earned a comfortable $3,000 per month, paid $500 for a two-bedroom apartment in Saigon, and could afford to travel extensively to domestic tourist sites and other parts of Southeast Asia. Thu rejoiced: "I'm very proud of my achievements, and maybe sometimes, I sound a bit more arrogant [than I should]." Her economic mobility after migration was intentionally put on display during some family visits, to make relatives who mistreated her family jealous. However, she concealed her assets and understated her success to other relatives in order to protect herself from having them meddle in her personal affairs and judging or socially monitoring her lifestyle and spreading vicious and gendered gossip.[7]

Other explanations for fewer visits did not have a direct tie to the war. Political differences were not the only cause of tensions between Viet Kieu and local relatives. Vincent said at the onset of our interview that he was not necessarily close to his uncles and cousins. I asked how often Vincent saw his local Vietnamese relatives—grandma, aunts, and uncles—in Cam Ranh and he responded, "I don't communicate with them often."

Since arriving in early 2010, Vincent stated that he visits them less than he did during his prior and multiple family return visits. The initial display of

interest in maintaining connections with his extended relatives in those previous visits became displaced by his career aspirations in start-up businesses.

Vincent spent most of his free time with fellow Americans who lived in his residential high-rise tower, with other American Viet Kieu, or Vietnamese who were educated abroad (such as his sister-in-law). Vincent explained this choice by describing cultural differences between him and his relatives, including gender stereotypes, manner of dress, future aspirations, and different consumptions patterns. Those "cultural differences" were magnified by the social location that Vincent found himself occupying in relation to his extended relatives; Vincent's U.S. passport, foreign currency purchasing power, gender, and his decision to live in a five-star luxury high-rise in Ho Chi Minh City meant that social status differences separated his future from that of his extended relatives.

Ultimately, these social differences magnify the Viet Kieu's realization that going "back" to Vietnam was not about finding "home" and a sense of belonging; returning to the ancestral homeland was marked by developed and developing country social worlds converging within extended families that once separated by geographic distance, now colocated in a rapidly expanding urban space witnessing a greater class divide in Ho Chi Minh City (Luong 2009). Younger-generation Viet Kieu like Thi, Vincent, Thu, and others were still grappling with identity politics and their social location as privileged Viet Kieu in a cosmopolitan expatriate community within a vastly unequal city, where boutique Louis Vuitton and Chanel stores have sprouted up in downtown Saigon while in other areas, disabled South Vietnamese veterans and street children begged for money by selling lottery tickets for their sustenance (Luong 2009; Hayton 2010). Attending to the needs of even middle-class extended relatives was part of their dual social worlds as Viet Kieu and a plight Viet Kieu managed from a protective emotional distance. There was extreme convergence in the matter of negotiating ways for maintaining social distance while not wanting to offend their relatives and the desire to impression manage on behalf of their U.S. parents.[8]

Conclusion

In the era of increased labor mobility and trade integration, particularly between North America and the Asia Pacific, many college-educated Vietnamese diasporic populations have sought long-term skilled work in their ancestral homeland. This globalization of work opportunities helped to reunite families that had been geographically separated for decades, initially due to the aftermath of war and conflict. The social forces that brought together these families, including Vietnam's transition toward market socialism, have also created a context for a mismatch of cultural expectations surrounding household economic

survival strategies and their relationship to migrant remittances to absorb the effects of these structural inequalities. Even though they have been able to foster long-distances ties, face-to-face encounters changed the quality of many kinship networks. This global ethnography illustrated the tenuous connections that the adult 1.5- and second-generation Viet Kieu maintained across space and time with their extended relatives in Vietnam since the end of the Vietnam War. It illustrated the social problems of filial angst and communal expectations, typically relegated to the private familial sphere.

For the subset of college-educated Viet Kieu who were returning to Ho Chi Minh City, being 1.5 and second generation meant they were poised to continue lines of care for their local extended relatives either through ritual support during weddings, funerals, holidays, or crisis moments, such as health emergencies. The flows of monetary remittances that preceded them in the decades after family refugee departure embedded the Viet Kieu in preexisting webs of mutual support and filial obligation that constituted a transnational social field. This obligation was embedded into the 1.5 and second generation's orientation toward maintaining family relationships; for gender and class reasons, some took critical strides to create a buffer of space—both physically and socially—from their extended relatives. For Viet Kieu such as Tara and Vincent, the journey of going back to Vietnam meant feeling culturally alienated from their local extended family, toward whom they felt morally judged, monitored, and gossiped about, in similar ways they had experienced with Vietnamese nuclear family in the United States. For Thu, the diasporic "return" was a reminder of legacies of intrafamily hostility created by divergent political loyalties. For Thi and Vincent, a retreat to the fortress high-rises was also a reprieve from drop in visits and impromptu favors requested by relatives. Being in good standing with relatives and maintaining privacy was a delicate tightrope that 1.5- and second-generation youths had been groomed to navigate in the United States.

The coping strategy of creating social and physical boundaries by shielding lifestyle, income, expenditures, and material assets by the select group of Viet Kieu in this study treats concealment and masking wealth and privilege (Pittelman 2013) within families as a relatively unexamined phenomenon in studies of migration and social class. The articles shifts the focus away from the first generation toward the coping strategies of adult children of refugees and shows how "return" visits, facilitated by global economic conditions, can reveal cultural fissures in the transnational extended family, which growing up on different continents can magnify. In the same vein, this article does not call for a normative vision of ideal diasporic extended family relations, as within each family, class, gender, migration status, generational and birth order hierarchy, and geographic divisions abound.

Author's Note

Previous versions of this piece were presented at the annual meetings of the Midwest Sociological Society in Minneapolis, MN, and Association of Asian American Studies in Washington, D.C., in 2012. A prior version of this paper received Honorable Mention by the International Migration Section of the American Sociological Association in 2013.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank Gay Seidman, Sida Liu, Myra Marx Ferree, Hae Yeon Choo, Kimberly Hoang, and Laura Heideman, and the faculty and graduate students in the Wisconsin Migration Research Group for the substantial feedback I have received on this article. I am grateful to the Special Issue Guest Editors and to the three anonymous reviewers. I am also hugely indebted to the many research participants who shared their stories with me. Please direct comments and queries to Mytoan Nguyen-Akbar at mnguyen@ssc.wisc.edu.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The write up stages of this project were generously supported by the American Sociological Association Minority Fellows Program and a number of smaller grants from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Notes

1. Transnational families, defined by Schmalzbauer (2004, 1318) as those who maintain close ties across two nation-states, are not new, but there are critical differences between today's transnational families and earlier ones. Global changes in communication and transportation technologies allow increased movement of people and goods across borders, making transnational ties easier to maintain.
2. In a focus group study conducted by Baldassar, Baldock, and Lange (1999) of migrants in Australia, extreme financial burden reflected strongly-felt moral obligations to provide substantial financial support to family back in their sending countries. Baldassar, Baldock, and Lange found that "the moral obligation to care was compounded for those who had come to Australia as refugees" who were said to suffer from survivor guilt—which made them even more determined to send monies home.
3. See the full Vietnamese text and other news about overseas Vietnamese from a Vietnamese government perspective at: http://quehuongonline.vn/VietNam/Home/Uy-ban-Nha-nuoc-ve-nguoi-Viet-Nam-o-nuoc-ngoai.

4. For further in-depth discussion of Vietnam's transition to market capitalism, see Martin Gainsborough (2010), *Vietnam: Rethinking the State*; Adam Fforde (2007), *Vietnamese State Industry and the Political Economy of Commercial Renaissance: Dragon's Tooth or Curate's Egg*?; Stephanie Balme and Mark Sidel (2007), eds., *Vietnam's New Order: International Perspectives on the State and Reform in Vietnam*.
5. Half held graduate and technical degrees including juris doctorates and masters of business administration or BS degrees in business/accounting. NGO mid-level Viet Kieu staff frequently held master's degrees in Public Administration, Foreign Affairs, or had liberal arts BA degrees.
6. For a more extended discussion of Vietnam reeducation camps, refer to Stephen B. Young, Fall 1979, "The Legality of Vietnamese Re-education Camps."
7. During one trip when I accompanied Thu, there were clear gendered and age hierarchies at a large family gathering where young women sat with their children at one table, and senior elderly men would drink hard liquor and eat together at another table. The rest of the younger men sat next to a table beside the senior men, and women would congregate and gossip in the kitchen while preparing large quantities of traditional Vietnamese dishes.
8. Past studies of the Viet Kieu living abroad, specifically in Canada, where relatives live in the same region, reflect a diminishing of the frequency and intensity over time of extended family visits (Chan and Dorais 1998, 293).

References

Baldassar, Loretta, Cora Baldock, and Raelene Wilding. 2009. *Families Caring across Borders: Migration, Ageing and Transnational Caregiving*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Balme, Stephanie, and Mark Sidel, eds. 2007. *Vietnam's New Order: International Perspectives on the State and Reform in Vietnam*. Palgrave MacMillan.

Barbieri, Magali. 2009. "Doi Moi and Older Adults: Intergenerational Support under the Constraints of Reform." In *Reconfiguring Families in Contemporary Vietnam*, edited by Magali Barbiéri and Danièle Bélanger. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Barbiéri, Magali, and Danièle Bélanger, eds. 2009. *Reconfiguring Families in Contemporary Vietnam*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Carruthers, Ashley. 2008. "Saigon from the Diaspora." *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 29:68–86.

Chan Kwok Bun, and Louis-Jacques Dorais. 1998. "Family, Identity, and the Vietnamese Diaspora: The Quebec Experience." *Sojourn* 13 (2): 285–308.

Chan, Sucheng. 2006. *The Vietnamese American 1.5 Generation: Stories of War, Revolution, Flight, and New Beginnings*, Asian American History and Culture. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Committee on Overseas Vietnamese in Ho Chi Minh City, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vietnam. 2010.

Dreby, Joanna. 2006. "Honor and Virtue: Mexican Parenting in the Transnational Context." *Gender & Society* 20 (1): 32–59.

Fforde, Adam. 2007. *Vietnamese State Industry and the Political Economy of Commercial Renaissance: Dragon's Tooth or Curate's Egg?* City University, UK: Chandos Asian Studies.

Gainsborough, Martin. 2010. *Vietnam: Rethinking the State*. London: Zed Books.

Glick-Schiller, Nina, and Georges Eugene Fouron. 2001. "Without Them, I Would Not Be Here: Transnational Kinship." In *Georges Woke up Laughing: Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home*, x, 324 p., [14] p. of plates. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Gille, Zsuzsa, and Sean O'Riain. 2002. "Global Ethnography." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28:271–95.

Haney, Lynne A., and Lisa Pollard. 2003. *Families of a New World: Gender, Politics, and State Development in a Global Context*. New York: Routledge.

Hayton, Bill. 2010. *Vietnam: Rising Dragon*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Hoang, Kimberly Kay. 2011. "'She's Not a Low-Class Dirty Girl!': Sex Work in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 40:367–96.

Kibria, Nazli. 1993. *Family Tightrope: The Changing Lives of Vietnamese Americans*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Levitt, Peggy. 2001. *The Transnational Villagers*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Levitt, Peggy. 2002. "The Ties That Change." In *The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation*, edited by Peggy Levitt and Mary C. Waters. New York City: Russell Sage Foundation.

Lee, Helene Kim. 2009. "Bittersweet Homecomings: Ethnic Identity Construction in the Korean Diaspora." PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara.

Lesser, Jeff. 2003. "Searching for Home Abroad: Japanese-Brazilians and Transnationalism". Durham: Duke University Press.

Long, Lynellyn. 2004. "Viet Kieu on a Fast Track Back?" In *Coming Home?: Refugees, Migrants, and Those Who Stayed Behind*, edited by Lynellyn Long and Ellen Oxfeld, viii, 275. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Luong, Hy, ed. 2009. *Urbanization, Migration, and Poverty in a Vietnamese Metropolis*. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press.

Migration Policy Institute. "*Remittances Profile: Vietnam.*" Migration Facts, Statistics, and Maps, 2011. http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/remittances/vietnam.pdf (accessed February 25, 2013).

Parreñas, Rhacel Salazar. 2001. *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Parreñas, Rhacel Salazar. 2005. *Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Pittelman, Karen and the Resource Generation. 2013. *Classified: How to Stop Hiding Your Privilege and Use It for Social Change*. Free Download at The Resource Generation: http://www.resourcegeneration.org/resources/free-downloads (accessed February 2013).

Pyke, Karen. 2000. "The Normal American Family" as an Interpretive Structure of Family Life among Grown Children of Korean and Vietnamese Immigrants." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62: 240-55.

Pyke, Karen, and Denise L. Johnson. 2003. "Asian American Women and Racialized Feminities: "Doing" Gender across Cultural Worlds." *Gender and Society* 17: 33-53.

Rowland-Klein, Dani, and Rosemary Dunlop. 1997. "The Transmission of Trauma across Generations: Identification with Parental Trauma in Children of Holocaust Survivors." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 31:358–69.

Sassen, Saskia. 2001. *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo, 2nd* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Schmalzbauer, Leah. 2004. "Searching for Wages and Mothering from Afar: The Case of Honduran Transnational Families." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66(5): 1317-31.

Skrbis, Zlatko. 2008. "Transnational Families: Theorising Migration, Emotions, and Belonging." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 29(3): 231–46.

Small, Ivan. 2012. "'Over There': Imaginative Displacements in Vietnamese Remittance Gift Economies." *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 7 (3): 157–83.

Smith, Michael Peter, and Matt Bakker. 2008. *Citizenship across Borders: The Political Transnationalism of "El Migrante."* New York: Cornell University Press.

Smith, Robert C. 2006. *Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Thai, Hung Cam. 2012. "The Dual Roles of Transnational Daughters and Transnational Wives: Monetary Intentions, Expectations and Dilemmas." *Global Networks* 12 (2): 216–32.

Tsuda, Takeyuki. 2009. *Diasporic Homecomings: Ethnic Return Migration in Comparative Perspective*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Vo, Linda Trinh. 2000. "Performing Ethnography in Asian American Communities: Beyond the Insider-versus-Outsider Perspective." In *Cultural Compass: Ethnographic Explorations of Asian America, Asian American History and Culture*, edited by Martin F. Manalansan. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Waldinger, Roger, and David Fitzgerald. 2004. "Transnationalism in Question." *American Journal of Sociology* 109 (5): 1177–95.

Young, Stephen B. 1979. "The Legality of Vietnamese Re-Education Camps." *Harvard International Law Journal* 20(519).

Zelizer, Viviana A. 2000. "The Purchase of Intimacy." *Law and Sociological Inquiry* 25(3): 817-48.

Zhou, Min, and Carl L. Bankston. 1998. *Growing up American: How Vietnamese Children Adapt to Life in the United States*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Author Biography

Mytoan Nguyen-Akbar is a doctoral candidate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.