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台灣跨國戀情中性別與國籍的身分溝通

Breaking the Stereotypes of Vietnamese Brides:
Communicating Gender and National Identities for Migrants'
Romance in Taiwan

Student: Nguyen Ngoc Huyen
Advisor: Prof. Ching-Ping Tang

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Abstract

Known for a paragon of democratization, Taiwan has worked hard to improve human rights and social status of identity minorities, such as aboriginals, immigrants, and homosexuals. While formal institutions have improved gradually, informal ones still prevail to impose barriers for the disadvantaged groups to fair better. This research examines how Vietnamese females encountered the stereotypes of Vietnamese brides in seeking romance in Taiwan.

In navigating the stories of three Vietnamese female migrants Bun Cha, Dua Hau – a lesbian woman and Yingtao who come from different backgrounds of Master student, language student and blue-collar migrant worker, the research found the new generation of Vietnamese migrant women come from much better growing socio-economic background in contrast to the first generations of Vietnamese brides in Taiwan. This implies increasing challenges to potential transnational relationships between Vietnamese and Taiwanese in future due to large identity gaps existing.

National and gender identities often intertwined with each other and play important roles in identity construct of Vietnamese migrant women in Taiwan. They have been accumulated through the women's growing up process, however, Taiwan provides a challenging context of Vietnamese brides' stereotypes targeting at heterosexual (looking) Vietnamese women that inactivates these identities and the women's online and offline strategies to communicate their new identity. The women not only negotiate negative stereotypes to positive ones, but also turn some over-positive stereotypes to fewer positive ones in avoiding pressure. Whilst in gender identity, the results suggest that the women adopt gender roles in finding balance in heterosexual relationships, a stronger level of national identity tends to lead to more defensive reactions that could harm or reverse the development of the relationship.

摘要

希望成為以民主化典範的台灣一直致力於改善原住民、移民與同性戀等少數族群的人權和社會地位。雖然法規與社會福利等等的官方制度已越來越完善，但台灣社會的潛規則與刻板印象仍是弱勢族群取得公平待遇的一大障礙。本論文旨在研究越南女性在台灣尋求愛情時，所遇到的「越南新娘」障礙。

透過剛畢業的碩士學生 Bun Cha（越南炭烤豬肉米線）、女同性戀語言學生 Dua Hau

（西瓜）和藍領移工 Yingtao（櫻桃）上述三位越南移民的故事，本研究發現新一代越南移民女性與台灣第一代越南新娘相比，是來自更富裕的社會經濟階層，但在台灣，人們秉持舊印象卻持續困擾著新一代的越南女性，構成難以跨越的挑戰。

移民來台灣的女性，往往在國籍和性別兩種身分交織互動中建構其認同感。對越南女性而言，它們的交集就是越南新娘的烙印。她們採用哪些溝通策略來克服這身份認同的障礙？本研究裡面的女性不僅致力於將負面

印象轉化為正面，而且為了避免壓力，刻意弱化正面意象的強度。本研究同時發現，和異性的關係中，兩種身份認同必須維持某種均衡，過強的國籍認同往往會導致防禦性反應，而傷害兩性關係的發展。

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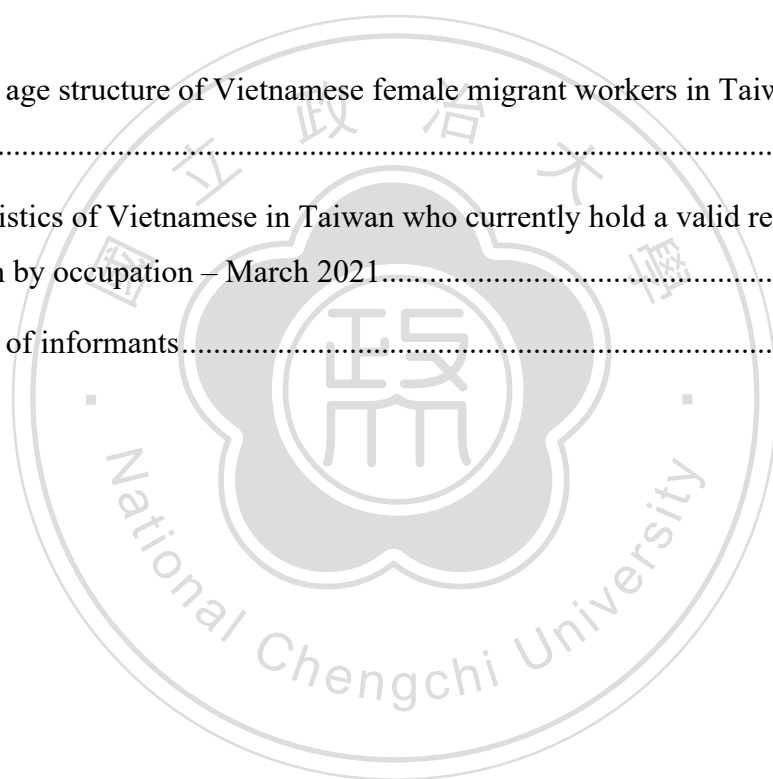
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research background

Over the last thirty years, a hundred thousand of Vietnamese females migrating to Taiwan for marriage, mostly through matchmaking agencies or introduction of other Vietnamese women married to Taiwanese, have formed the largest group of foreign spouses in Taiwan. Economic disparities and reputation of Taiwan in Vietnamese society have continued bringing more migrant workers to Taiwan in seeking for economic improvement. In the recent years, Taiwan, by adopting more open policies, has not only been improving the lives of the new immigrants and current migrant workers, it also attracts a growing number of Vietnamese students and high-skilled workers to come and stay. The growing changes in socio-economic contexts of both Viet Nam and Taiwan, and in the structure of migrants from Viet Nam lead to an urge to reconsider Vietnamese migrants' identities.

Love is a basic need of human-beings recognized in Maslow's theory of needs and love also plays an important role in migrants' well-being. Love and dating are part of migrant experience shown in different researches. Mai and King (2009) pointed out researches since the 2000s had started experiencing an "emotional turn" that explored migrants' emotional world including love or romance in association with their decisions and behaviors, however, such researches are rare and did not place love in the central of migration, instead a motive for mobility. The popularity and positive receipt of cultural products such as romantic novels (e.g., "Beloved Oxford" by Duong Thuy), dramas and movies (e.g., Korean drama "Love story in Harvard", movie "Touch" by oversea Vietnamese director Nguyen Duc Minh) featuring romantic love of migrants abroad whether with partners from the same country or the host country, as well as successful love stories of migrants and Vietnamese students abroad featured on Vietnamese media, suggest love and dating are an expected experience of young Vietnamese migrants abroad. Samuel (2010) pointed out the ways female migrants make decisions on dating and marriage show the complexity of how identities are "framed by cultural systems and expectations".

Migration is a social changing process instead of mere geographical changes. The migrants with existing cultural knowledge negotiate their identity in everyday life in the host country where they choose whether to assimilate or integrate (Bhugra, 2004). Identity, thus, is a very important part of migration process that I would like to examine in this thesis through the

love journeys of Vietnamese female migrants. The research discusses how young Vietnamese women's identity, with consideration of national and gender identity, is presented, negotiated in their love and dating practice in Taiwan. Even though the study places a focus on love and dating experience, it will also spend a part to discuss on marriage, family, material aspect, and sexuality which were proved to have a close connection with love and dating practice through a research on literature review and cultural context in Section 4.1.

Most of inspiration for this study came from my everyday life experience and reading Facebook posts of Bun Cha, an informant of this research, also a Vietnamese friend of mine who lived in the same dorm during my first year in Taiwan. As a Vietnamese national who used to live and travel to different parts of the world before coming to Taiwan, I have many friends who are or once were Vietnamese students abroad, as well as foreign friends who also are or once were students abroad. By observing Facebook and social media of my Vietnamese friends who mostly went to the United States, Europe, Canada or Australia, as well as other international-student friends in Taiwan, I learnt that studying abroad to most of them is an unforgettable and meaningful experience. Before coming to Taiwan, both me, Bun Cha or many women in this research knew little about Taiwanese society, we had also expected such a pleasant experience like most of my friends did when they studied abroad. However, learning from my personal experience as well as Facebook posts of Bun Cha on how her and her female friends had been mistreated, how they dealt with every-day issues in Taiwan, how they think Taiwanese misunderstood about Viet Nam and Vietnamese people, and what they tried to show to their Taiwanese friends on Facebook, I came to realize that the experience of living in this island could be not so pleasant to some Vietnamese women. I would like to use this research as a means to discover the situations, the strategies to cope with this issue in order to solve it.

Since the 1990s, globalization and socio-economic disparities brought hundreds of thousands of Southeast Asian women migrating to Taiwan in seeking for a better future. Women of Vietnamese origin are accounted for the second largest groups of foreign females in Taiwan behind Indonesian women (2019), they consist of approximately 107,000 marriage immigrants (外籍配偶與大陸(含港澳)配偶人數, 2019), more than 73,000 documented blue-collar migrant workers (外僑居留人數統計表11003, 2021) and thousands of students and white-collar workers.

Marriage immigrants and migrant workers have been traditionally framed as a source of “social issues” and a “threat” to the Taiwanese society by the media (Hsia, 2007; Lan, 2006) which led to social discourses and generalization that portrayed Vietnamese women as “materialists” and “gold diggers” who sacrifice love and exchange sex and marriage for money (Hoang & Yeoh, 2015; Hsia, 2007). In the recent years, the booming economic growth of Viet Nam, the positive reforms of Taiwanese policies and the rising of Vietnamese women’s status in both Vietnamese and Taiwanese societies have resulted to dramatic changes which make Taiwan less attractive to marriage and low-skilled work migrants, but more attractive to young talents and students. The arrivals of the new Vietnamese female migrants urge a new consideration of the Vietnamese women’s identity as well as their connection with romance which remains undiscovered.

The Vietnamese bride phenomenon since 1990s has played a decisive role in how the perceptions towards Vietnamese women have been shaped by Taiwanese society. Vietnamese brides were portrayed being stuck in a marriage without love or with only a loose emotional connection sparked in the blind dates arranged by the matchmakers which, in many cases, led to the brides’ runaways later on, since these marriages ended up nowhere close to their expectations (Sinorama Magazine, 1995, as cited in Hsia, 2007). There is, still, love existing in this type of marriage, however, it may come much later after marriage and the couples being together for a long time. This phenomenon of marriage contradicts the “love marriage” norm of Taiwanese society (Wu, 2019), thus Vietnamese brides have been stereotyped as the “runaway brides” and “money lovers” which put Taiwanese-Vietnamese couples married for love in an awkward position (Wang, 2014). And even worse, Vietnamese brides and their transnational marriage are also discriminated back in the brides’ home country due to the marriage’s distortions of traditional values promoted by intermediaries in generating more benefits (Huang, 2015).

Wang (2014) in a research on the nurture and development of intimate relationship in transnational marriages between Taiwanese and Southeast Asian women adopted a very open-minded and sympathized approach towards the females in transnational marriage as Wang argued that the free-love movement derived from Western society that changed the world’s concept of love, sex and marriage and romanticize marriage from a tool of patriarchy to a symbol of commitment in love, is the culprit causing cross-border marriage being stigmatized in Taiwanese society while it should not. Because these men and women coming from lower status background cannot afford the middle class’s luxury of having time and

money to invest in a time-consuming romantic love (Wang, 2014), and even free love cannot guarantee the success of a marriage (Chen, 2015, as cited in Chen, 2019). Wang also showed evidences that the love in cross-border marriages can be developed through the time and expressed through care and actions instead of a merely verbal statement.

Vietnamese female students (VFS) and Vietnamese female workers (VFW) are sojourners migrating to Taiwan for a period of time for study, work, or both. Even though the contrasts in educational and financial backgrounds may result to their different fates, they are connected by culture, nationalism, womanhood, and especially the label of “Vietnamese women” in Taiwan. Vietnamese white-collar workers in Taiwan, with many of whom once were students in Taiwan who chose to stay after graduation, account for a very small group of foreign migrants and less known by research world. The term “migrant workers” in previous researches only refer to blue-collar (or low-skilled) workers in reflecting the reality that this group of Southeast Asian people is largely known as “wailao” (foreign workers) while white-collar migrant workers mostly from the West are better featured as “waiguorenshi” (foreign citizens) by Taiwanese media (Lan, 2013).

Hoang and Yeoh (2015) in investigating love and sexuality of VFW in Taiwan found a number of married VFW engage in extramarital relationships with Vietnamese men who are also migrant workers in Taiwan and Taiwanese old men, in which Vietnamese men were portrayed as “sentimental” and culturally close but poor, while Taiwanese men are considered as “emotionally distant” but could satisfy the women’s material needs. The women deployed their sexuality strategically in various different ways in order to achieve emotional boost (for women who enjoyed the flirtation and material gifts from men while refusing intimate relationship with them to stay loyal to the husbands home), love (for women who seek for romance and passion out of marital relationship), and economic advancement to cover the “damages of their moral selves”. While Hoang and Yeoh’s research shows a very detailed and fascinating picture of the love and sexual life of VFW in Taiwan, it could be bias if using the findings to generalize the love life of VFW in Taiwan because of its choice of sample with Vietnamese women aged 30 to 51, all are married, in an economic deprivation pushing them abroad and in a long-distance relationship for years with their husbands in Viet Nam that could imply a “loss of emotional expressiveness and sexual identity” (Mai & King, 2009) that results to infidelity and the need for material fulfillment in the case of this research.

Zhang (2017) in a thesis on the identity of Vietnamese students in Taiwan made a very subtle discovery contributing to the scholarship of the love life of Vietnamese students in Taiwan. Zhang realized the inequality in the relationship between VFS and Taiwanese in which both sides facing the stigmas of the “inferior others” (for Vietnamese female) and the “undesirable losers” (for Taiwanese male) which results to the phenomenon that some Taiwanese men refuse to verify their relationships with Vietnamese girlfriends while VFS in acknowledging the situation refuse to be open to relationships with Taiwanese men. This led to the fact that transnational relationships between Vietnamese students and Taiwanese are, in fact, very rare (Zhang, 2017). Even though the thesis recognized the “gendered situation” of Vietnamese student’s identity, in the scope of the thesis, Zhang only spent a modest part analyzing VFS in romantic relationship with Taiwanese. A larger picture of love and dating practice of VFS remains undiscovered. And even though the inequality in relationship has been acknowledged, it is not clear if it is only because of the stigma only, or if there are any disparities available in the relationships and the dating behaviors.

1.2 Research purpose and questions

This thesis is expected to complement previous studies because of its focus on the young generation and inclusion of different groups of Vietnamese women in Taiwan. With a consideration of national, gender identity, the study aims to find out how identity in association with the stereotypes towards Vietnamese brides have influenced young Vietnamese women’s experience of love and dating in Taiwan, how they communicate their identity in love and dating practice. This is a qualitative study employing ethnographic approach in researching young Vietnamese women in Taiwan from the two groups - blue-collar migrant workers (MFW) and students (VFS) in order to seek for similarities as well as differences. This study employs in-depth online interviews and conversations on daily basis with selected informants with the aim to portrait the two groups of women in a liveliest way possible. In addition to one interview with an informant’s Taiwanese boyfriend, 11 interviews with young Vietnamese women in Taiwan aged 22 to 28 from 2 different groups including blue-collar migrant workers (VFW) and students (VFS) with extension to ones who have already graduated and joined white-collar work force in Taiwan, have been conducted. Since all the informants at the time of the interviews had lived in Taiwan for at least six months,

they obtained certain understanding on Taiwanese culture, and they were or have been open to love and dating experience in Taiwan.

The main research question is how young Vietnamese women's national and gender identities are presented and negotiated in their love and dating practice in Taiwan? And it is divided into 4 questions in the followings:

- 1) What is the context influencing their national and gender identities?
- 2) How previous stereotypes towards Vietnamese migrant women's identity influence love and dating experience of them?
- 3) Which strategies are used by the women to communicate their identity?
- 4) How to improve the situation?

The thesis is expected to contribute to the academic knowledge of migrants in Taiwan as at first, it focuses on unmarried young Vietnamese women including female workers and students in Taiwan whilst most existing studies on Vietnamese female immigrants focus on Vietnamese spouses. Secondly, this study specifically aims to explore or discuss how national and gender identities of Vietnamese young women are presented and negotiated in their daily encounters with the Taiwanese through their interaction and communication with Taiwanese people inside and outside romantic relationships. It is also hoped that the thesis will provide better understanding on the situation of Vietnamese women in Taiwan and improve mutual understanding as well as potential transnational relationships in the future.

Due to the pandemic outbreak in Taipei and the sensitiveness of the topic, all the author's attempts to find random informants who are migrant workers out of networks of the author did not succeed, however, by using ethnographic online approach to take advantages of various available resources in the network of students and Vietnamese friends in Taiwan, the effort to find informants has become easier, and the understandings of the author towards some informants that she had previously known before the research made it easier to explore the depth of the informants' thoughts and ideas.

1.3 Thesis structure

The thesis is organized in 6 chapters with Chapter 1 as introduction. The following chapter introduces relevant concepts and theories regarding migration, love and marriage as

motivation for migration, and identity, as well as explains how those concepts are applied in the context of this thesis. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used and how the research has been implemented. Next, Chapter 4 discusses empirical results including social-cultural context of Vietnam as the Vietnamese female migrants' origin, and Taiwan as their host country, together with the three selected cases from the interviews. Discussions on the cases, stereotypes and communication strategies, the women identity in love and marriage, and socio-discussion context will be placed in Chapter 5. Finally, the last chapter - Chapter 6 provides findings, limitations, and suggestions for future research and to Taiwanese government.



Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter begins with introducing of the concepts of migrants in connection with love, marriage and identity, in which the situation of Vietnamese migrants in Taiwan will be discussed. In the second section, identity of Vietnamese migrants in Taiwan in previous researches will be reviewed. Next, national identity and gender identity will be respectively introduced as two focal identity concepts of this research. In the following, the concepts of self-expression and identity negotiation will explain how an individual communicates his/her identity. Finally, the chapter closes by presenting various identity-related theories including social identity theory, communication theory of identity, cultural identity theory, and identity in cross-cultural background.

2.1. Migration for work, study and marriage purposes

Migrant, as defined by the United Nations Migration Agency - the International Organization for Migration (IOM), is a “person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons” (*Global Issues - Migration*; IOM, 2021). According to this definition, VFW, VFS as well as Vietnamese brides researched in this thesis are all migrants.

For work migrants, in the context of Taiwan, the term “yigong” (migrant workers) refers to both “blue-collar workers” who mainly come from Southeast Asia and “white-collar workers” mostly coming from developed countries in the West (Chunhuai, 2005; “【搶救競爭力—勞工篇】 缺工求外援 白領移工薪資是藍領 7 倍,” 2018). However, the use and meaning of this term and its variants are problematic as they have been racialized in Taiwanese society (Lan, 2005, 2013). According to Lan (2005), migrant workers from poor countries have been in high demand due to their cheapness and “3D” nature of work choices: “deskilled”, “demeaning” and “dangerous”, however, they are socially excluded due to poverty, criminal tendency, lack of work ethics, etc.

International students are temporary migrants who move to another country (host country) to pursue an education. Taiwan Ministry of Education defines international students as students from foreign countries who are not Taiwanese citizens, people from mainland China, Hongkong, Macao or Chinese descendants from Overseas Chinese Program (“Regulations

regarding international students undertaking studies in Taiwan," 2021). Thus, Vietnamese students in Taiwan, except Chinese Vietnamese partaking in the Overseas Chinese Program are considered as international students in Taiwan.

The third group - marriage migrants including Vietnamese brides were previously addressed as “waiji peiou” (now still being used in legal documents) or its shortened form “waipei” (foreign spouses) or “waiji xinniàng” (foreign brides) while Vietnamese spouses were called “yuepei”. In the current years they have been referred as “xinzhumin” or “xinyimin” (new residents or new immigrants) to avoid the discrimination over these migrants, however, these terms are also proved to be problematic since they are only used to refer to Southeast Asian marriage migrants (Yang, 2012).

2.2 Love and marriage as a cause for international mobilization

Love is a ubiquitous human-being’s emotional experience which varies in many forms and results to different reactions and behaviours (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993, as cited in Treger et al., 2013). Lewis (1960) in an attempt to classify love proposed 4 types of love: “affection” (family love), “friendship” (the feeling and connection between friends), “eros” (love between lovers) and “charity love” (unconditional love without expectation of reciprocation). Shave et al. (1987) in their proposed hierarchy of love place love under emotion together with joy and anger, and identified 4 types of love: infatuation, friendship, romantic love and maternal love (as cited in Bergner et al., 2013). Sternberg (1988) brought a new insight of love by introducing his famous conceptualized triangle of love which include 3 dimensions: “intimacy” referring to the feelings of being connected and bonded to each other, “passion” referring to physical drives of love such as physical attraction and sexual satisfaction, and finally “decisions” one makes to love in the short term or “commitment” to maintain love in the long term. A perfect love is one comprises of all the three dimensions. In the case there are only intimacy and passion, it is passionate love. If only passion and commitment it is foolish love. And finally companionate love is for one with intimacy and commitment (Bergner et al., 2013; Sorokowski et al., 2020).

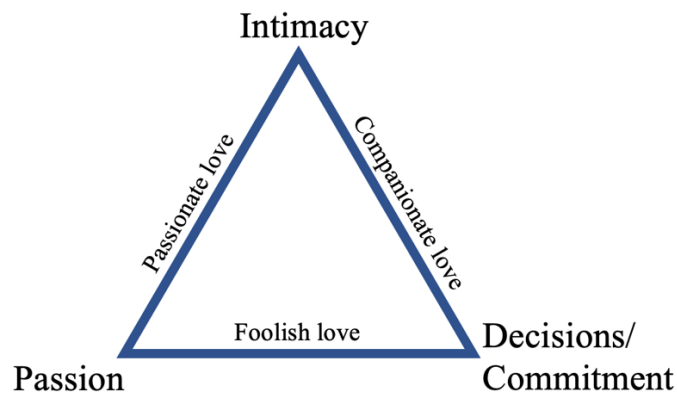


Figure 1: Sternberg (1988) 's triangle of love

Researches also showed the two main genders can experience love differently. Men are more prone to fall in love easily while women are more careful with love (Rubin et al., 1981). Men also tend to experience passionate or uncommitted love while women are more likely to experience practical, sentimental and vehement feelings in love (Hendrick et al., 1984).

Over decades, the conception that love is a precondition of marriage remain mainstream in a vast majority of population, however, this belief is stronger in independent cultures in the West rather than collective cultures (Levine et al., 1995). Marriage refers to the relationship between husband and wife that is distinct from one between lovers (Bell, 1997). Gough (as cited in Bell, 1997) defined marriage as an “union” between a male and a female that make the children born from this relationship legitimate. Marriage has been traditionally viewed as a permanent commitment, however, this has been changed with time due to the growing number of divorces (Swensen & Trahaug, 1985).

Globalization has been bringing countries together, so do the people. Love and marriage have become one of the main motives for migration nowadays (Pananakhonsab, 2019).

Transnational relationship and transnational marriage describe relationship and marriage commitment with a partner out of one's own country. The characteristic of these kind of relationships is that even one partner cross physical border to close the gap with one another, they could still be separated by different barriers in language, culture, communications, etc. (Mahler, 2001).

In the past, most transnational marriages between Taiwan and Vietnam were characterized by media and researches as financially unequal relationships since Taiwanese men paid a large amount of money to hire intermediary agencies to “buy” Vietnamese brides who were usually from poor family in the countryside of Vietnam, and these brides are known to continue material support to their original home in Viet Nam (Sandel, 2015). Inequality in marriage

has led to various consequences including powerlessness, dependency in the family, no access to equal rights and education, discrimination, domestic violence, etc. (Chen, 2011; Tang & Wang, 2011). In contrast to this, there were also transnational couples married for love, however, their relationships had been challenged by the stereotypes against transnational marriage (Wang, 2014). Taiwan government and social organizations have been actively supporting marriage immigrants to adapt to Taiwanese society and protect them from discrimination and violence. In the recent year, as the result of growth in economics and the status of women in Vietnamese society, Vietnamese women have more access to education and choices of future partners. Transnational marriages continue to take place, however not as unequal as it used to be. This will be discussed in Section 4.1.3.

2.3 Identity of Vietnamese migrants and identity-related concepts and theories

2.3.1 Identity and migrants

Identity is a broad concept which has been discovered in a large number of researches. The most fundamental concept explaining identity is how people respond explicitly or implicitly to the question “Who are you?”. The answer for “who you think you are” question is not only about one single person, but also that person in interaction with other individuals and groups in the society (Vignole et al., 2011). One person at the same time can manage many different identities (Collier, 1989), for example in the context of my study, my research subjects could define themselves as first Vietnamese women, then students, part-timers, expats, students, dating apps users, polite people, etc.

The act of migration not only suggests a spatial change, in fact, it is also a social changing process in which migrants bring with them cultural knowledge, also frustration, and they will negotiate their identity along the way settling down in the host country where they choose whether to assimilate or integrate (Bhugra, 2004). Identity, thus, is a very important part of migration process that I would like to examine in this thesis.

2.3.2 Identity of Vietnamese in Taiwan

Migrants' identity is always "relational, contextual and incomplete" and being influenced by many social factors (Samuel, 2010). In reflecting the growing population of Vietnamese migrants in Taiwan, a number of studies have researched on the identity of Vietnamese women and students in Taiwan. From 3 researches of all 25 researches about Vietnamese women and 52 researches about Vietnamese students I found on the National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations in Taiwan, I found one research by Zhang (2017) on student was set in the background of 2016 in the beginning of New Southbound policy when there were only more than 4000 Vietnamese students in total in Taiwan most relevant to my thesis.

Zhang (2017) recognized Vietnamese students in Taiwan "confirm, resist or negotiate their national identification" in the daily life process of self-identifying and being identifying as "the others" by Taiwanese and the seemingly Vietnamese "inferiors" who are marriage or labor immigrants. According to Zhang, Vietnamese students in Taiwan are ones who seek for higher social status through academic achievement and prefer the self-image of an international elite, however in the eyes of Taiwanese, they are often linked to the stereotypes of migrants from Vietnam and Southeast Asia in general. Vietnamese students often adopt the strategy of demonstrating themselves as a "non-Vietnamese migrant" and perform differently. Especially Zhang called this stigmatization, that Vietnamese students have to face with, a "gendered situation", as well as recognized gender among nation and class as a strengthening boundary that Vietnamese students have to cross in the process of self-identification. As mentioned in introduction part, Zhang's research also spent a small part to discuss VFS in romantic relationships with Taiwanese, however, it did not show the dating practice of VFS in Taiwan as a big picture as well as cultural and material aspects in these relationships.

Another research on the identity of Vietnamese students in is that of Luong (2013) regarding the identity and strategy when using IM of Vietnamese students. Luong found language an extremely important factor influencing the students' identity, and many of them prefer speaking English as a way to confirm their identity both online and offline. According to Luong, Vietnamese students care much about personal image, they are sensitive in regard to what Taiwanese think about them, and they find appreciation of own culture as a way to win recognition from other Vietnamese friends.

Tao (2005) in researching on self-interpretation and self-identity of Vietnamese wives in Hualien discovered there are "value judgment and material competitions" between the women. Some of them identified themselves separated from other women with lower status,

and some preferred to be recognized as Taiwanese rather than Vietnamese. Research also showed the close connection between Vietnamese brides and their families back home remained and the transnational marriage had brought positive influence on their financial and social status in the Vietnamese families. From Tao's research, it is clear to see the connection between material value and financial status with identity. However, since Tao's research was conducted in 2005, they could not imagine the development of Viet Nam afterward at the time of the research.

From other source on the internet I found Yu (2014)'s research on Vietnamese spouses in Taiwan from the perspective of social and cultural identity also confirmed that Vietnamese women keep a very close connection with their home in Viet Nam. Yu found "cultural integration" (how Vietnamese brides integrate their own culture into Taiwanese society) most relevant to those women while "cultural devotion" (how Vietnamese wives involve in Taiwanese cultural activities) and "cultural belonging" are less relevant, and "self-identity" (how Vietnamese wives consider themselves with regard to their home – Viet Nam and host culture – Taiwan) is least recognized. From that, we know Vietnamese wives would like to maintain their original culture and negotiate it into their current life in Taiwan by sharing the foods and the language, as well as involving others in their cultural activities.

The last research I found is Ho (2012)'s research on VFW's identity. Ho argued that gender-difference concepts influence those women's identity negotiation in the host country and their connection with home. According to Ho, those women experience the change of self-identity from "poor farmers" to "new heroines" who work so hard in Taiwan to earn a living, at the same time fulfill their roles in the families back home in Viet Nam as a mother, wife, daughter.

Stritikus and Nguyen (2007) highlighted the importance of gender roles in researching on the immigrants' identity and culture by showing evidences that Vietnamese migrant women in the United States tended obtain better performance at school and higher social status than men. This derives from women's original lower status in the Vietnamese society and adoption of gender equality values in American society which results in the women putting more effort in achieving a higher status. Even though this research was conducted in the United States, I find the findings could also help explain the case of Vietnamese women in Taiwan - why most of the outstanding Vietnamese individuals in the community are women and how Taiwanese often talk about Vietnamese women rather than men, and downplay the roles of Vietnamese men back in the Vietnamese society even though this may not hold true.

2.3.3 National identity

National identity is a concept in association with the concept of nation (Tartakovsky, 2010). Anderson (2006)'s view of nation as an "imaginary community" has a large influence on media and the proliferation of researches on nationalism (Castelló, 2016). The view of Anderson was based on the original idea that people in the same country do not really know each other, however, they are connected by the idea of belonging to an "imagined community" – a nation. The concept of nation suggests a common sense of identity and belonging (Anderson, 2006, as cited in Tartakovsky, 2010).

National identity is a set of one's cognitions and emotions demonstrating the relationship between oneself and a country (Tartakovsky, 2010). National identity comprises of (1) a personal belief toward which country one belongs, (2) a strong connection with a country as part of one's identity, (3) both positive and negative feelings towards the country, (4) stereotypes regarding to characteristics or traits of people of own countries or other countries in order to differentiate one from another (Barret, 2005, as cited in Tartakovsky, 2010). As an outcome of national identity, nationalism and patriotism reflect positive views toward the group which one is a member, however, consists implicit social goals (Blank & Schmidt, 2003). Even though both nationalism and patriotism describe one's idealization of own group, they are different. Nationalists tend to blindly idealize the group based on origin and history, while patriotists' idealization is based on "constructive-critical analysis" which made patriotism more relevant to the values of democracy society. In addition, nationalists tend to support outgroups' degradation, while patriotists show tolerance towards outgroups and minorities (Blank & Schmidt, 2003).

In order to explore the informants' national identity especially in their dating practice, during in the interviews, the informants had been asked questions regarding their emotional links with the home country, as well as their negotiation with and expectation towards romantic partners in this regard. The author also made use of her own experience to explain and give concrete examples to informants whether they had encountered similar situations.

In addition, a number of previous scholars showed an interesting relation between nationalism and foods in which national identity can be defined through foods (Kimura, 2016). Ichijo and Ranta (2016) in "Food, National Identity and Nationalism" wrote:

The “food-and-nationalism axis” has an almost unique potential for illuminating the way in which these various levels of politics and analysis overlap, connect and influence one another

Some researches on Vietnamese migrants in Taiwan also showed this phenomenon, for example, Yu (2014) realized the Vietnamese spouses in Taiwan share their Vietnamese foods with people surrounding as a way to keep up with tradition. Wu (2019) acknowledged the acceptance towards Vietnamese foods could show the foreign husbands’ love and openness to Vietnamese culture to some extent. Since the consumption of food is a part of dating culture (Amiraian & Sobal, 2009), I would also like to examine whether foods as an expression of national identity also play role in the dating practice of Vietnamese young women in Taiwan in this thesis by asking questions related to Vietnamese food and its negotiation in relationships.

2.3.4 Gender identity and gender-relevant concepts

Gender identity, according to Gurin and Markus (1989) is “an internal representation of belonging to the social category, women” or how you define yourself as a man or a woman. It is hypothesized to be dependent on (1) how important one sees herself as a woman in the self-construction, (2) the level a female shares “a sense of common fate” with her peers (cited in Freedman, 1993). Branscombe et al. (1993) shared a view with feminist by pointing out the components constructing gender identity which include (1) in-group favoritism, (2) emotional bond, (3) commonness, (4) knowledge, (5) “sense of common fate” (cited in Freedman, 1993). Gender identity is a concept being used interchangeably with sextype (gender roles), gender ideology, sexual orientation in the past. Even though sexual orientation has been successfully distinguished from gender identity, it is still very difficult to separate the rest from this concept (Freedman, 1993). In this research, informants were asked questions regarding their thoughts and behaviors of themselves as a woman in a relationship, as well as their perceptions towards other women in the community in general and their closest female Vietnamese friends in Taiwan in particular in order to examine the common senses, knowledge and ties between them.

Sexual orientation is simply defined as the sex group(s) that one is interested in in order to look for a potential sexual or love partner. One’s sexual orientation not only include straight male and female, it also includes gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual, and asexual (*Sexual Orientation*). In the stage of identifying potential informants, candidates were questioned

regarding their sexual orientation. According to this definition, one of the main featured informants - Dua Hau and Sushi are defined as lesbian women due to their sexual interest in women instead of men.

Gender roles is a social concept referring to how we are expected to communicate, behave and appear to be up to social standards regarding our biological sex (*What are Gender Roles and Stereotypes?*). For example, men are traditionally expected to be the breadwinner in the family. This expectation reflects the expected roles of men in the society. In the interviews, the author tried to dig into the informants' inner thoughts regarding the expected roles of their romantic partners or the men in their lives and the roles of themselves in the relationship.

Gender stereotype refers to bias or judgmental ideas but largely received in the society toward a gender group. However, those stereotypes are often over-generalized and inaccurate (*What are Gender Roles and Stereotypes?*). Previous researches that have been discussed in Section 1.1 and later in Section 4.1.3 including Zhang (2017)'s research already pointed out the "gendered situation" of the stereotypes towards Vietnamese migrants in Taiwan. For that reason, the interview questions were designed not only to collect informants' ideas towards gender difference, but also their perception towards Taiwanese people' stereotypes towards women and men from Viet Nam.

Gendered racism referred to intersectional concept of racism and sexism reflecting through stereotypes, images and perceptions towards a certain group of people. This phenomenon has been examined in different intersectional analyses and researches, however usually focus on women of color in multiracial societies with people of different colors (Crenshaw, 2011; Essed, 1991; Laster Pirtle & Wright, 2021). Even though this concept is rather relevant to the context of this research since it involves both women and nationality, I decided not to use this concept later in the background context of this research, since unlike other multi-cultural nations', the situation of Vietnamese female migrants in Taiwan that will be discussed in Section 4.1 is special due to the consequences of marriage migration phenomenon. However, I would suggest to reconsider this term in the next ten to twenty years if the situation will not be changed through the time.

Gender equality, as defined by UN Women, refers to "the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys". Gender Equality has been included in the international human rights law, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948. The law states:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” and that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, ... birth or other status.

In this research, the concept gender equality is employed in order to explore the socio-cultural situation of both Viet Nam in Taiwan in Chapter 4 through social context analysis as well as understand how gender equality has been applied or negotiated in the informants’ romantic relationships.

2.3.5 Identity communication

In order to understand how identity is communicated, this section will introduce the concept of self-presentation and identity negotiation. And in the end of Section 2.3.5.2, the author will compare and distinguish the differences between self-presentation and identity negotiation, as well as explain how these concepts will be used in this research.

2.3.5.1 Self-presentation

Self-presentation refers to one’s acts of expressing self-images or information about the self to others (Baumeister, 1982, as cited in Baumeister & Hutton, 1987). Self-presentation can be “defensive”, “denying” instead of “claiming” a reality (Hogan, 1982, as cited in Baumeister & Hutton, 1987).

Two types of motivation have been addressed by Baumeister and Hutton (1987), one is to please the audiences (tell them what they would like to hear) and one is to please the self-desire of matching one’s self-presentation with one’s preferable self (make them believe we are who we want them to believe, no matter negative or positive) (Baumeister & Hutton, 1987). Izumi (2010) proposed another set of motivations of self-presentation which is (1) to influence others in the forms of “persuasion, deception, manipulation, glorification”, (2) to begin, form and develop a relationship with desired audience, (3) to perform a certain social role, (4) to “verify and validate” one’s self-image. Izumi’s classification of self-presentation based on previous literature explains better the motives in certain contexts, however, is not as comprehensive as Baumeister’s explanation as it does not cover the negative-self presentation and “defensive” manners.

2.3.5.2 Identity negotiation

The term negotiation in the identity negotiation theory refers to both verbal and non-verbal communication between two and over people or groups in which maintain, threaten, or uplift the identity or image of a person or a group that the person is a member (Ting-Toomey, 2015). The concept of identity negotiation is based on the idea that people engage into social communication bearing certain goals in mind, hence, they develop various different identity in order to achieve these goals. The process of negotiation will then take place until one or some of the identities reach mutual consensus and the person successfully reaches his/her original goals, or it could happen that in the end, the other party involved would withdraw from authorizing this newly-negotiated identity (Swann, 1988). Identity negotiation refers to the set of processes which people work to feed their perception of identity (Swann & Bosson, 2008).

One of the differences between identity negotiation and self-presentation is the length of time. While self-presentation is an action or reaction happening in a short period of time, negotiation is a time-consuming process whether to change oneself or change others' views towards the self. Identity negotiation also stresses at two-way communication while self-presentation is more like a one-way expression. These distinguishments are helpful in understanding how informants in the research had communicated their identity in a short or long term in order to achieve certain perceived identity. Thus, informants will be asked whether they had encountered a specific context or situation that their desired identity was misunderstood, and what were their first reactions, as well as the results after a long-term negotiation.

2.3.6 Identity theories

2.3.6.1 Social identity theory (SIT)

SIT was introduced by Tajfel and Turner (1979) with the aim to explain the psychological background of discrimination in the intergroup context (Chen & Li, 2009). As described in the theory, people negotiate their identity through the process of (1) categorizing oneself or people into various different categories, (2) identifying the self through connecting with one's

group, and (3) comparing one's group (in-group people)/category with certain groups/categories (out-group people) (Chen & Li, 2009).

Group identity is a concept developed through the process of self-categorization theory in SIT. Group identity compliments personal aspect of identity in forming one's identity as it could be applied to analyze intergroup-context issues (bias, stereotype, agism, sexism, etc.) as well as other contexts using intergroup-dimensional approach (personality, leadership, etc.) (Spears, 2011). Even though SIT provides more insights to social-conflict-related researches and it is criticized as creating "positive in-group bias" which one only exaggerates positive side of own group and/or degrades out-group people (Islam, 2014). In this research, the author will examine Vietnamese young women and Taiwan as a big group, at the same time tries to make comparison if applicable between VFS and VFW.

2.3.6.2 Communication theory of identity (CTI)

CTI is a theory developed by Hecht (1993) describing interaction between identity and communication rather than identity is formed through communication. Hecht proposed four layers of identity "personal, enacted, relational and communal". As these layers are standing alone from one another (Jung & Hecht, 2004), one person could be defined by some or all of these layers at the same time. Personal identity refers to one's inner definition of self in general or in specific social situation. Enacted identity is identity expression through communication in interacting with the others in the society. Relational identity is how one's perception of self is shaped through relationships with people surrounding, for example spouse or friends. Communal identity describes collective values or quality shared by a community which one is a member (Hecht, 1993). Identity helps defining one person, at the same time mirroring his/her social roles and relations through communication (Jung & Hecht, 2004).

Identity gaps are proposed by Jung and Hecht (2004) in order to explain the inconsistency which could sometimes happen between the 4 mentioned layer of identity. However, matter how they are contradicted to each other, they still manage to co-exist and working together in constructing one's identity (Jung & Hecht, 2004). For example, the discrepancy between personal and relational identity in the case of Vietnamese students in Taiwan when they perceive themselves as international elites and they express their identity in the way making themselves being international elites by speaking English or being around other international

elites from other countries, however, to Taiwanese people, they still fall into the category of Vietnamese migrants (Zhang, 2017). According to Jung and Hecht (2004)'s research, identity gaps are associated with the following concepts:

Communication satisfaction refers to emotional fulfillment when one thinks his/her inner standards are well-expressed through own communicative action or well-appreciated by others (Hecht, 1993; Hecht et al., 1992; Jung & Hecht, 2004).

The sense of being understood describes emotional feeling when one thinks whether the meaning of his/her message(s) has been successfully delivered to the listener(s). However, identity gaps can result into feeling of being misunderstood. For example, personal-enacted identity gap which the gap between an authentic personality one think he/she is and a reinterpreted version of him/her in the eyes of the other will trigger one's feeling of being misunderstood (Jung & Hecht, 2004).

The appropriateness and effectiveness of conversation. A conversation is considered appropriate when the communicative behaviors and the messages conveying meet communicators' expectation or do not infringe communication norms. Once the goals of the conversation are met, it is considered as effective (Canary & Spitzberg, 1987). According to Jung and Hecht (2004), when identity gap emerges, one person think the others do not see him/her the way he/she sees himself/herself, he/she will think his/her communication was ineffective or whether he/she has violated any communication rules.

This theory is a complement to the concepts of self-expression and identity negotiation in Section 2.3.5. Through the interviews, the author would like to examine the situation of informants in communicating their identity, and understand whether there was any gap between their desired identity and the identity already perceived by Taiwanese, and whether the informants satisfied with their identity communication or they still felt being misunderstood by Taiwanese people.

2.3.6.3 Cultural identity theory

Collier and Thomas (1988) are the first scholars proposing the concept of cultural identity. Cultural identity are values identified and received by a group of people sharing the same systems of meanings, symbols and norms (cited in Collier, 1989). Cultural identity has to do with 'being' as well as "becoming" (Hall, as cited in Samuel, 2010).

According to Collier (1989), Collier and Thomas (1988) assumed: (1) one person at the same time negotiates different identities (2) communication of cultural identity is made between cultures based on the culture's own values and inferable assumption about it. Cultural identity has 3 reciprocal measurements: (1) scope is how large the group of people sharing this identity is or whether it can be applied to a large group of people with similar identity values, (2) salience means how one identity stands out from other identities, (3) intensity refers to how strong identity communication is (as cited in Collier, 1989).

Since cultural identity of a nation as well as a gender group within a nation is also what shapes one's national identity, I find it important to analyze traditional cultural values of Vietnamese women as part of the Vietnamese female migrants' identity construct which will be discussed in Section 4.1.1. In addition, applying Collier and Thomas's theory into my research, VFS and VFW in Taiwan at the same time negotiate different identities including national identity, gender identity and different groups' identities. In this research, the author would like to examine how the informants perceive about themselves and how they think their identity are perceived by others in comparison with other gender groups of Vietnamese and Taiwanese. Finally, the case of Vietnamese migrants in Taiwan can also be generalized to a wider population of migrants from other Southeast Asian nations who face similar issues.

2.3.6.4 Identity in cross-cultural settings

In cross-cultural study, cultures are traditionally divided into individualistic and collective cultures where individual members respectively define themselves as being independent or interdependent in the relationships with the other members of the same culture. Independent and interdependent self-construals in many early researches have been recognized for being associated with cross-cultural differences. Later researches pay more attention to the choice of an individual in the spectrum between personal and social identity which depends on the context whether it is an independent or collective culture (Smith, 2011). Hofstede is one of the most famous theorist in the realm of cross-cultural communication (Saleem & Larimo, 2015) and his researches have been applied in explaining identity in cross-cultural context.

Hofstede's cultural indexes

Hofstede's cultural indexes as known as the 6-D model developed by Hofstede and his colleagues provides a set of dimensions to compare the culture differences in general between countries rather than individuals based on six components in the followings.

Power distance refers to how much lower status citizens accept the power inequality in a hierarchical society. Lower score mean inequality is less accepted, and more required to be justified.

Individualism/collectivism index describes the how independent one individual is in his/her groups and society.

Masculinity/femininity refers to how success, achievement and competition instead of life quality and cooperation make senses to people in a society. In case they do, the society is characterized as a masculine society, otherwise it is a feminine society.

Uncertainty avoidance index shows how much society members see uncertain and unknown events in future a problem or threat. Lower score means the society is more relaxed and refrained from worries of uncontrollable events.

Long-term/short-term orientation measures how conservative a society could be in holding on to their past, for example, dealing with traditional values and norms rather than planning towards future. Higher score means more preparation for future, for example, saving and investment in education.

Indulgence/restraint describes how carefree (to enjoy life) and intense (to suppress own needs due to harsh norms) members in a society could be (Hofstede-Insights).

Hofstede Insights, a researched consultancy firm from Finland has been adopting Hofstede and other researchers' studies and data from around the world in providing tools to compare cultural values between countries. In section 4.1.5, I will make use of this tool to analyze cultural-value differences between Viet Nam and Taiwan in order to predict the challenges to a transnational relationship between two individuals from the two cultures.

Chapter 3: Methodology and research design

3.1 Research Method

The thesis shows some complexity as it covers various different fields and concepts, from gender, ethnicity, communication to psychology. In this case, qualitative research methodology would be a good choice since this method allows researchers to develop concepts or hypotheses later when conducting the research rather than have them well-defined since the beginning (Flick, 2007b). Besides, the literature review research on Vietnamese students in Taiwan revealed the lack of narratives that make the stories of them more realistic and livelier, hence, in-depth interviews will be the main material for this thesis.

In an attempt to understand the dating fields of Vietnamese in Taiwan, I downloaded several dating apps such as OkCupid, Pairs and Scout, with hope to find some information of Vietnamese female users there, however, soon I realized that even though some of the apps offer the functions to choose your languages and your preference of languages, it is impossible to filter users by nationalities or by languages. Next, Facebook groups were employed as a tool for investigation with different keywords as listed: “hen ho” (dating), “ket ban” (make friends), “giao luu” (exchange friendship or get to know each other), “ban trai” (boyfriend), “ban gai” (girlfriend), “nguoì yeu” (lover or boyfriend/girlfriend), “ban trai nguoi Dai” (Taiwanese boyfriend), “ban gai nguoi Viet” (Vietnamese girlfriend) together with keyword for location - “Dai Loan” (Taiwan) and “Viet Nam” (Vietnam) in both Vietnamese and Chinese. The result showed zero special group for Vietnamese women who have Taiwanese boyfriend while there are some for Vietnamese married to Taiwanese, Korean and groups of people who have a “Western” boyfriend.

Instead, the searches resulted in different groups of single people or friend-making (a lot of implying dating in Vietnamese language) between Vietnamese and Vietnamese where I found all sorts of contents from livestreaming to sell clothes to employee-hunting, and self-introductions of people whose profiles mostly suggested their identity as migrant workers in Taiwan. Finally, in similar searches on Google, no other alternative dating platforms could be found. My failure to find the dating field online suggests no chance for online observation of the dating field of Vietnamese female in Taiwan, however, the little research could suggest that (1) dating with a Vietnamese in the community could be mainstream to a large number of

Vietnamese women in Taiwan, (2) Vietnamese students and intellectuals keep a low profile in dating and finding partners.

In order to look for informants for this study, I decided to first take the advantage of my current network of Vietnamese students where I could identify some potential candidates who are my friends or acquaintances whom I at least have some understandings regarding their background and dating experience. The informants interviewed also referred me to others in the network who they know have a dating history in Taiwan. I also made a post on Facebook groups of students in Taiwan where other potential informants were targeted. It was not at all difficult to find students since I am already in the network of them, however, this is not the case for migrant workers. As most of my student informants came to Taiwan without any relatives or previously known acquaintances, they stay in the network of students and barely know anyone who are migrant workers or Vietnamese brides in Taiwan. This makes it difficult to find informants who are VFW through the student's network.

In addition, the topic of this research contains private information, some difficulties to find informants outside of my network were expected. I have tried various different ways to connect to my target group, first, through connections who are documented and undocumented blue-collar and white-collar migrant workers, the-already-informants, and the students I know, however, there was no luck. Then I started my online search for VFW by making posts on more than 20 Facebook groups of Vietnamese people and migrant workers in Taiwan (there were more posts, but some were removed due to restrictions by group managers), and using "finding people surrounding" function of Zalo – the most popular messaging app among Vietnamese to look for women aged 20 to 30 in the area of 50 kilometers where 131 people were found and each was messaged privately. Despite the fact that in those messages, my personal information, purpose of study and monetary incentives were clearly stated, the result was truly disappointing. I received only 2 messages back, one stated the person had already married a long time ago, and another message said "bi dien" (crazy).

Nevertheless, I soon realized my mistakes as using too academic and formal language to approach migrant workers while it should be the right language to find the right informants. This brings me to observe more some Facebook groups of migrants in Taiwan and copy the style of some most popular posts by using some special syntax, being short, blur and attractive. And instead of being crystal clear since the beginning, the intention of the thesis

will only be disclosed later before conducting the interviews to make it seem to be less serious and private.

Then there came the second attempt to make Facebook posts with advertising banners on more than 20 groups of Vietnamese migrant workers and Vietnamese people in Taiwan, as well as a Facebook group of Taiwanese business people in Vietnam market where I received many advices of people on how to find informants. This time, the result became better as there were more Facebook likes received and some people inquired about the details and even offered help to find some workers in a factory. However, the effort then turned to bubble since my following-up private messages turned into silent. Helplessly, I turned to my other acquaintances in Taiwan on Facebook who are not students to seek for help, unfortunately, most of candidates found are over 30 or not suitable with my description of informants.

At the time, through people on Facebook and through the news media, it is said that employers had been banning or limiting migrant workers from leaving the dorms and the factories with fear that they would contract or spread the virus. Because the internet search did not work, I decided to go the actual field directly, however, chose not to travel too far, concerning my safety due to the current level-3 pandemic alert in many parts of Taiwan.

The Vietnamese grocery shop in Muzha with supportive owners became my targeted field. As I spent two mornings (Friday and Saturday July 2-3) there, the owners helped me identify young girls who could suit my informant criteria. Unfortunately, despite the shop owners' insistence that migrant workers usually visit at weekend, only students were found and they seemed not interested in providing information. From interaction with Taiwanese online and the grocery shop owners, it is to take note that many Taiwanese people consider students who worked part-time at restaurants or shops as blue-collar workers, while they are actually students who come with a study visa instead of a working visa, and this realization later helped form a better description of my potential candidates.

The grocery shop owner in the end referred me to a Vietnamese “banh my” (known as Vietnamese French-style bread in Taiwan) shop, also a lottery shop near the petrol station near Bao Bridge where he said is near to some factories where many Vietnamese migrant workers frequently visit. The lottery shop keeper did not welcome me even though I bought a “banh my” and offered to pay if she could help find me proper informants. She said she was busy, avoided continuing the conversation and ordered me to go out of the shop as I tried to initiate talk with two girls buying lottery, since I noticed from their appearance, they could be

suitable candidates of my study. It turned out that the two shy girls are 24-year-old migrant workers in a factory nearby, however, they refused to take the interview nor recommend me their co-workers as they said they had to work till very late at night, and not allowed to go out freely, and more importantly they do not have internet access to receive the interviews. Later, I spent an extremely hot afternoon (July 3) under nearly 40-degree-Celsius heat waiting outside of the shop, however, never saw anyone looking like those two girls again.

Again helplessly, I made the decision to go home and go online again, but with a better description of my informants. This time by taking advantage of Line's timeline and Line groups, I finally found some friends who could help connect me with my migrant worker informants and these informants also helped introduce me to others in their networks. This final result of informant seeking process implies the importance of social connections and relations in Vietnamese society. My initial intentional to find random informants online and offline did not work well, however, through this experience I have learnt so much regarding how to best describe my informants and how to communicate with them in a proper way, and by employing online ethnographic approach, I could make use of the existing and trustable resources and the role of the myself as a member of the targeted community in investigating the situation through a closer lens.

3.2 Research Design

The research consists of two main parts, in which the first part provides an analysis on the socio-cultural context influencing Vietnamese female migrants' identity. The analysis not only helps identify the perceptions of the women towards love, dating, relationship, marriage, family, materiality, sexuality as 7 main factors influencing their major decisions in love and relationship, but also predicts the challenges to potential transnational relationships. Cultural identity theory is applied to analyze Vietnamese traditional values of women in Section 4.1.1 whilst Hofstede's indexes are applied to analyze cultural views and values in comparison between Viet Nam and Taiwan in Section 4.1.5.

The second part of research employs semi-constructed in-depth interviews conducted with 12 informants, using ethnographic approach in which I spent a period of time getting to know my informants who were not my acquaintances before, talked with selected informants on regular basis almost every one or two days after my interviews, and researched their Facebook posts in order to understand them better. Except one informant who is Yingtao's

Taiwanese boyfriend, other informants are Vietnamese female aged 22 to 28, VFW or VFS with extension to those who had already graduated, and had been in Taiwan for at least 6 months, were unmarried at the time of arrival, and were or have been open to love and dating in Taiwan.

The interview questions for the Vietnamese female migrants are online based through Line or Facebook Messengers and organized in a semi-structure including 3 parts: (1) getting to know (informants' background, friends and relationships in Taiwan, reasons to choose Taiwan), (2) love and dating, and (3) future, career and decision to stay in Taiwan. "Love and dating" part consists of 6 components: love, dating and relationship, marriage, family, materiality, sexuality. These 6 factors are then respectively blended with gender and nationality to form the questions. For example, when love is blended with nationality, the informants were asked questions such as "Do you love Viet Nam?" and "Is it a must that your romantic partner has to love Viet Nam?". Applying communication theory of identity to the questionnaires, informants were also asked whether there is any gap between their desired identity and the identity perceived by Taiwanese partners, and whether there was any time they didn't feel being understood in or outside the relationship because of their national and gender identity.

The questions were modified case by case in order to match with group identity (whether an informant is a VFS or a VFW), relationship status, sexual orientation, nationality(ies) of the informants' romantic partners, and other experience of the informants. The interview with Yingtao's boyfriend was conducted through Line's voice recording function in order to fit with his busy schedule, and targeted at specific questions related to Taiwanese's stereotypes towards Vietnamese women and his negotiation towards Yingtao's identity.

Since the study topic contains private details, it would be difficult to motivate candidates to join the research, in order to encourage them to participate I provided all informants some gifts to people I know, and monetary incentives or gifts to the others with choices depended on their preferences. Potential informants were first questioned regarding their basic information, relationship status and dating experience, later they were classified based on the basic information that they had provided in order make decision whether to conduct the interviews and tailor questions applicable to them. Some candidates interested in the research were not chosen to conduct the interviews in the end due to their similar background and relationship experience as some informants who had already been interviewed.

Flick (2007a) pointed out sampling interviewing is about finding the right case, the right people with relevant experience in order to category or to compare, and also the right part of interview transcription. From 11 interviews with Vietnamese female migrants, I only selected to feature 3 stories of Bun Cha, Dua Hau and Yingtao to represent the women in this study. Whilst the cases of Bun Cha and Dua Hau reflect the changes and new trends in Vietnamese society that tend to challenge potential transnational relationship between Vietnamese and Taiwanese in future, the story of Yingtao is a lighthearted one featuring a successful transnational relationship.

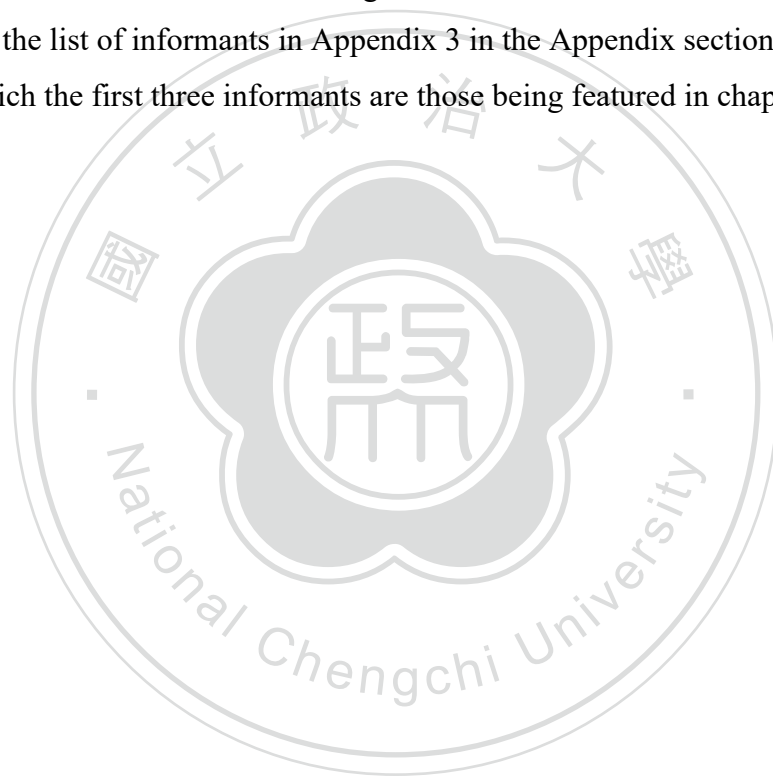
Kvale and Flick (2007) emphasized “qualified naivete” in qualitative research which researchers are advised to be open to new and unexpected situations, at the same time keep being curious and critical in order to clarify the underlying issues. In the interviews, I made sure to follow up with the construct as well as spent enough time to investigate ambiguous responses and their meanings. In qualitative research, a natural context is desired in order to leave the space for the particularities of research to be exposed (Flick, 2007b). In order to do so, I spent time to learn about their basic information of informants and communicate with them accordingly in a friendly and intimate way in order to gain trust and make them comfortable for receiving the interview. I also kept contact with some of them in a daily basis after my interview in order to better understand their situations and clarify what they had told me during the interviews whenever there was something unclear. In an attempt to have these Vietnamese migrant women’s identity revealed and exposed in a most natural way, I did not highlight the term “identity”, instead, told my informants my intention to discover their life experience, especially in love and dating in Taiwan.

Because the informants come from many different backgrounds and have different levels of dating experience, instead of using a fixed questionnaires for the interview, I designed a map of interview structure to ask them questions. Besides, the interview structure is designed in a way to get to know the informants gradually personally before going deeper to more private content. For that reason, when I reached to the part of love and dating, we had already developed certain understanding about each other as well as gained certain trust from them to feel free to let me discover their experience.

Due to the current outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in Taiwan, it was difficult to see my informants in person, however, by keeping close contact and interaction with selected informants on Facebook or Line, I could easily explore different aspects of my informants that could enrich the materials for this research. By keeping daily-basis communication with

some selected informants and developing friendship with them throughout the time, I have been able to provide the information in more details and deeper meaning than the first interview conducted.

Finally, ethical issues have always been a great concern in researches in general as well as qualitative researches. Christen (2005) (as cited in Flick, 2007a) highlighted the importance of informed consent, privacy protection of participants as well as deception-free in doing research. I made sure that my informants understand thoroughly the purpose of my research, as well as to have their consent and agreement before publishing my work in which my informants' names and real identity will be protected. Instead, I asked each of them to provide a nickname which could be something close to them, their culture or a dish that they love. Please find the list of informants in Appendix 3 in the Appendix section in the end of this thesis, in which the first three informants are those being featured in chapter 4.



Chapter 4: Transnational romance in challenges

In order to understand about the socio-cultural background forming and influencing the Vietnamese female migrants' identity, the first part of this chapter first traces back to Vietnamese traditional values to understand the cultural knowledge that Vietnamese female migrants bring with them. Then it will discuss Taiwanese society's attitudes towards ethnicity and gender, the status of Vietnamese women, the arrival of new Vietnamese students and talents, and finally, the differences in culture and values between Viet Nam and Taiwan that could influence the women's romance experience.

The second part discusses the cases of three Vietnamese migrant women Bun Cha, Dua Hau – a lesbian woman and Yingtao who are respectively Master student, language student/part-timer and blue-collar migrant worker/part-timer in order to learn about their daily identity communication in association to romance experience in Taiwan.

4.1 Socio-cultural context influencing Vietnamese woman in Taiwan

4.1.1 Vietnamese women and traditional values in love, relationships and marriage

Under the four-thousand-year influence of Confucian and feudalism, Vietnamese women's status in the society is traditionally inferior, representing in “tu tuong trong nam khinh nu” (male chauvinism), “nhat nam viet huu, thap nu viet vo” (one boy means one, ten girls mean none). This lies in the belief that women will later “ga chong” (marry out) and join the husbands' family workforces while the men will stay with their parents, “ke nghiep to tien” (to inherit and take over the ancestors' business) and “duy tri huong hoa” (maintain the incense). A girl in the family can be recognized as a feminine lovable being, thus being referred as “con gai ruou” (literally means daddy's “wine daughter” in acknowledging a daughter is as precious as wine to her father), at the same time “vit gioi” (mallards) who will “fly away” later when marry out at the age of marriage.

A married woman then will become a “guest” in her own original family while become a “daughter” in the husband family where she is not necessarily treated as a real daughter, forming the traditionally struggling relationships between the bride and the mother-in-law

(“moi quan he me chong nang dau” in Vietnamese), together the husband’s sister(s) representing in the verse “giac nuoc ngo khong bang ba co ben chong” (meaning even the Ngo invaders are not as harsh as the husband's sisters). In order to avoid conflicts and consolidate social status, Vietnamese families traditionally seek marital connection with families of the same status, this practice is called “mon dang ho doi” (“mendang hudui” in Chinese meaning socially and economically well-matched).

Besides, deep-rooted collectivism emphasizes moral values of women to “hy sinh” (sacrify the self), “nhân nại” (be patient), “cam chiu thiet thoi” (bear the loss) in order to obtain harmony or well-off status for the family (Hoang, 2016). This was proved to lead to many consequences such as the endurance of the women in abusive relationships and domestic violence (Do Ngoc et al., 2013) or the phenomenon of Vietnamese brides struggling in no-love marriages and Vietnamese female migrant workers leaving their husbands and children behind in order to achieve a better life for themselves and their families (Hoang & Yeoh, 2015). Hoskins (2011) explained this motive of Vietnamese women in her words:

When a woman fulfils her part in the family, she strengthens that group which is her source of power as well. In this setting, it is the group welfare that is most important, not the individual. The individual does not ask herself if others make her happy, rather if she and others are fulfilling their roles within the family structure. As long as she lives up to her role, she can count on the power and support from the family. If she fails to do so, power and support are withdrawn.

Being traditionally identified as the inferiors, however, as many scholars pointed out, Vietnamese women, indeed, possess certain power and autonomy in the family, for example they could take care of family business or control the husbands’ pocket money. Hoskins (2011) explained this complexity is a result of various different roles a Vietnamese woman has to bear under her shoulder: the domestic roles of being a daughter, a wife, a mother, and the social role in work and leadership. Vietnamese society put a double-standard expectation on women requiring them to “gioi viec nha, dam viec nuoc” (be excellent at work and perfect at home) (Tran, 2020) while men are expected to “lam viec lon” (do the big things that exclude housework). Gender inequality and discrimination towards women are challenges preventing Vietnamese women’s advancement in the society which also have a negative influence on social and economic development (UNDP, 2016). UNDP in 2016-2020 strategy addressed gender stereotype and norms, son preference, domestic work distribution, domestic

violence, ownership, work and employment, political participation and equal access to opportunities as Viet Nam's current main issues challenging gender equality.

Even for a long period in the history under patriarchy when free love was not a practice, love has been highly-valued in Vietnamese tradition with its strength being acknowledged that could clear the borders between classes, social norms and nations. I find Vietnamese traditional folklores, known by most Vietnamese as they have been included in elementary textbooks, plentiful materials for analyzing traditional values. Duong (2001) also highlighted the importance of folklore in the spiritual life of Vietnamese as well as its contribution to Vietnamese women's identity. For example, the legend of Chu Dong Tu features the story of a Cinderella man called Chu Dong Tu who is parentless, homeless and penniless, to the extent his one and only property - a loincloth was buried with his father who had just passed away. In a coincident encounter with Princess Tien Dung, daughter of the 18th Hung King, the princess was touched and fell in love with Chu Dong Tu, thus disobeyed her father to marry to him. The princess and her husband later have become a symbol of Vietnamese folk culture and Taoism, being worshipped in temples in Hung Yen province of Viet Nam nowadays (Duong, 2001).

Transnational love and marriage were also featured in Vietnamese legend of My Chau and Trong Thuy in which My Chau is a princess, daughter of King An Duong Vuong of Au Lac, an ancient country within the border of Viet Nam nowadays, while her husband Prince Trong Thuy (Zhongshui) is a son of Trieu Da (Zhao Tuo), the ruler of Nanyue in Chinese history. Despite My Chau and Trong Thuy's political-motive marriage and Nanyue's conspiracy to take advantage of the love and trust of My Chau toward her husband that caused the later downfall of Au Lac, the love of them for each other was real that led to the two's tragic deaths in the end of the story. This folklore, in fact, could be seen as a lesson learnt on the threat of transnational marriage to national defense.

Love and faithfulness are two values that are bound together throughout Vietnamese folklores. Other women in Vietnamese folklores Hon Vong Phu (the husband-longing stone) (Duong, 2001), and the legend of betel and areca had waited and sought for their husbands until death which represents love and faithfulness of Vietnamese women towards their husbands reflecting Confucian values that a woman should only be with one man in her life and that should be her husband (Hoang & Yeoh, 2015). These analyses on cultural characteristics of Vietnamese women revealed the phenomenon of Vietnamese women migrating to Taiwan involving in marriage without love, or sex labor, for economic reasons,

or any stereotypes that Taiwanese people ascribe to Vietnamese women are, in fact, contradict to Vietnamese traditional values.

Khuat (1998) pointed out that the six decades of French colonization have a deep influence on Vietnamese culture and overshadowed the Confusion values in which free love is an example. The colonial time could be the first time for some Vietnamese to experience the freedom to socialize with friends of the opposite sex and choose their own love interests. Khuat also showed despite conflicting narratives recorded in Vietnamese literature, platonic love and faithfulness are highly valued throughout the war time and period of building socialism, behaviors that are sensitive or against those ideal values such as sexuality and adultery are socially criticized or avoided to mention.

During the 1990s, some love couples started to be more open to practice premarital sex, however, this was not socially accepted and even physical expression affection such as intimate touches or kisses were regarded as inappropriate, and confusion between love and sex was mainstream (Khuat, 1998). Nguyen (2007) recognized the growing trend of post-reform young urban Vietnamese considering material and sexual needs instead of only romantic love in their dating practice. Vu (2021) acknowledged the dilemma of modern Vietnamese in love and relationship, in which Vietnamese women under the influence of Western ideology expect romantic and intimate experience whereas Confusion values clearly define gender roles that prevents their male partners from emotional closeness expressing through love, caring and sharing information, and the females have to learn to adapt to this.

4.1.2 Multicultural society and gender issues in Taiwan

The Republic of China (R.O.C) was found in 1912 as a result of the Chinese Xinhai revolution in 1911. Not until Kuo Min Tang under the leadership of Chiang Kai-Shek made the historical retreat to Taiwan in 1949, the R.O.C has become Taiwan nowadays. Since the main language of the island is Chinese Mandarin (known as “guoyu” or “huayu” in Taiwan) and because of its historic bond with Chinese mainland, it is easy to mistake Taiwan as a mono-ethnic society. In fact, even though Han-Chinese represent more than 95% the population, there are different subgroups inside this group of people, and the rest of the population are indigenous Taiwanese (known as “yuanzhumin”) whose 16 groups are officially recognized by the government (*People - Fact focus*, 2021). Inside the Han-Chinese, the Hoklo (as known as Hokkien people) are people who speak “minnanhua” (Taiwanese

language) and mostly originated from Fujian province in China), the Hakka are people who speak Hakka language and mainly came from Guangdong province in China, and the remainders are other groups of Chinese mainland origin. Han Chinese from China started relocating to Taiwan many centuries ago, however a number of people moving to Taiwan after 1946 together with the retreat of the government to Taiwan are identified as “waishengren” (“mainlanders” in English, meaning people from other province in Chinese). The Hoklo, Hakka, mainlanders and aboriginal represent the “four great ethnic groups” in Taiwan (Damm, 2011; Tsai, 2010).

Taiwan had a long period between 1895 and 1945 under rule of Japan. During that time, Taiwanese were forced to speak Japanese language and went to Japanese schools which resulted into a great influence of Japanese culture in Taiwanese society. The fact that Japan as well as the US have become Taiwan’s two most important allies led to many Taiwanese people grew up heavily consuming cultural products from these two countries. Even though Chinese culture influence and Confucian ideology still play a certain role in Taiwanese culture, the effort to politically separate from mainland China and the process of liberalization and democratization in the island made Taiwanese people have a “hybridized identity” and culturally distinct from their mainland counterpart (Damm, 2011; Hui-Chun & Miller, 2003; Lee, 2015).

Taiwan’s miraculous economic growth in the 1980s put an end to its brain-drain period previously when many Taiwanese found the way to migrate to developed countries in the west to find new opportunities. The needs for human resources for economic development had led Taiwan to open its market for migrant workers and welcome overseas Taiwanese to return. A large number of migrant workers are low-skilled blue-collar workers from Southeast Asia, however, there is also a number of better-skilled and high-salaried white-collar workers of whom many were English teachers from the more developed economies joining the workforce. The fact that the former was from poor and low-educated background led to them being socially excluded in the Taiwanese society (Lan, 2006). However, the latter are greatly welcome since they refrain the society from worries that they could cause harms or social problems, at the same time they could help Taiwanese enterprises in globalizing and internalizing process (Zeng, 2001).

Nowadays, people migrate to Taiwan for various different purposes (e.g., studying, retirement), however, still a majority of foreigners come for job opportunities and majority of those are Southeast Asian. According to Taiwan Ministry of Interior’s statistics, foreign

residents (not including people from China, Hongkong and Macao) in Taiwan in April 2021 are accounted for 821,817 people who mostly come from Southeast Asia, East Asia, North America, West European countries and India, equivalent to approximately 3.5 percent of Taiwan population in 2020 (外僑居留人數統計表 11004, 2021). Compared to 83,500 expats living in Viet Nam (2019) just before the global pandemic over 96.46 million Vietnamese people (2019), the number of foreigners living in Taiwan is an extremely large one.

In another aspect, hot economic development resulted into growing disparities between Taiwan and its neighboring countries which brought thousands of foreign brides from mainland and Southeast Asia to Taiwan, with many of them coming with financial motives in seeking for a better life and supporting the families back home (Sandel, 2015). By the end of 2019, the number of foreign spouses (also known as “xinzhumín” or new immigrants in Taiwan) with more than 90% of those are female reached 557,450 people (almost 2.4% of Taiwan population) with more than 65% of them coming from mainland China, Hongkong and Macao, and the rest mainly come from Southeast Asia

(外籍配偶與大陸(含港澳)配偶人數, 2019). The newly migrated immigrants and their biracial children accounted for more than one million people in Taiwanese population ("台灣大選 2020：越裔移民二代選民的故事," 2020), have become dominant motivation for Taiwan to be more open to multicultural experiences.

Taiwan, in its democratizing process starting with aboriginal political movement in 1987 - 1988(Wakabayashi, 2016), began recognizing the differences, and officially identified itself a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Taiwan since late 1990s as in the statement of Lee Teng-Hui and Chen Shui-bian during their presidential terms (Damm, 2011). In recognition of the raising social issues in a multi-cultural society and supporting the well-being of its people, a regulation against discrimination were issued in 2008, in which it states:

Anyone residing in Taiwan Area, if discriminated against based on nationality, ethnicity, skin color, class, or birthplace, may petition the competent authorities for the resultant infringement of his/her rights, unless otherwise stipulated in other laws ("Regulations regarding international students undertaking studies in Taiwan," 2021).

Even though the act of discrimination is banned by laws, discrimination over people from other races, other states, especially Southeast Asian countries still exist as an implicit issue

(Yip, 2020). The nature of it in Taiwanese society is deep-rooted, multifaced and rather complicated. Even the way of calling a specific group of people such as “xinzhumín” (new immigrants), “xinerdai” (second generation of new immigrants), “yigong” (migrant workers) (Lan, 2005) are problematic as they could imply discrimination and separate them with the rest of Taiwanese people as “the inferior others”. For example, Luu Thien Binh – Executive Director of TransAsia Sisters Association, based on her experience of growing up in a Vietnamese-Taiwanese family stated she felt like she and her peers being seen as a “second-class” in Taiwan by being identified as “xinerdai” (Tseng, 2020) while children of transnational marriage between Taiwanese and people from other countries such as Japan and the US are not included in this definition, instead being referred as “hunxue” (mixed blood).

Activists, non-governmental organizations, as well as foreign governments still continue urging for changes to protect the rights and well-beings of immigrants and migrant workers in Taiwan (Drillsma, 2018; Teng, 2018). Under both internal and external urges, as well as the need to politicalize transnational marriage and relationships as a national-building strategy in order to gain better relations with the Southeast Asian spouses’ home countries (C.-j. Cheng, 2020; I. Cheng, 2020), Taiwanese government has also adopted different measures and provided social services to improve the life of new immigrants and migrant workers (Drillsma, 2018), especially through the current new Southbound policy, it has been promoting cultural diversity and recognizing the contribution of ASEAN cultural values to the Taiwanese society (Tseng, 2020).

Discrimination has a gendered aspect since the majority of foreign spouses and a considerably high number of migrant workers in Taiwan are women. In the realm of gender equality, Taiwan has achieved certain advancement in comparison to many other countries in Asia and the world. For example, gender equality has been adopted in Gender Equality Law and Education Law since very early in 2004 (Yong, 2011), Taiwan has progressively achieved very high rankings in terms of gender equality in many years – most currently number 6 in the world and number 1 in Asia in 2020 (Barnat et al., 2019; Chen & Mazzetta, 2021), and Taiwan LGBT rights movement is a big success receiving high praises from world media.

These achievements reflect Taiwan’s effort in tackling with gender inequality, however, they could not show a comprehensive picture of gender equality in Taiwan. First of all, the number could be bias as it was self-assessed by Taiwan Executive Yuan's Gender Equality Committee (GEC) based on the Gender Inequality Index (GII) initiated by the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP) since 2010 (Chen & Mazzetta, 2021). This is because of Taiwan's political disadvantage that made it being excluded from gender reports at international level such as Global Gender Gap Report by World Economic Forum, Gender equality global report and ranking by Equileap, Global Annual Results Report by UNICEF, Gender equality, Gender Report by UNESCO, etc. GII is not a perfect measurement only reflects three dimensions of GII – “reproductive health, empowerment and economic status” (Chen & Mazzetta, 2021), let alone it has its own flaws as mentioned in different critical reports (Barnat et al., 2019; Permanyer, 2013). The index is only based on average numbers without considering extreme cases which news media seems to be better at featuring. In addition, different groups of foreign women accounting for a large portion of the population including the focus group of this thesis were not featured in the index.

One of the most famous politicians in Taiwan from Kuomintang Party, once Mayor of Kaohsiung between December 2018 and June 2020 – Han Kuo-Yu once drew controversy over his statement featuring gender roles and stereotypes during his presidential election run being called “the most sexist” campaign in the history of Taiwan by journalist Roger Yan of The Reporter (Yan, 2020). In one speech, Han said:

A boy can stand guard for two hours, but a girl cannot handle it for two hours. But a woman can apply makeup for two hours in front of the dressing table without getting tired. Yet, if it was a boy, his arm might fall off.

A man's life is his lower body; a woman's life is her upper body (Everington, 2019).

Not only Han, a number of Taiwanese politicians and public figures are also alleged for gender-bias comments against women as well as migrant women (“KMT chair sparks outrage over sexist comment against Taiwan's president,” 2019; Xie, 2021; Yan, 2020). Even though Han seems not to be fond by the majority of Taiwanese since he was not the winner eventually, he has a huge number of supporters who share with him political and social views. Most of Han's supporters are described as being older, more masculine, and from the background of working class, government workers, or mainlander family, which is opposite to his rival President Tsai Ing-wen whose supporters are well-known to be of the young generation (Wang, 2019; Yan, 2020).

Even though this demographic picture could somehow reflect the perceptions towards gender equality and gender issues vary between different people of different genders, age groups, political views and social statuses, the fact that Taiwanese people live in a close

interrelationship with family, groups and the society imply a woman should have certain pressures and challenges to have an equal status as men in the society. And Southeast Asian women in Taiwan seem to be at the center of this disadvantage since they are not only socially marginalized because of their origins, but also being caught up in the frame of gender bias just like their Taiwanese counterpart.

Despite racial and gender issues existing in the society, it is necessary to recognize that the social progression of Taiwan provides an environment where Vietnamese female could find sexual freedom as well as express their issues. Migration life could help those women avoid traditional norms and values towards women back in their home country, such as women should get married at a certain age, or sex and cohabitant practice before marriage, in which women are identified as suffering more loss and damage (Williams, 2009), are not socially accepted. Zhang (2017) acknowledged Vietnamese female students could avoid being rushed to get married and achieve freedom through their study-abroad experience. Hoang and Yeoh (2015) also recognized many VFW in Taiwan could show off their curves through sexy outfits the first time in their lives without being afraid of social criticisms.

4.1.3 Vietnamese women's status on the rise

Vietnamese women in Taiwan can be categorized in at least four main groups: marriage immigrants, blue-collar migrant workers, students and white-collar migrant workers. While marriage immigrants and migrant workers (blue-collar) have a history of relocating and migrating to Taiwan, the two latter groups are less known to both media and academic world due to the groups' expansions in size only happen in the current years in association with more open policies attracting foreign talents as well as tightening diplomatic relations with countries in the South.

Taiwanese news media take the prime responsibility for their "interpretative works" that contribute to define the status of Vietnamese women in Taiwan. Hsia (2007) analyzed the media construct of "foreign-bride phenomenon" as "social problems" and "a threat" to Taiwanese society and pointed out various strategies being employed by Taiwanese media such as imbricated coverage, made-up statistics, unreliable authorizing sources and bias quotations with many of those referred to government agencies. According to Hsia, the image of foreign brides has been misinterpreted and misled by the media. Hsia wrote:

The brides are portrayed either as passive victims or materialist gold-diggers, and prone to committing crimes, while the bridegrooms are portrayed as the ‘socially undesirable,’ including physically or mentally disabled, and morally inferior.

Similarly, Cheng (2016) in revealing the social status of migrant workers through analyzing “omission, inference, and emphasis” tricks used news media in some particular events, came to a sad conclusion that there is no way for migrant workers to “politically, economically and culturally” have a position in the society of Taiwan. Lan (2006) in her widely recognized work “Global Cinderella: Migrant Domesticity and Newly Rich Employers in Taiwan” described migrant workers as in the following:

They are “the dangerous savage” associated with criminality and backwardness as well as “the ideal servant” naturally suited to dirty work and deferential conduct.

Beside news media, other media such as films and dramas also play a certain role in forming an image of Vietnamese women in the eyes of Taiwanese. Many of those cultural products widely broadcasted and screened in Taiwan feature the villages of Viet Nam, the poor people living there and the life-changing opportunities to pursue a better life by migrating to Taiwan instead of the full picture of a developing country with significant social, economic and cultural gaps. I remember once R., my former Taiwanese boyfriend after watching “The Good Daughter” (2019) directed by Wu Yu-Ying texted me:

A Zi (the protagonist)’s father in the documentary said: “You see, the family in the opposite side of riverbank have no daughter so that they do not have good house and have no choice but to go to the city to work all together. (R., personal communication, March 20, 2021)

R. explained his interpretation of this as the father thinks he could get his daughter married in exchange for money to buy motorbikes and build house. He also mentioned his older brother after watching the documentary together with him came to a conclusion that Vietnamese men are even worse than Taiwanese’s mother-in-law (husband’s mother) since in his impression, Vietnamese men in the documentary did not work at all while Vietnamese women did all the jobs. In order to support his brother’s statement, R. also explained his impression that there would be more Vietnamese women went abroad to work in order to support the families rather than men in order to support his brother’s conclusion. However, from my later investigation, in fact, there are a more male (64.8%) rather than female (35.2%) in the construct of Vietnamese blue-collar workers in Taiwan (外僑居留人數統計表11003, 2021).

From this experience, I learnt that there is a very thin border between the true story and a generalized image extracted from the story.

Group threat theory is a sociological theory initiated by Blumer (1958) who observed that the ingroup people's discrimination towards the outgroup is, in fact, the ingroup's response to the collective threat of the outgroup people to their existing benefits (Quillian, 1995). Quillian (1995) in developing Blumer's theory pointed out the size of the outgroup over the ingroup and economic situations are two factors that matter in this threat. According the theory, Vietnamese women could be a threat to the society not only because of the job opportunities and other opportunities that they and their second generation may take, but also their traditional values which tend to be attractive to Taiwanese traditional men which is a threat to Taiwanese women, and also to Taiwanese men who believe marriage is a measure of power and social status that other Taiwanese men of lower status should not share with them.

The size of the group of Vietnamese women coming to Taiwan indeed have been increasing dramatically throughout the years and this had considerably contributed to foreign brides being called as "the fifth ethnic group" in Taiwan (Sandel, 2015). By the end of 2019, the population of Vietnamese spouses in Taiwan is 108,997 people with more than 98% of them are female (外籍配偶與大陸(含港澳)配偶人數, 2019). Except spouses from China,

Hongkong and Macao who share more or less the same language and culture to Taiwanese, Vietnamese brides rank number one in the number of foreign spouses of Taiwanese.

Although the total number of VFW tends to level off and even decrease in recent years, by March 2021, there are still 74,002 blue-collar Vietnamese female workers in Taiwan, forming the third largest group of blue-collar female workers in Taiwan after Indonesia and the Philippines. Appendix 1 (*please find in Appendix*) shows how the age structures of VFW in Taiwan have varied throughout the course of 10 years between 2009 and 2019, in which in the most current statistics, women aged 25-34 accounted for the largest group (approximately 43%), age 35-44 ranks second with nearly 26%, and women under 25 represents 20%,

From the statistics in Table 2 (*please find in Appendix*), it is unclear how the white-collar female should be calculated and there is a clear disparity in the figures provided by Ministry of Interior and ones of Ministry of Education in terms of the number of Vietnamese students. However, this could be explained that the MOE's figures also include non-degree students who could stay a much shorter time than degree students while the Alien Resident Cards (ARC) are only issued to ones who stay in Taiwan for more than 6 months.

From economic aspect, the fate of those women no matter marriage immigrants or migrant workers are intertwined with each other because of the biggest reason that many of them come from underdeveloped, poor and uneducated backgrounds, and they often coupled with an “undesirable partner” in Taiwanese society (Hsia, 2007). Because of economic disparity, a large number of Vietnamese women sacrificed their marriage, freedom in exchange for a believed better future. They have been treated like a commercial good that can be bought and possessed as Taiwanese men paid to mediating agencies in order to marry Vietnamese brides (Wang & Chang, 2002) or employers paid a cheap price to have them work in their family or factories (Lan, 2006).

Career choice of Vietnamese women in Taiwan is also an important factor influencing the status of them in the society (*please see Table 2 in the Appendix*). The fact that most Vietnamese women working in Taiwan are blue-collar workers, among those, a large number of people chose to work as manufacturing workers and caregivers – the industries less likely be considered by local Taiwanese because of the hardship and low-pay, automatically gave those women the stigma of “cheapness”. This quality of “being cheap” has been being fully exploited by employers and intermediates. Even worse, caretakers are socially excluded by unfair policies preventing them from having equal rights like other foreign residents (e.g., naturalization, family sponsorship, restriction of residency, mobility and work, and previously fertility suspension) (I. Cheng, 2020).

In addition, approximately 16% of Vietnamese female residents (not including new immigrants who have been naturalized) in Taiwan are homemakers (housewives) or unemployed (外僑居留人數統計表11003, 2021). Many of them due to language barriers as well as low educational background have limited access to job opportunities in Taiwan, thus the only choice was to stay home doing housework and take care of children, deepening the contrast between them with majority of Taiwanese females who are career women.

Moreover, a number of undocumented labors and sex workers working illegally in Taiwan also contributes to a negative perception of Taiwanese society towards Vietnamese women.

Behind the motive of Taiwanese men to marry a foreign wife is an expectation of them doing “their jobs” of being a wife, a daughter-in-law, a mother producing the offspring (Sandel, 2015). Vietnamese women as well as their counterparts from Southeast Asia who are married to Taiwanese are “acknowledged” of their “ability to give more birth” in contrast to the Taiwanese counterpart, thus being stereotyped as “birth-giving machines” by the husbands’

families, the media and the society. For example, Taiwanese internet influencer Emmy Hu who specialized in finance drew controversy by her Facebook post stating that Southeast Asian women took the responsibility for Taiwan's fertility in the recent years and the pandemic that causes interruption of transnational marriage are the reasons lying behind Taiwan's world lowest fertility rate (Xie, 2021).

Zheng (2019) by citing Yang Jing-li et al. (2012) explained this phenomenon is just myth. In fact, even though these foreign women coming to Taiwan at their "golden time" to give birth and tend to give birth earlier than average Taiwanese women, they share the same fate of living in a society full of norms and pressure which led to their birth rate actually lower than one of Taiwanese women. In addition, Vietnamese also have to face with discrimination in accomplishing the role of a mother in educating their children (Huynh & Huynh, 2020) due to their lack of education and local language ability.

Researches also showed Vietnamese women of different backgrounds adopted different strategies to thrive in the Taiwanese society (Huynh & Huynh, 2020; Luong, 2013; Tao, 2005; Zhang, 2017), integrate to local culture, at the same time remain their tradition (Yu, 2014). The recent years have witnessed a gradual change in status of Vietnamese women in Taiwan, firstly thanks to the efforts of the women themselves to overcome difficulties, thrive for their rights and let their voice to be heard in society. The emergence of outstanding individuals such as activists (e.g., Nguyen Thi Thanh Ha, Hong Man Chi), educators (e.g., Phuong Nguyen, Hoang Chun-Chuang), entertainers (e.g., Nguyen Thu Hang known by her YouTube channel Hang TV) also helps improve positive image of the whole community. Besides, the supports and efforts made by non-governmental organizations as well as the government in improving the welfare of new immigrants and foreign migrants in compliance with international standards are immensely encouraging.

On the other side of the sea, Vietnam started opening the doorway to foreign investment since the economic reform "doi moi" in 1986. Not until achieving WTO's membership on January 11, 2007, has it been officially expanding international trade at international level. With the effort of Vietnam government, private sector and social organizations in developing the economy and eradicating hunger and poverty, the country eventually achieved a lower-income nation status in 2011. Even during the worst time when the world is reeling due to the global pandemic, Vietnam still managed to sustain its economic growth at 2.9% - one of the world highest (Dabla-Norris & Zhang, 2021) and is expected to rebound back to 7% in 2022 (ADB, 2021). It is predicted to be an upper income nation in 2023 (Dao, 2020) and planned

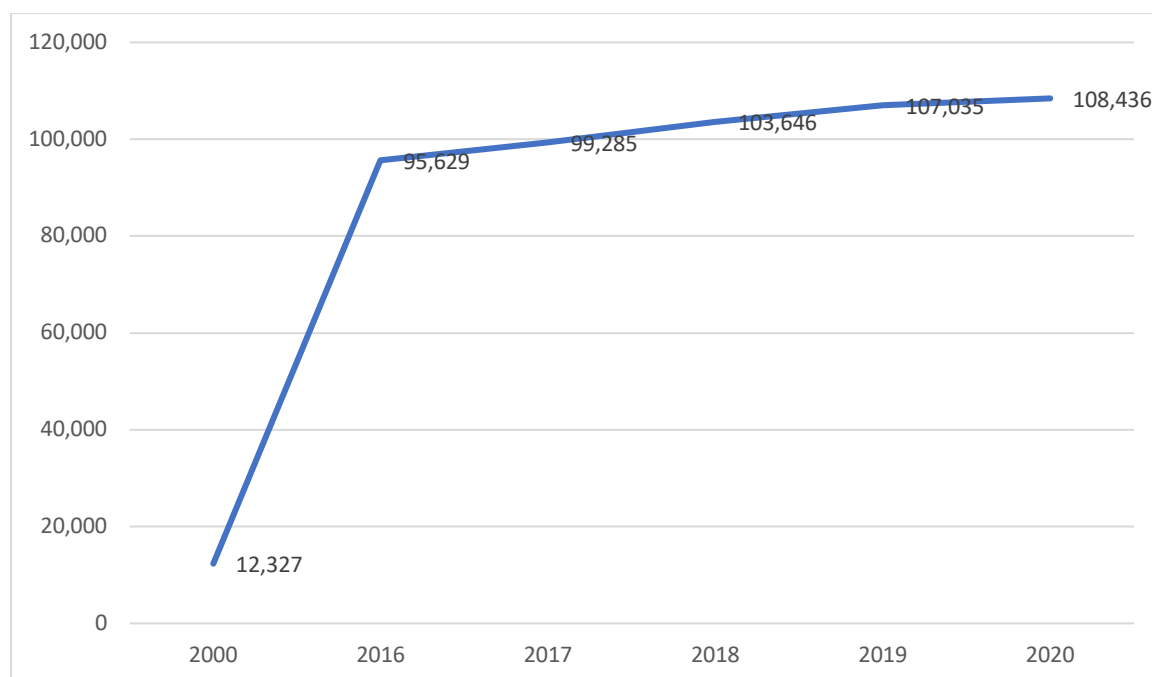
to reach high-income developed country status in 2045 (Onishi, 2021). International trade, tourism and technology innovation have provided plenty of opportunities for people to escape from poverty. The Japan Center for Economic Research (JCER) – the nonprofit research institute which forecasted economic development of Viet Nam also made a forecast that Viet Nam will surpass Taiwan in terms of GDP in 2035 which is only 14 years from now (Uehara et al., 2020).

Economic growth leads to positive social changes in Vietnamese society. Even though there are still gender norms and discrimination towards women existing in the society (Ha-My et al., 2019; VLLF, 2018), on the lighter side, Vietnamese women now have higher education (Mergoupis et al., 2018) and more access to opportunities to develop themselves, thus gain certain financial freedom from men and even seek for leadership roles (Vien-Thong, 2018). Vietnamese people also pay a special attention to studying languages especially English which is planned to be universalized in Vietnamese schools in 2025 (Thu-Huong, 2016).

The increase in economic and educational status of Vietnamese women has led to better self-awareness that makes them become choosier in selecting a long-term partner. Vietnamese through news media learnt about the lives of Vietnamese women migrating to Taiwan for marriage with most of the stories describe a negative picture of a hard life far away from home, with violence and discrimination from both Taiwanese and Vietnamese. At the same time, there are more choices for future partners from other countries in Asia sharing similar culture such as mainland China, Japan, Korea, as well as Vietnamese men who are more educated and learning to respect women. Same things happen in the realm of economy, in a report by International Labour Organization, there are some positive evidence that non-migrant women are having a better (or a growing-better) life than migrant women (Miller, 2019). The above reasons could explain the reason why Vietnamese women are losing interest in migrating to Taiwan or marrying to Taiwanese as the current statistics of Vietnamese brides in Taiwan are shown in the below figure.

Figure 2: The number of Vietnamese brides in Taiwan between 2016-2020

(Source: National Immigrant Agency of the Ministry of Interior, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020; Consular Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as cited in Wang, 2001)



4.1.4 Taiwan's new policies and the arrivals of Vietnamese intellectuals

The original Southbound Policy was initiated since 1994 during the administration of President Lee Teng-hui, which fostered state's investment in countries in Southeast Asia. It had been again adopted during the term of President Chen Shui-bian. Not until President Tsai Ing-wen took the office in 2016 and introduced New Southbound policy which not only expands its area outside of ASEAN countries to south Asia, Australia and New Zealand, but has also been enriched with human-to-human approach and the participation of private sector (*Guidelines for the New Southbound Policy*; Tseng, 2020).

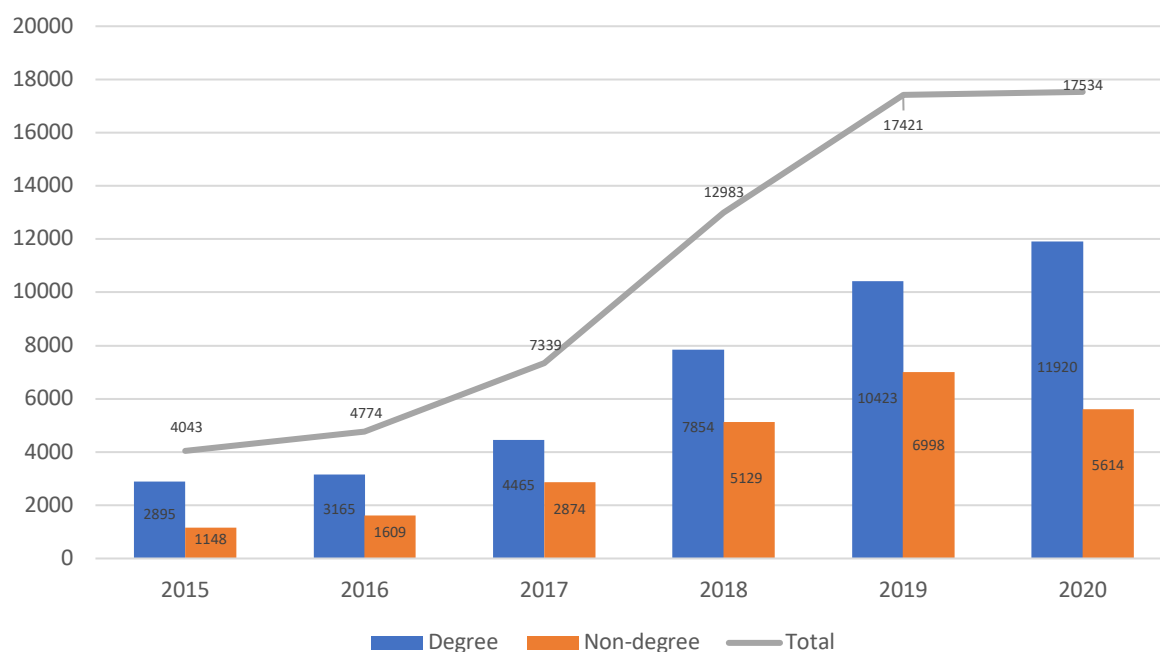
The number of Vietnamese students in Taiwan in 2020 both degree and non-degree, short-term and long-term students is accounted for 17,534 – still a very small number over the total number of Vietnamese in Taiwan - 265,637 people with ARC in addition to those who have APRC, or Taiwanese passports, as well as undocumented people.

According to Taiwan Ministry of Education, since the implementation of New Southbound policy, the numbers of Vietnamese students in Taiwan, both degree and non-degree, have increased fivefold between 2015 and 2020 (See Figure 2) (新南向人才培育計畫-越南-學生概況, 2021). Not until the global pandemic - Coronavirus (COVID-19) has been conquering the world since the beginning of 2020 which have a serve influence on the study plans of

many potential and current Vietnamese students abroad (M.H., 2021; Nguyen, 2020; Nguyen, 2021), did the figure temporarily level off.

Figure 3: Vietnamese students coming to Taiwan between 2015-2020

(Source: Statistics Department - Taiwan Ministry of Education)



Under the policy, more foreign students are awarded scholarships, or opportunities to work or do internship in Taiwan during the time of study, and encouraged to stay and join the labor force after graduation. It is notable that part of the Southeast Asian students in Taiwan including Vietnamese students are of Chinese descendants and came to Taiwan through special program and policy which are also associated with the New Southbound policy (CNA, 2017).

In the recent years, there are a significantly growing number of researches on Vietnamese students which reflects the fact that there are a growing number of Vietnamese students choosing Taiwan as a destination of education, especially under the implementation of New Southbound policy since 2016. Among 52 researches on Vietnamese students found on the National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations in Taiwan, I found different researches in the recent years discussing the reasons of coming and staying in Taiwan, difficulties in language and communication as well as adaptation of Vietnamese students during the time in Taiwan. Especially, there are 2 researches featuring the use of Line and IM among Vietnamese students in Taiwan, one research studying the use of Facebook of Vietnamese

students back in Viet Nam, yet none featured the use of social media or dating apps of Vietnamese students in Taiwan.

Even though there are already some current researches featuring the choice of Vietnamese students to study in Taiwan, they are still lack of structure and usually confused between the definition of choices/decisions made before coming to Taiwan and satisfaction during the time studying in Taiwan. Bui (2018)'s thesis is named as "Factors affecting choice of studying in Taiwan of Vietnamese students", however, later the content of Bui's research revealed that he actually researched about the satisfaction of current Vietnamese students in Taiwan. For that he named the destination's attractiveness (including university reputation and the study program itself, language and culture, reasonable tuition and living costs), social assistant from Taiwanese people during the time in Taiwan, and online and offline interaction with school the factors influencing the students' choice.

Bach (2013)'s research discovered different aspects of Vietnamese students choosing Taiwan to pursue higher education where he found 3 categories of factors are most relevant to the choices of Vietnamese students. Unfortunately, the way he grouped the categories made it lack of coherence. Specifically, the most relevant group of factors – FAC1 includes scholarship, studying program, Taiwan's level of development in economy, physical facilities, parental influence decisions, and part-time opportunities; the second group – FAC2 consists of location, education reputation, testimonial, people's advice and suggestion, transportations, services, housing, and professors; the third and final group – FAC 3 lists Taiwan - Vietnam's collaboration, study major and living circumstance.

Cultural adaption is an indispensable aspect in the life of people living abroad including international students. He (2020) found Taiwanese culture and customs share many similarities to ones in Viet Nam, thus influenced the choice of students to study in Taiwan. He also discovered a high share of Vietnamese students in the research are from the south of Vietnam and more than half of them did not have relatives nor friends in Taiwan. C.-j. Cheng (2020) found the Vietnamese students in Taiwan in the research have medium to high level of adaptation and acculturation and there is a high positive relation between these two indicators. Group interplay, style of living, and manifestation of a culture positively influence the students' adaptation.

Do (2018) discovered Vietnamese students' personality traits, understanding of cultural differences, communication skills will influence their life adaptation in Taiwan. Accordingly,

extrovert and adventurous students tend to adapt better and have an easier life in Taiwan than their peers. Regarding adaptation to a host culture, it will be incomplete without mentioning language ability and fluency. Depends on the language of the study program, Vietnamese students may speak only Chinese or only English in class. From my observation, since there are many Chinese-taught programs and universities require students to access to reading materials and literature in English, many Vietnamese students studying Chinese-taught programs can read and converse in English to some certain extent. However, this is not the same phenomenon for students in English taught programs as they are not required to look for references or readings in Chinese, although there are also some exceptions that students in these programs are fluent in both English and Chinese. Since a large number of Taiwanese companies requires foreign employees to be fluent in Chinese, in order to secure a place in the Taiwan's labor market, many students from the English-taught programs also start learning Chinese.

Vu (2016) recognized the difficulties of many Vietnamese students in using Chinese which are the difficult nature of the language itself (pronunciation and confusing difference between traditional and simplified Chinese writing language), un-confidence of using the language, and external factors such as learning materials, teachers, relations in class and opportunities to use the language outside classroom. The research highlighted one strategy that Vietnamese students deal with the language learning issue is to remain a positive attitude. Since very few researches discovered the life of Vietnamese students outside schools and academic activities, the life out of campus of Vietnamese students, especially their expressions toward the need for love that are relevant to my research, remains undiscovered.

Different from USA where has strict immigrant policy and US government scholarship programs usually asked students to commit to return to their countries after graduation, Taiwan welcome foreign students and talents to stay. In order to fulfill the human resource needs of Taiwanese enterprises to develop their business in different markets especially Southeast Asia, Taiwan government in the recent years announced a Points System for Foreign Graduates in Taiwan to make it easier for international students including Vietnamese to have opportunities to stay and work in Taiwan after graduation (*Apply by New Scoring Criteria for Foreign and Overseas Chinese Students to Work in Taiwan*, 2020). And most currently in June 2021, Taiwan has passed a bill to facilitate the recruitment of foreign talents in which not only requirements for job candidates are loosened, more tax incentives are given, and health insurance are offered immediately, but the number of years of

continuous residence required for permanent residency also reduces from 5 years to 3 years for foreign talents, respectively 2 years and one years to ones graduating from Master and Doctorate programs in Taiwan (Everington, 2021b).

Ly (2014) in a research on Vietnamese students in different countries abroad showed multiple reasons that the students chose to stay after graduation. The most important factor is people and culture of the host country, following by environment, social support, sentiment reason and career is only the last reason that made them stay. Hoang (2014) explained both personal and external motivation leading to Viet Nam's "brain drain" which many Vietnamese students chose to stay in Taiwan after graduation. Amongst the students researched 70% decided to stay to earn initial capital before going back to Viet Nam. Hoang also found that self-confidence, personal abilities, marriage status played an important role in the decision to stay of Vietnamese students. This means ones who are confident about themselves and independent in making decision tend to make decision to stay.

4.1.5 Collisions between different cultural views and values

In the past, when analyzing transnational marriage and its consequences between Vietnamese and Taiwanese, researchers and reporters usually refer to general concepts of "cultural differences" or "language barrier" to explain the origins of conflicts and misunderstandings (A. Nguyen, 2017; Nguyen & Tran, 2018). Even though both cultures indeed share many similarities, Vietnamese brides had not been well-prepared in terms of languages and cultural awareness before getting married and coming to Taiwan. However, in the case of transnational relationship between Vietnamese and Taiwanese young people at the present, looking deep into the social and cultural context of Viet Nam and Taiwan, there are further more collisions in sociocultural views and values rather than just the differences of languages and behaviors that may cause harm or destroy the potential of transnational relationships.

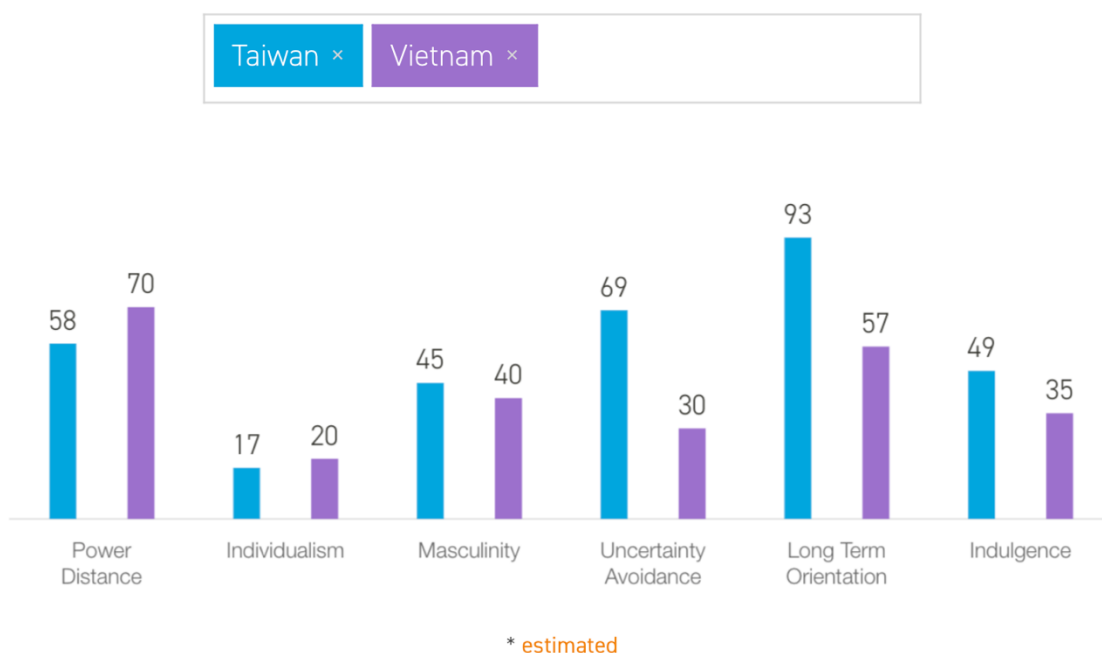
In order to make a comparison between Viet Nam and Taiwan, I use Hofstede's cultural index as a tool to highlight the differences that would make sense in the background of my topic. Taiwan and Viet Nam both have fairly high score in Power Distance meaning that there is an accepted hierarchy in the social construct. Low Individualism score reflects people in Taiwan and Viet Nam appreciate collectivity as relationships and being a part of it are important to them. For low-intermediate score in Masculinity, Viet Nam and Taiwan are

slightly considered as feminine countries which means people value equality, well-being rather than achievement and competition.

With a lower score in Indulgence score, people from Viet Nam seems to scarify their own desires to comply with social expectation while it is not the case in Taiwan. While the two did not show significant difference in Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity and Indulgence, the indexes for Uncertainty Avoidance and Long-term Orientation show clear disparities. A lower score in Uncertainty avoidance means Vietnamese people are more relaxed, flexible and do not do thing out of necessity while Taiwanese feel more tense to work hard, be busy, precise, and rules are important for their emotional security regardless of their necessity. Finally, for Long-term Orientation, both are seen as “pragmatic cultures” where people embrace “thriftiness and perseverance” in order to save and invest for future, however, the level of long-term orientation of Taiwanese are so much higher than one of Vietnamese.

Figure 4: Comparison of Hofstede's cultural indexes between Taiwan and Viet Nam

(Source: Hofstede-Insights, 2021)



The rest part of this section will analyze compare current situation of marriage, sexuality and materialism and their values in both societies. Taiwan society nowadays is facing with serious crisis when young people are characterized by not-get-married, hard-to-love, few

births (in Chinese 不婚, 難愛, 少生) (Su et al., 2021). This phenomenon has been reflected in the number of registered marriage in 2020 which reached the bottom over the 10-year record (Hsiang et al., 2021), 165,249 new-born babies in 2020 making Taiwan the lowest birthrate record in the world (Everington, 2021a), the number of death surpassed the number of new-born babies in the first quarter of 2021 (Huang & Kao, 2021). The most current statistics in 2016 revealed the average age of Taiwanese people getting married has been increasing throughout the years, reached 32.4 (years-old) for male and 30.0 for female in 2016. The numbers in municipal areas such as Taipei, New Taipei city the numbers are even higher, respectively 33.7 for male and 31.5 for female in the capital, 32.8 for male and 30.6 for female in New Taipei (國情統計通報, 2017). There have been many reports and news analyzing various reasons behind this phenomenon.

The last two scores in Uncertainty Avoidance and Long-term Orientation to some extent could reflect how Taiwanese young people have been stressed out by the uncertainty of the future that made it difficult for them to just settling down and relax. A Taiwanese old saying “daoichi ganzhe” (倒吃甘蔗) literally meaning eating the sugarcane from top to bottom in order to increase the sweet flavor could explain Taiwanese spirit to accept the less favorable present (less sweet part of sugarcane) in order to exchange for a better future. There are lots of pressure to own a house or apartment before marriage and to bear the cost of raising kids that makes one keep delaying the plan to settle down with a family (Ketels, 2015).

In the contrast, one of the mostly-known Vietnamese traits is optimistic (Pike, 2020; Thanh-Xuan, 2021). Many Vietnamese, especially ones in rural are think of marriage and settling down as a must way to go, they are encouraged and the government (Bui-Thu, 2020), expected and even urged by their families to get married and give birth, one after another, at a “proper” age usually less than 30 (Co-Chang, 2020; KL., 2021; Minh-Trang, 2020; Pham, 2019), with traditional belief as the time goes, they will earn enough to raise the family. Besides, Vietnamese parents tend to be very supportive in terms of taking care of grandchildren (Dieu-Nguyen, 2018; Doan, 2016). For that reason, the young parents will have more time and energy to concentrate on working and earning.

Since education has an influence on gender perception (Doan & Nguyen, 2016), young people in the cities in Viet Nam, who more likely to have better education, have more access to information and knowledge towards equality and genders as well as new concepts towards

love and marriage. As a result, there is a growing number of people getting married late, divorce cases, single moms, people who move in before marriage, people from LGBT+ community coming out, however, those concepts and people are still not widely accepted by the society. Vietnamese adults in general still bind together the concept of love and marriage, meanings when one looks for love, he/she also looks for marriage (Williams, 2009). In contrast, in Taiwan, the dating culture under cultural influence of Japan has formed “gaobai wenhua” (confession culture) (Lynd, 2020).

Lynd (2020) also pointed out the differences between dating cultures between Taiwan and the West, accordingly in Taiwan when an individual confess love his/her lover interest (the act of “gaobai” in Chinese) and if they both share mutual interest, they both will go straight to the exclusive commitment while dating in the West takes time to get to know each other before the decision to commit. According to Lynd, dating culture in Taiwan falls into the category of somewhere near empty love (decision/commitment) in Sternberg’s triangle of love as commitment is a dominant factor of relationship. Even though mutual commitment in relationship is desirable in Taiwanese culture, however, the growing number of unmarried population suggest even committed relationships could not guarantee marriage.

Statistically, the average age of first marriage for Vietnamese is 27.2 and 23.1 for male and women respectively. People in urban area tend to get married later than people in rural area, with 28.1 for male and 24.8 female in cities, and 26.7 for male 22.1 for female in countryside (Thu-Huong, 2020). It is noticeable that there are a 5-year distance in the age of first marriage between Vietnamese and Taiwanese male, and 8-year distance for female. Looking at these figures, it seems to be very difficult for a Vietnamese woman to find an equal partner (around her age and similar background) in Taiwan with serious intention and readiness for marriage.

In addition, there would be many constraints in terms of social perception towards foreign partners from both sides. From the Taiwanese side, a male having a Vietnamese partner will be regarded as of lower status (Wang & Mei-Hua, 2017; Zhang, 2017). In addition, Vietnamese news media and relevant Vietnam government agencies (Viet Nam Women’s Union) have been featuring stories of uneducated, poor, “qua lua lo thi” (meaning over-ripen or too old for marriage) Vietnamese women married to low-educated and old Taiwanese men in the countryside of Taiwan and ended up with unhappy marriage, domestic violence, repatriation, mental issues and even perishment (Mai-Lan, 2007; Nhat-Ho & Tran-Luu, 2016; Phuong-Nguyen, 2011; Thanh-Truc, 2012; Thuy-Linh, 2020; Tue-Quan, 2004). As a result, Vietnamese women married with Taiwanese not only have to face with discrimination in

Taiwan but also discrimination from other Vietnamese in their community (Hanh-Ly, 2015; Le, 2019).

DiFiore (2011)'s research revealed Vietnamese youth's opinions towards different concepts in the dating culture such as pre-marital sex, co-habitation, inclusiveness show traditional and conservative ideas was still mainstream amongst those youth. Contrastingly, Taiwanese society seems to be open to pre-marital sex, co-habitation and even non-monogamy. For example, the number of users of Ashley Madison - an app for people seeking for non-marriage affairs in Taiwan were reported to surge right after adultery was removed from criminal code (Everington, 2021c). In Vietnam, adultery is not considered a crime in the law, however, the act of making a scene of jealousy when a spouse attach his/her love rival is socially accepted and even encouraged as soon as it does not involve violence at the level that it causes harms to one's body (Ngoc-Anh, 2021a; Thu-Nga, 2020).

In Vietnamese language, there is an old saying: “Đàn ông xây nhà, đàn bà xây tổ ấm” (Men build the house, women make it a home) reflecting gender roles in Vietnamese society. Even though there are some opinions that this saying is somehow out-of-date as women now also work and achieve success in career (Ha, 2019), the fact that controversies around this never come to an end means this still make sense to a large number of Vietnamese. As a result, many women especially would still expect men to take care of them emotionally and materially.

Even though fulfilling material needs through relationship with men seems not to be mainstream and nor encouraged by Vietnamese news media (Tran-Ngan, 2020), but the fact that many Vietnamese female celebrities and women showed off their gifts on social media after every special occasion implies the high expectation of receiving gifts in Vietnamese dating culture (Hong-Minh, 2018; Thu-Huong, 2020). Not only the gifts, Vietnamese women also expect chivalrous manners from men (Hong-Minh, 2016; N.Minh, 2020; Thanh-Nam, 2018). Interestingly, a survey in 2016 by Q&Me Vietnam Market Research came to a conclusion that Vietnamese men treat their female partners like princesses as a majority of Vietnamese men pay for dates, present gifts and pick girls up for dates (Q&Me, 2016). However, it will be unfair to come to a conclusion that Vietnamese women expect material fulfillment from men, the above research by Q&Me also showed there is a large number of women buying gifts for her boyfriends.

Another old saying “cua chong cong vo” (could be roughly translated as “in what the husband possesses, there is a contribution of his wife”) widely accepted by Vietnamese could describe a practice and perception of Vietnamese towards material factor in order to achieve a harmonized relationship between a couple, not only in marriage (Minh-Phuc, 2020; H. T. T. Nguyen, 2017; Thich, 2019). Even though there are reports featuring misuse of this sentence (Song-Van, 2019), what it originally means is that in a relationship, one should not tell who contribute more, and material and financial factors should not be discussed too bluntly between the two parties. In return, a woman receiving material gifts could choose to pay back by investing more emotionally or investing in something different in the relationship, for example by taking care of her partner’s family or investing more time to raise and take care of children.

In the contrary, Taiwanese people was growing up with the concept of gender equality gradually rooting (Wang, 2008). In a society embracing the concept gender equality, chivalry could be seen as a gender stereotype (Naurin et al., 2019). Or from the view of anti-feminism, the lack of chivalry and romance are the cost of feminism (Roberts, 2019). For that reason, many Taiwanese men would also expect a distinctly equal contribution from their partners in terms of dating costs (e.g. going Dutch in English or AA 制 (50%-50%)/AB 制 (pay for what you use/eat) in Chinese) and investment in the relationship (Hsu, 2020) and more Taiwanese women would accept this practice (Xiang, 2020) which would be considered a cultural shock to Vietnamese women who are not used to this. However, this does not mean this practice is not applied by Vietnamese. To some Vietnamese, especially amongst young people or students, this practice is also accepted or expected (mostly by men), even though not mainstream. More importantly this should be dealt in a sophisticated way, otherwise it would ruin the relationship and even lead to social condemnation (Hoa-Mi, 2019; Vy-Vy, 2021).

4.2 Cases

4.2.1 Bun Cha: My friend asked me “how to buy a Vietnamese bride?”

Bun Cha, a friend of mine, chose her nickname since Vietnamese pork meatballs with rice noodles, as known in Vietnamese as “bun cha”, is one of her most favorite Vietnamese cuisines, also the dish she made for her currently married Caucasian husband, also her Master’s degree classmate, that night just right after our interview. Bun Cha is a woman who

has all the elements of attractive appearance, high education, nearly perfect English, and a good family background. Bun Cha was born in Quang Ninh province, however, her family later relocated to Ha Noi where her dad works at a bank, and her mother established and manages a private kindergarten. Being trained in English specialized class since being in schools, Bun Cha defined herself as a non-standard woman with a blending mindset of both traditional Vietnamese culture and Western values, a growing phenomenon in urban area of Viet Nam which she believes, made it difficult for her to fit in and find a suitable Vietnamese husband although she had no shortage of potential suitors.

Some women in my study expressed their oppose to what the norms tell them to do as a complete woman who are supposed to be good at everything. Bun Cha related her experience to one first date with a Vietnamese man in the past where the man quoted “cong dung ngon hanh” – the traditional four attributes of an ideal woman including “work”, “appearance”, “speech” and “dignity” as his requirement for his girlfriend. She said:

He told me he like girls with “cong dung ngon hanh” or something like that. Even though I think I am not bad, but I do not like people who say that to me. (B.C., interview, June 29, 2021)

Bun Cha found Vietnamese men living in Ha Noi with at least similar family condition like her if not less educated than her, then totally different in mindset.

I think there are two types of Hanoian boys, one with a good family background, they do not have to worry about the housing problems, but the bad thing is that their parents often think they are something precious. Therefore, they often behave very harshly to friends of their children who are girls, just friends, not yet lovers, but still being treated very harshly. For those who have 2 to 3 houses to rent, they would not study at all because they have passive income, so I am not suitable for those people. There are also ones who are from the provinces but their parents are government officials, but I would not talk with them, I do not think we are suitable in terms of mindset. I think if I stayed in Hanoi, I probably would not be able to get married. (B.C., interview, June 29, 2021)

Bun Cha came to Taiwan to study without understanding of Chinese language in the beginning, and with consideration of career opportunities that Taiwan offers as a close friend of hers, who encouraged her to come, found a good paid English-speaking job at a public agency, at the same time working as a freelance interpreter. She could afford an education in the United States or New Zealand, however, what attracted her was generous scholarship and especially higher opportunities to find jobs and stay in Taiwan after graduation to accumulate

international working experience. Although choosing Taiwan, Bun Cha still excluded Vietnamese men whom she encountered in Taiwan as her potential dating partners during her stay for different reasons.

First of all, I personally think people coming to Taiwan are usually not “gioi” (excellent, usually academically excellent), secondly, their family conditions are not good enough. As I also work as an education advisor, I am so sure about this. There are also people who come to reunite with their family, siblings or relatives that they already have here. Finally, there are people who come to study on specific disciplines, such as Asian culture, studying Chinese characters, and calligraphy. I learned a lot from this group of people about ideology dominating Vietnamese society because I am very patriotic. However, I could not develop love with them because they are usually people with high potential of patriarchal problems. Those who do not study those majors nor go to university as good as mine or above, I would say that their academic strength is far behind me, same to family background. So, there is no reason for me to date with them because this will not go anywhere. It will hurt me and hurt them as well. (B.C., interview, June 29, 2021)

Geographic distance also help the women avoid strict management of family and complex relations and norms of Vietnamese society, in the case of Bun Cha, it was “nobody hurries me to get married”. Although most informants in my study said they do not have much pressure from family in terms of age of marriage and they could make decision on their own, there are still some certain pressure and expectation from the relatives or the society towards women. And Bun Cha was, in fact, obsessed with the idea of getting married before 30. In the beginning of her stay in Taiwan, she was quite positive and open to date with Taiwanese as she had always been attracted to Asian men.

In fact, when I first arrived, I also had good feelings for Taiwanese men, I felt surprised, (they are) better than our men at many points, less drinking, more discreet, more gentle. And I am surprised that no matter how I dress, there was no such type of men staring at me on the street, teasing me, whistling at me. At that time, I told my parents that, “oh, I think that Taiwanese men are more polite than our men”. Maybe they are gentler, more polite, but later learning deeper and dating with them, I realized that maybe we are not as compatible as I thought at first. (B.C., interview, June 29, 2021)

Nevertheless, after reading stories on Facebook groups of Vietnamese students in Taiwan where she has been a very active member, and experiencing herself from dating Taiwanese as well as learning from her friends’ experience, she soon realized the situation that made her oppose to the idea of having a Taiwanese partner.

I think I really love Viet Nam so much. That is for sure. That is why I turned down on Taiwanese boys because when I was talking with them, they often look down on Viet Nam. They often told me Viet Nam like this and like that. Then they “innocently” asked me questions, like “is this like this or like that in Viet Nam”? [laugh] Seems innocent, but smells racist. For example, “is it true that you Vietnamese girls are very interested in coming here to get married?”. That sounds very sarcastic to me. That is why I do not like them. (B.C., interview, June 29, 2021)

Bun Cha had also encountered with Taiwanese’s misinterpretation over the roles of Vietnamese men and women in the Vietnamese society that made her felt comfortable. Sadly, such perception of Taiwanese people seems to be extremely popular among whom she has met. For example, once a Taiwanese professor and classmates asked her if Viet Nam is a matriarchy country where women overpower men. Most of the time, she would make use of her knowledge of Vietnamese history to explain the situation to Taiwanese people by explaining that it could be the situation during the war, Vietnamese women took care of all the work at home in order to support their husbands in the frontline, but not in modern life. She usually tried to show the importance of her dad in the family as an example in explaining to Taiwanese people.

Taiwanese guys usually said “it seems that Vietnamese guys do not go to work, do they?” “Only slobbering and let women do all the job?”. That is what they usually asked. So, I told them I do not know whoever do that, but at my home, my dad does everything. (B.C., personal communication, July 12, 2021)

Even though Bun Cha made effort to explain from time to time, she has the feeling that whenever she tried to explained something positive about Viet Nam and Vietnamese people and the development of the country in the recent years, it was unlikely that her listeners believed in what she said as disappointment that her answer did not meet their expectations was obviously showed on their faces. She believes this stereotype towards Vietnamese male and female is a personal situation since she learnt that some Vietnamese female migrants in Taiwan had come from complicated family background of domestic violence or with fathers who were alcoholics.

Bun Cha also happens to meet a large number of people who thought she was from Japan or Hongkong, or at least of mixed, or of Chinese descendant background. She usually feels awkward because the fact that she is from Viet Nam sometimes results to cold reaction from some Taiwanese even though they had seemed enthusiastic to get to know her in the

beginning. At the time I am about to submit this thesis, Bun Cha has currently found herself a job at a bank in Taiwan. As she had been actively looked for jobs for a couple of months after graduation, she told me she had felt uncomfortable and discouraged being questioned about nationality just to realize that she is not of the employers' interest because of her nationality. However, from her experience, some Taiwanese men would be more enthusiastic when knowing she is a Vietnamese woman. But this is not at all in an advantage to her as she said:

Taiwanese middle-aged men become more enthusiastic because of their lustfulness as they think Vietnamese girls are well-known for being easy. (B.C., personal communication, July 9, 2021)

According to Bun Cha, Taiwanese men often showed off their affluence to her. In reaction, Bun Cha usually posted pictures and information of Viet Nam, and pictures of her home and dog on her Facebook with the intention to let others know that what other countries have, Viet Nam also has. She also mentioned her experience of being materially seduced by Taiwanese men, she said:

In their mindset, it seems that Vietnamese are all money-hungers or something, so they frequently boasted which stocks they bought or sold to me. They meant to show off their assets to me, bragging about how many houses they owned, because they thought I might be moved because they are rich as they flirted in a sophisticated way. One even invited me to be his teacher, teaching him Vietnamese. After teaching him a few lessons and he had already spent 5-7000 NTD, he stopped as he did not see me moved at all [laugh]. They are businessmen, been to Viet Nam quite a lot, so they are very smart. But they are just nothing special to me, so I am not moved. (B.C., interview, June 29, 2021)

But there was nothing more disgusting than her experience of being asked "how to buy a Vietnamese woman?" and the person who asked it was, in fact, a close male "xuezhang" (student from the previous batch) who often boasted about himself and his family's affluence. Bun Cha did not really realize the situation, and could not express her awkwardness and emotions in the beginning, because the way he asked her was extremely soft and sophisticated since he disclosed his family situation of three brothers with the eldest brother is a mentally-ill person who needs special care. As he explained him and another brother do not want to take care of the ill brother when their parents pass away one day, it is his parents' wish to buy his brother a Vietnamese bride. Although Bun Cha thought this is a very selfish act as they did not even think of the happiness of a woman who is a human with all her rights, she still explained to the man that she did not even know anybody in person in her society in

Viet Nam that would get married with Taiwanese, not to mention ones in the economic situation that leaves them no choice but to get married to a mentally incomplete husband. It was in the beginning of her days in Taiwan when she did not have much experience with the situation of Vietnamese brides. And she believes she did not know that the man actually targeted at her as he showed off more than necessity his prosperity. Now thinking back, she could not help herself from angers because of the stress and suffering accumulating through the time being asked such questions and being targeted by ostentatious men believing she would be impressed by their wealth in exchange for different things.

In term of equality in relationship, despite the fact that most of my informants adopt a liberal view as they are willing to share equal work and financial burdens with their partners, they still feel love by being taken cared by their romantic partners. As Bun Cha described herself as someone who had to test to many men before finding the love of her life, and both Bun Cha and Yingtao used to be a devoted lovers to their previous boyfriends just to receive an unpleasant result in the end, they found some way back to traditional values of women and think those work in their relationships. Bun Cha described her belief towards gender roles:

I think we, men and women, have different mechanisms in terms of investing in relationships. For women, we will invest in cooking, cleaning, taking care which are very feminine work. As for men, they like to work to express their roles of a provider. So, we cannot equally share the cost as contribution of each gender is different. In terms of income, it is likely that he will have a higher income than me, so he should not to ask for a 50-50 split because his salary is higher, for example. So, to me, “minh gop cong thi anh gop cua” (we contribute physically or emotionally while they contribute financially), we reciprocate, we take care of them. We women are really simple, we will give the most delicious food in our dishes to our boyfriends, probably say "I am already full, you can finish" just because we want to give them the best (while suppress our own needs). So why the man would care if we pay less 1-2 dollar? I do not think that would make sense, and I do not think we should split everything and say that it is feminism because it is not feminism. (B.C., interview, June 29, 2021)

She also explained more about her definition of care and this is also similar to what other informants also mentioned in the interview.

For example, I have a friend who is dating a Taiwanese man. Her room was very hot, she complained to her boyfriend, and the boyfriend immediately support his girlfriend half of the money to buy an air conditioner. In my opinion that is a very righteous act. That means he cares about whether his girlfriend is living comfortably or not. It is not like men who just buy designer bags or nice cars for women. But when visiting where the girlfriend lives, they

realize the freezer is a bit small, or the room is a bit hot, they can realize it themselves and provide support. This is the so-called “real care”. (B.C., interview, June 29, 2021)

Despite the picture of Vietnamese women constructed in previous literature as “money lover or “materialists”, Bun Cha as well as informants in my study are financially independent or capable of being independent. If there is somebody that they want to rely on, they would only choose to rely on their closest people who are their partners who they trust and want to “share together” without calculating.

If I liked that boyfriend and I thought I could stay with him in a long term, I would freely let him pay for me. For the boys that I do not like and have no long-term intention, I will find a way to return him. For example, the other day he bought me something, today I would buy him something in return. For the Taiwanese boyfriend that I decided not to be with him in the long term, on his birthday I bought him a gift equal to the gift he had given me on my birthday. I would feel freer (comfortable). (B.C., interview, June 29, 2021)

Throughout interviews with my informants, the concept of love, marriage and family are usually intertwined with each other. For most informants, when they are in love or dating relationship with somebody, they would treat their partners as their family and they would also think of marriage as a happy ending together with their partners. Bun Cha said:

I had always made sure that once I decided to date the guy, I would try and find out whether the person can be a suitable marriage partner or not. If I think this person is not suitable for marriage, I will not date him again. I do not just date. Because for me dating takes a lot of effort, investing in clothes and many other things. I really invested in dates, so I do not like those sloppy dates. (B.C., interview, June 29, 2021)

It is known by previous research that a love and dating partner could serve as a social status identity for an individual (Winegard et al., 2017), and individuals with different social status backgrounds would have different preferences towards romantic partners (Karney, 2021). My informants who are students tend to have more specific criteria for romantic partners than informants who are blue-collar workers. Many blue-collar workers expressed no criteria on their partners except love and care usually by measured by the actions from their partners. And the worker’s narrow working environment and social network, as well as the lack of foreign language ability led to many of them stick to Vietnamese migrant society and date with only Vietnamese who are also migrant workers. It seems to be more difficult for students in my study to find compatible partners in Taiwan despite the fact that the students stay in a more open social networks of people from different cultural and social backgrounds

and they have no problem communicating in foreign language. To Bun Cha, family background and education are most important to her and she would first consider these criteria before agreeing to date. These preferences of the students not only challenge the stereotypes of Vietnamese women in Taiwan matching with an “unfavorable partner”, but also suggest that educational criteria play an important role in their choice of society and this is a kind of in-group favoritism. Even though except the criteria for romantic partners, there is not much different in group identity between the students and the migrant workers, however, both share some certain avoidance of being Vietnamese brides. For example, to many informants, parents’ support is somewhat important in developing a relationship, however, some parents of both students and migrant workers oppose the ideas of their daughters getting married in Taiwan for distance reason or unclearly stated reasons, Bun Cha’s parents are more direct to point out the reputation of Vietnamese bride as the reason.

No, not with Taiwanese. Because my parents would be unhappy that their daughter would suffer a bad reputation of being a Vietnamese bride. For my parents, there is not much different between Taiwanese and Vietnamese men, why would I choose to marry to a Taiwanese man? I do not have a foundation here (in Taiwan), I would have to depend one hundred percent on the husband’s family of Asian culture heritage. For that my parents would not be happy with this. (B.C., interview, June 29, 2021)

This statement of Bun Cha also suggests that her how husband is a complement for her and her family’s identity rather than both Taiwanese and Vietnamese men even though they are also culturally different. As she said:

I was joking that thanks to him for marrying me before I reach 30 years old. The reason is because I really understand that he is my best choice. Because it solves a lot of problems because I am deviant from the norm to get married with a Vietnamese. That is for sure! And if I tried to marry to Vietnamese boys, I have to endure the Vietnamese lifestyle where people gossip, I think it would be very tiring. (B.C., interview, June 29, 2021)

4.2.2 Dua Hau: A lesbian woman’s story

Dua Hau, meaning water melon in Vietnamese, is my informant’s favorite fruit and her nickname in this study. She is a lesbian woman from Ho Chi Minh city who will soon become a student in a top university in Taiwan. I found her on a Facebook group of Vietnamese students in Taiwan at the time I am working on this thesis, and she has been a

friend of mine ever since as we kept on exchanging our experience and stories in Taiwan through the internet. Everyone from the LGBT community has their own stories on how they discovered their sexual orientation. In my first interview with Dua Hau, she told me it all begins when she was in elementary school when she started noticing her affection for a childhood female classmate from kindergarten. Long after that interview with her when we become closer, I have learnt it was also about the time when Dua Hau was sexually harassed by her own uncle and a dad's colleague that made her develop fears towards men and scared of the idea of engaging in any sexual activity with them when growing up. The fact that her dad's refusal to believe with assumption that it is a child's made-up story made her change and become, as she said, a rebellious child to her family. This unpleasant experience has been haunting her throughout the childhood and even until now she will react aggressively to any news related to pedophiles and sexual crimes.

Dua Hau was born in a fairly better-off family with her father - a government officer, her mother who previously ran a family business, now is a free-lancer, and a younger brother, that made her tend to be a generous giver in relationships, however, still she keeps herself financially independent from them since coming to Taiwan. Prior to her arrival to Taiwan in 2019, she had spent 2 years studying in a Vietnamese university where she met a Chinese Vietnamese young man who liked her and introduced her to his younger sister who was studying in Taiwan, not knowing both Dua Hau and his sister are both lesbian women. The two kept contacts with each other through Instagram and only became closer after Dua Hau broke up with her first Vietnamese girlfriend from Ha Noi. They exchanged messages and felt in love. It was also about the time Taiwan had legalized same-sex marriage which was a big hit in the LGBT community. Dua Hau decided to give up her initial plan to graduate in Viet Nam and later go to Japan for furthering education and learning about the culture, instead she chose Taiwan to start all over again as a language student in order to enroll in university later, at the same time, stay closer to her loved one and think of a future together. They both enjoyed the comfortability of living in Taiwan as they could reveal their true self and affection to each other at the public, Dua Hau said:

People here are more open-minded. Like even two heterosexual lovers share a French kiss at a MRT station still nobody notices. So, we feel more comfortable to kiss and hold hands than in Vietnam. So, it is easier to express emotions. In Viet Nam that we can also hold hands, right? In Viet Nam, if you want to kiss the lips on the street, you have to look around a little bit. Although it is more open in Sai Gon (Ho Chi Minh city), but it is still a bit like... my

former girlfriend still felt scared and shy... In Vietnam, it is fun to sneak a little bit. It is ok to public (display of affection) here, but my former girlfriend was too shy to be in public. So, in general, whatever I do here, I wear here, people do not notice nor pry into our affairs too much. Even if they look, they do not say or if they speak Taiyu (Taiwanese language) we also do not understand. I like to stay here because it is more comfortable. In future, if I have a significant other, I also want to publicly show off and be intimate with that person, because we are lovers, there is nothing wrong exchanging little intimate gestures. (D.H., personal communication, July 9, 2021)

When she first arrived in Taiwan, she employed a tomboy look that people would know immediately that she is a lesbian, however, as the time goes, she has changed her style to be more feminine, for that she started to attract not only women but also men. Defining herself as a genderfluid lesbian, her appearance has been moving between the two poles of a tomboy and a totally feminine girl who she is now. Only one thing that has not been changed that she is not sexually attracted by men, however, she also confessed she was not sure if this would change in future. She is open to platonic friendship with men in Taiwan as long as they pay her respect, as well as relationship with foreign women other than just Vietnamese, while being surrounded by her Vietnamese female friends in Taiwan. It was just fine when she was a tomboy, now as her hair grows longer, she started being annoyed by questions targeting at Vietnamese women.

Well, at first, when my hair was still short, people immediately knew that I was a “be de” (means gay or lesbian in Vietnamese), so they did not say anything. Later, when my hair gets longer, some men asked if I came to get married. I find this kind of prejudice hard to accept. If I hear that sentence, I will curse, what do you think that we Vietnamese people come here just to get married? We came here to study. I almost argued with them.

Actually, I would not say it to people on the street, but people who work with me. In addition, I found coworkers here just like... Strangers were quite polite when they do not know me, but “tongshi” (coworkers) asked many rude questions like that. To be honest, as I have been working in many different restaurants, they are all the same. (D.H., interview, June 30, 2021)

The serious relationship that brought Dua Hau to Taiwan only worked for one year. In that relationship, Dua Hau played the role of the giver. She explained her behavior to pay more and take the initiative to pay for dating costs was out of her “tu ai” (pride) like most Vietnamese men in relationship even though she is feminine and she was dating with older girlfriends, and her belief that “splitting does not make us look like lovers, so I still take the initiative in paying. Since we are lovers, it should not be that clear right?”. After the break-

up, Dua Hau has thrown herself into busy work as a part-timer at Taiwanese restaurants as a way to forget. She even looked for one-night-stand with another Vietnamese lesbian once to solve her urgent need, just to realize that her emotional problems have not been solved. She started using dating apps, and Zalo the first time in her life to talk with people and look for a new relationship.

Because of her beautiful look and model-like poses which made her mistaken for a Japanese or a Korean, many men and female on dating apps (Tinder and lesbian dating app Zoe) or other internet platforms in Taiwan found Dua Hau attractive. In the beginning of using dating apps when her Chinese had not yet been fluent, she wrote on her profile that she is a foreigner without clearly stating she is from Viet Nam, later when her Chinese become better, she no longer mentions she is a foreigner. By employing this false identity as a suggestion for pick-up line from the others, she learnt that there are a population that find her national identity an issue to develop a friendship or relationship, but since it is just a small group of people, she found ignorance and substitute a strategy to move on.

There I did not state which country I am from. When they say: “You look like Korean or Japanese”, I will use that as an excuse to start a conversation: “Oh well, then guess which country I am from?”. I just left a link to my Instagram (her “Finsta” – fake Instagram account especially used for online dating purpose) and mentioned that I did not use this app often, so if you would like to learn more about me, then go to Instagram to talk.

Usually, in a day of talking, it is ok to let them know. If they guessed wrong, I would tell them directly I am Vietnamese, but I would not talk for a long long time before letting them know. In general, there were ones who stopped the conversations after learning I am Vietnamese, but those were not many. Usually, I was the one who discontinued the conversation because I found them too boring.

It is true that I heard many people feedbacked they stopped messaging after learning we are Vietnamese. I also met those, but not many. When I encountered that situation, I would ignore them completely and find others to talk with. (D.H., personal communication, July 8, 2021)

While her act of looking for both genders on dating apps was out of her curiosity towards Taiwanese men, the fact that she did not know how to properly use Zalo led her to receive messages from men there. She found Taiwanese men on Tinder far active than lesbian women. However, the fact that most of men she found there tried to suggest sexual activities with her made her feel disgusted and eventually changed her settings back to “only look for women”. Nevertheless, Taiwanese men on Zalo were somewhat different as they targeted at

Vietnamese women by using that Vietnamese messaging apps. She said many of them who aged 28-30 and above seemed to genuinely look for a marriage partner that made her think that they could be friends because of their pure motive rather than just sex. However, soon she realized their over expectation of the Vietnamese women also discomforted her, because she is as well a Vietnamese woman. Dua Hau in defending her gender and national identity chose not to make friends with those men, instead just talked with them to kill her time.

I talked to a lot of guys and they were straightforward. They told me “I came here to get to know Vietnamese girls because I know Vietnamese girls are not only pretty and cute, but also hard-working and obedient, like being good at cooking, and supportive to the family, doing housework and good at earning money”. I just said “okay, alright”, but I saw no point going further with them.

Oh my god, how could we take this as compliments? There are many different types of Vietnamese girls, right? So, if they married one and then (realized it is not), “My god, why did I hear that Vietnamese girls are good at cooking?” “Well, what if I do not know how to cook?” “Well, you married me because you love me or you just want to hire a maid?” Oh my God! If you want to find such a complete person, then you should better hire someone to do it for you, or you buy a robot to do it. How could you even think that way? Humans are humans, even you yourself are old, but you think you have money, then you can buy a girl, right? There were a lot of guys think like that, so I just talked with them, but people here still think that they could use money to buy Vietnamese girls or something like that. (D.H., personal communication, July 8, 2021)

Dua Hau also feels hilarious that Taiwanese men on Zalo tend to show off, even their foods and invite her to expensive restaurant to lure her.

They texted and sent me pictures of lavish eateries and foods, asking: “Do you like seafood?” “Do you know how to eat sushi?” “I will take you there and there to eat” and so on. I am just talking to get to know them but I am not interested. Oh mama (Vietnamese expression for “oh my god”), this is so funny [laugh]. They were just like there is no such dish in Vietnam. Because I really like eating sushi and I ate it too much back home, I also sent a picture of me eating sushi in Vietnam and told them “Look, I also ate it in Viet Nam”. Oh mama, you act just like others could not have it but you [laugh]. (D.H., personal communication, July 8, 2021)

Other than her experience with Taiwanese men online, from her friends who dated with Taiwanese men, she learnt that Taiwanese men are “self-centered” and lack of care towards girlfriends.

I told you that I knew a Vietnamese woman who already returned to Vietnam that dated a Taiwanese photographer. Those two lived together and shared the living cost. She told me many things and I can see through her point of views that Taiwanese people love themselves too much. For example, I would take both me and my girlfriend into consideration, right? But in her case, that Taiwanese man only thought about himself, but never thought of both. Because he is a photographer, so he comes back late, sometimes 4, 5 or even 6 a.m., but when she still worked with me, she arrived home around 10 p.m. She is very self-sacrificing, cooked and washed all the clothes. Oh my god, just like a good wife in the family who never complained. But this man only came home for ready meals and clothes nicely washed, right? He had a day off on Sunday, thus she also asked for a day off on Sunday, but this man did not take it. On Sunday he would hang out with his friend, he did not seem to care about her feelings at all. Oh my gosh! All the time, he said he was tired and wanted to entertain with friends. He also spent some times for her, but very little. It is not because he did not love her. But it is also weird. Like she bought him a shirt and then he would buy her an item. It is rare that he took the initiative to do little things for her or care about her. I heard Vietnamese men in love rather take care of their girlfriends and pay attention to every gesture. But Taiwanese are not like that. (D.H., interview, June 30, 2021)

Dua Hau found it extremely difficult to connect with Taiwanese who, she thinks, are not as sincere as Vietnamese from her personal experience. Once in a while, she met a Taiwanese girl from an app who she felt clicked, however, this girl suddenly disappeared one day, leaving her feel “oops, I was trapped (by trap girl)” (“trap girl” is currently popular word in LGBT community in Viet Nam to refer to attractive tomboys who try to win over the hearts of other girls by their sweetness and care, then suddenly leave and make them suffer). After all, Dua Hau is still single and believes dating apps may not be a good platform to find a romantic partner, since she is more expressive and much bolder than Taiwanese lesbian apps users who appeared to be shy and passive. Dua Hau believes soon when she enrolls in the undergraduate program after two years studying Chinese language, she will have more opportunities to meet people like her in university clubs and activities of the community. Like most informants of my research, she expressed her seriousness in love where she also seeks for a happy ending – a marriage and a little family.

I am a rather rigid person, very difficult to love. Once I like, love and date someone, I want to be with that person for a long time and end up marrying that person. That is why when I was here with my former girlfriend, I certainly came out to my family. We both had the goal of getting married, and even studied about pregnancy (insemination). When I feel in love with

someone, I determine the future for both of us. Once relationship ended, often I fall into a deep hole. (D.H., interview, June 30, 2021)

Coming-out to Dua Hau is a long process that costed much effort as she recalled the days when she gave hints of her lesbian identity to parents just to receive their negative reactions and disapproval. She officially came out to her family during the time in Taiwan and finally received their full support. Talking about her criteria towards her partner, even though both Dua Hau and her family are open to the option of dating foreigners, she still hopes to find a Vietnamese girl because as being a Vietnamese woman herself, she understands and appreciates the quality of Vietnamese women.

For the first criterion, I hope my partner already came out to her family. Because as I said I want a long-term relationship, if we are compatible and able to go further, I hope my lover is lesbian. I do not have discrimination toward “bi-sexual”, but I hope to find a lesbian because I feel secured. If that friend meets another girl, I will be heartbroken too, but it is still less painful than seeing her dating a man. Actually, I have not really dated foreigners, so I do not know. I will just relax, when love comes, whichever country is ok. But I am quite fond of Vietnamese girls, so if choosing between a foreigner and a Vietnamese woman, I will choose a Vietnamese girl. Vietnamese girls are good, and their characteristics are really cute as well, and they are also “biet chia se” (sharing and giving in Vietnamese). At least we speak the same language, we can tease each other without misunderstanding. So, if we both come out, and we are both from Viet Nam, it is convenient for us to go home and take care of their parents from time to time. (D.H., interview, June 30, 2021)

4.2.3 Yingtao: They said a migrant worker like me should stay poor like a migrant worker

Yingtao, a blue-collar migrant worker from Bac Giang whose mother once was a caregiver in Taiwan found her happiness with her Taiwanese boyfriend of 4 years. I luckily found her through introduction of a Vietnamese friend from Taiwan Hostfamily program at my most desperate moment of looking for informants who are VFW, the become quickly familiar as Yingtao is a much lively and approachable young woman. Yingtao chose this nickname because the fruit - cherries are rare and considered at a fancy food in Asia as she said “who would not love cherries here?”. Yingtao was originally from an economically disadvantaged family in which her parents divorced when she was 3 or 4 and her mother went to Taiwan to

work when she was 10, leaving her staying with a relative's family. However, after years of capital accumulation as her mother had worked in Taiwan, and herself has been working here for 8 years, she has become confident of her own financial situation and considers herself as an equal partner to her boyfriend who is a university graduate, now a security guard with relative high pay for a big company. Yingtao, like all other blue-collar workers in my research, only finished her high school. And even though she would like to continue studying at the time, the fate, as she said, finally brought her to be a migrant worker with the help of her mother.

I did not think at all (to meet my mother again in Taiwan). I just thought that I came here to earn money, at the same time travel around. Just thinking that I would be free without her control.

Besides, at that time my family was very strict. I could not go out at night, instead I could just go to school and back. After (high school) graduation, I had choices. If I stayed home going to university I would still be controlled. But I could choose going abroad to be free. So, you think which one would I choose? (Y., interview, July 4, 2021)

Yingtao had learnt Chinese mostly from everyday practice with her mother in the beginning of her stay in Taiwan, and she is the best Chinese speaker among my blue-collar worker informants. She spoke Chinese with a strong Taiwanese accent which she sometimes added some Chinese words or sentences to our conversation in Vietnamese. Yingtao met her boyfriend during the time she worked in his family's previous restaurant.

Later I went to work part-time near my house at a "rechao" (stir-fried) restaurant, the eldest son of the owner likes me, then I have been "guai" (taken) and it has been 4 years ever since [laugh]. But I initially hated him so much. I said "li wo yuan yi dian" (leave me alone) and he would "wang hou tui" (step backward) for two steps and then turned around. (Y., interview, July 4, 2021)

Ying Tao has been working extremely hard since coming to Taiwan. In addition to her main job at a factory, she also took part-time jobs illegally at restaurants since migrant workers are not allowed to take this category of job. She decided to give up on her part-time job just several months ago as she wanted to relax and enjoy her life in Taiwan, spend some more times to attend Chinese class and go to gym. Thinking of Vietnamese students in Taiwan, she only thought of them as over hard-working people because students to her are people who have to study, at the same time work to pay for their education while she could enjoy her life as a full-time worker, earn money and be independent on her own. From the experience of

Yingtao, it seems some Taiwanese expected to see their perceived image of a “poor” female migrant worker in her and when their expectation was not met, they did not like her. However, as she has been consistently expressing herself in her own way, she could successfully negotiate and change their views towards her and other migrant workers.

It depends on some people who would judge me by my look, for example, the people at my company when I had newly come, in the eyes of them who had not had much contact with Vietnamese people, I was the one who often bought branded goods. I did the hair, make-up, in short, I knew how to take care of myself, but in their eyes, it was, frankly, “you are a “wailao” (migrant worker)”, “you come here you have to save”, “you have to work hard”, “you have to suffer”. In their eyes, I was wasteful, I did not know how to save. But gradually, people think differently. In the eyes of many people who are old and have not had much contact with migrant labors, Vietnamese or young Vietnamese who come here to work but not necessarily from financially difficult families are unusual. Because people at their age in the old days often interacted with the aunts coming here to work as domestic helps and caretakers, they would develop such idea. Some people will think that I am optimistic, I love life, I know how to make myself not boring. I just think wherever I am, in Vietnam, or Japan, or Taiwan to whether work or study, no matter what I am doing, I do not live sloppily, I live within the time budget of my life. (Y., interview, July 4, 2021)

Yingtao believes her boyfriend also knows that she is the “fancy girl” type, however she never hesitated showing him her true self. She said:

I am just me, I am just the way I am. Those who understand will understand, but those who do not will not. My boyfriend does not think so. He just thinks I really love myself and I love myself more than anything [laugh]. As for his parents, I do not know what they think, I just know that in the past they were very cold, but now whatever foods they have they will bring me. (Y., personal communication, July 21, 2021)

Yingtao still remembers her boyfriend’s parents did not like her initially because they are all over 60, at the age of people who would, to her, think Vietnamese women are “money lovers” and be afraid of their son being taken advantages. However, through the time, by proving her independence and lovable characteristics, she has developed a loving relationship with the family and his parents turn to like her so much to the point they even took care of her daily life, for example, asking their son to bring her foods. When I was interviewing her the first time, our interview was interrupted for a couple of hours because her boyfriend suddenly showed up bringing her foods as he concerned about her health that day.

At first, they thought that a Vietnamese is (in relationship) with a Taiwanese in order to take unfair advantage of (the Taiwanese) or put their interests first. As he and I have been together for a long time, 4 years, gradually they could see their son becoming better and better. Since he fell in love with me, his career is getting smoother. Everything is ok, his health gets better, his weight has increased rapidly [laugh]. That is it. He has earned more and more, not less. Then they also changed their minds. Besides, they should know that there must be something good about the girl so that their son has been loving her for so long, falling head over heels, right? (Y., personal communication, July 21, 2021)

I am financially independent. I do not rely on him too much. Not at all. I let him know that I am not like what previous generations said that Vietnamese girls love Taiwanese people for money. That is the first thing. Secondly, I do not let myself be mentally dependent, with him I am very happy, without him I am still very happy. Like that. (Y., interview, July 10, 2021)

Yingtao's boyfriend also confirmed his parents' harsh attitudes towards Yingtao in the beginning of their relationship. In the following, he explained how his impression on Vietnamese women has changed, and how he has changed himself since meeting her.

Before meeting Yingtao, I had not had any experience with Vietnamese people at all. In my impression, I only knew that my uncle married a Vietnamese wife. I think they (Vietnamese women in my impression) are very caring. Because my uncle is not physically convenient, it is not bad that there is a Vietnamese woman willing to be with him. However, after getting to know Yingtao, I have realized that this depends on the person. It seems she knows better how to take care of herself [laugh]. After meeting her, I have changed to have more thoughts about future and orientation to make effort. I had never thought of these before. I thought that it was just fine to get along that way. Now it is not the same any more. There is one more person by my side, there is more things to think of now [laugh]. (Y.B., interview, July 2, 2021)

Yingtao is truly confident about herself because of her attractiveness as she joked, and her comfortable life with her mother in Viet Nam after their years of working in Taiwan. Her mother even persuaded her to go home and get married there to be closer to each other. She also referred to the time when she was not accepted by his family:

I am more confident (than my boyfriend). Oh, I am more beautiful, I am richer. Oh, I am more confident and more attractive [laugh].

At that time, I was so angry thinking that living at home was even more abundant and happier than their family. My family did not even want him [laugh]. My mother said "you are not allowed to get married there, whatever handsome, fat, thin, whatever, you can find anything

in Vietnam, no matter your type is fat or skinny, there is no point to get married far away from home”. (Y., interview, July 4, 2021)

Except emphasizing on appearance as her criterion towards romantic partners and Yingtao did not seem to care much about other factors such as education, jobs, family background. She believes she really loves Viet Nam, for example she would stay up late to watch football on her own, but if they live together in future when they get married, she will not require him to watch with her, nor study about her culture as she said “he does not even understand about his own culture”. She showed a little regret that her boyfriend did not make use of his university certificate, instead chose to be a safeguard, however, she thinks it is his own life that he should be responsible to.

In the past, I was like “how could you spend so much money while your parents had to work hard at home?” But now “your money is self-managed by you, it has nothing to do with me, I will only take care of my money. You take care of your life and I take care of my life”. It is a private space, it will be another story if in future we live together, then we can continue discussing. (Y., interview, July 4, 2021)

She narrated her own experience of her former Vietnamese boyfriend, also a migrant worker in Taiwan who ran away from his employer to be an undocumented labor in Miaoli to explain the reason why she changed from a traditionally devoted Vietnamese woman in relationship to a totally different self today in order to find balance in relationship and happiness.

Because back then he ran away (from employer), after fleeing to Miaoli, he could not come back here anymore. So I had to be the one going there. Then nobody would see me on weekends, I would be gone missing every weekend. Because I thought he could not go out, he was alone and did not dare to go anywhere, I went there to see him. Now I realized how stupid I was, did what the heart told, then it “tui” (pushed) me to “haili” (the ocean) [laugh], initially it was the ocean, after that it “tuidao shuigouli” (pushed me to the dirty sewer), then love dies, love was gone with the sewer. See! The man has to pay effort, he has to run to me, then he can love me. But if he just sit there and his lover run to him, he would have the feeling that he did not need to do anything but could still receive love, that love would naturally die. That is it, in the end, we broke up. (Y., interview, July 4, 2021)

In the current 4-year relationship, Yingtao also employed her new strategy to avoid being framed as an ideal woman which will only bring her pressure. That is, she would dare to show off her flaws and seek for support from her partner.

Let me tell you, I went to my boyfriend's house to eat, I did not pretend to excel. What the hell of being a good girl that only makes me suffer in my life. In his family, whoever bowl whoever washes and his parents cook. I and him do not need to cook because we do not know how to cook. When I finished eating, I told him to go wash the dishes. The first time he washed, I helped with rinsing. The second time, I washed my own bowl. The third time he washed everything, I stood by his side looking at the sky, the earth, and the clouds (Vietnamese expression of doing nothing) [laugh]. His mother told him something like "you and her are equally lazy", and then he told his mother that three of us are equally lazy [laugh]. I told him "Go wash the dishes", he asked why I did not wash the dishes, I told him "I am a guest!" [laugh] That is right! Now I think this is only a temporary resort. In future when he comes to my house, tell me that he is a guest, and force me to wash the dishes then what am I supposed to do? I will think about it later. (Y., interview, July 4, 2021)

Yingtao said whenever she felt pressured, she thought of going back and living an easier life as her family members own some business back in Viet Nam, or she could go back and help her mom with her breakfast business. But still, she hopes to have a happy ending with her boyfriend, in that she successfully negotiates with him her ideal choice of residence.

I just told him: "I love my country and you love your country. So, I respect your country, you also have to respect my country and Vietnamese people. Besides, if you and I get married, it means that I will have to leave my friends, my hometown, and my family, so that I can go to Taiwan to live. But with one condition, whenever the situation or time allows, I will return to Vietnam every year. You have to respect and you also have to go back with me." He said "oh, of course". And he said just yesterday when we went for a walk together in Songshan where there is a delicious cake store. When we went for a walk together, he said that if we get married in the future, we will save money and rent a house here, but buy a house in Vietnam so that in future when we "tuixiu" (retire), the two of us can return to Vietnam to live. It is him who said this, I did not [laugh]. (Y., interview, July 4, 2021)

Chapter 5: Discussions

5.1 Discussing the cases

Bun Cha and Dua Hau are chosen to feature in the stories because of their middle-class metropolitan background representing current modern Vietnamese society and the potential group of people who will migrate to other country for education and work purposes. Bun Cha's story portrays a modern woman's distress of fitting in the current society and struggle in finding a countryman to be her lifetime partner, however the situation she encountered in Taiwan made her realize that Taiwanese men are also not a better option, while the story of Dua Hau are highlighted through her unusual experience as a lesbian woman. The remaining case features Yingtao who provides a lighthearted love story of a blue-collar working migrant that shows some positive sides and hopes towards the current transnational relationship between Vietnamese and Taiwanese.

5.1.1 Discussing Bun Cha's case

Among other informants, Bun Cha showed strongest national identity in the way she defined herself as a patriotist (and she, in fact, is, according to the definition of patriotism in Section 2.3.3 as her idealization of the country is based on critical analysis), as well as in the way she defensively reacted to questions targeting at Viet Nam, Vietnamese women and men. No matter she perceives a mixed feeling of both what she likes and does not like about Viet Nam, bearing the concept of nationalism in mind, she is ready to defend her national identity whenever encountering any risks to its reputation. For example, she has various different experience and views towards Vietnamese men. Bun Cha described her encounters with many characteristically unattractive Vietnamese men in her life, however, she still think Vietnamese men are a better choice for a love and dating partner as they are more emotionally available and sentimental in comparison to Taiwanese. And she would defend whenever Taiwanese men who had approached her talked ill of their Vietnamese counterpart. Her defensive reaction had accumulated with the time as she said, in the beginning of her stay, she had good impression towards Taiwanese and she also felt regretful that she did not react stronger when her friend asked "how to buy a Vietnamese bride" because of her lack of understandings on the situation of Vietnamese brides at the time. Her national identity also demonstrates in the way she perceived both positively and negatively about Viet Nam and its

people, even though throughout our interview, it seems there was more things that she dislikes about Vietnamese men. However, still she considers them as better choice than Taiwanese men because of their sentiment.

Bun Cha's gender identity reflects through her views of women as disadvantaged partners in relationship which is in her belief the common fate of women, for that she thinks by employing some certain level of gender-roles, women can find balance in relationship and find happiness which is also her own strategy in current relationship after a period of time adopting feminism. There is an identity gap between the identity Bun Cha is or would like to become, that is "hard-to-get", "non-materialists" and "valuable" (money cannot buy) for Vietnamese women and "capable men" for Vietnamese men, and her contrast identity of "easygoing", "money lover" and "cheap" perceived by Taiwanese that she has tried to negotiate. The ways she chose to communicate were whether defend her identity of preference as mentioned or deny to develop a relationship with Taiwanese.

The phenomenon that some Vietnamese female students refuse to establish a relationship with Taiwanese has been noticed by Zhang (2017), and according to the author, this happened even to ones who had stayed for a long time and adapted very well to Taiwanese culture. When I read this research, I had been wondered if economic disparity or any social disparity are the cause of this phenomenon. However, in my study, as I made a further investigation into the family background of the informants as well as their education, I realized the women in my research from the most advantaged family background, highest education as well as highest working capacity are the ones falling into this phenomenon.

Bun Cha tried to defend her identity by proving her and her country's betterness through Facebook post and explanation to Taiwanese people. However, her negotiation of identity was not yet a success as she mentioned in many occasions, she could see disbeliefs shown in the eyes of her listeners that made she feel not being understood by them. However, as she currently mentioned some Taiwanese expressed their surprises and saw her in a new light since knowing she is married to a Caucasian man, at some points she thinks she has negotiated an even better identity through her marriage. From her criteria of choosing dating partner, it is clear that high education is her preference which made "high education elite" her group identity.

5.1.3 Discussing Dua Hau's case

Defining herself a woman and staying in the close network with other Vietnamese women, the second case - Dua Hau shares with her community common knowledge towards Taiwanese men, and through her own experience communicating with Taiwanese men she also learnt their perceived identity toward Vietnamese women and defend both her national and gender identity. She tried to defend Vietnamese women's identity as "non-Vietnamese brides" (those coming for study like her) and "unconventional women" (good at everything) and refuse to be friends with Taiwanese men who did not show proper respect towards her country's women. By defending herself as "coming to study", she confirmed her group identity as "educated Vietnamese women" that, she believed, made her distinct from the stereotypes towards Vietnamese brides.

Complex history under the long-term domination of the kingdom of China and Viet Nam's historic expansion to the south made Vietnamese gene a hybrid of Chinese and Southern Asian (Pischedda et al., 2017). This results to many Vietnamese obtaining similar appearance to Chinese or East Asian. Both Dua Hau and Bun Cha experienced this "false identity" when people they met whether offline or online in Taiwan thought they were from a different country rather than Viet Nam. Even though the women took this as a compliment to their appearance and enjoyed this "false identity", they do not necessarily downplay own national identity as they always chose to proudly expose their real identity in the end.

There is a gap between Dua Hau's offline and online communication shown in her story, as she behaved in a more defensive way to people whom she met in person rather than people she met online, and to people she knows better rather than people she does not. For online people, she could choose to ignore and stay indifferent while she could argue with people in reality in defending her identity.

From her story, it seems she had not had problems with her Vietnamese identity in the appearance of a tomboy lesbian. Only after she changed her style to become more feminine, there came the troubles. This again confirms that those Vietnamese brides' stereotypes are targeted at heterosexual (looking) Vietnamese women. Same as Bun Cha, there is something she likes and dislikes about Viet Nam, but still she found connection with the country as she thinks Vietnamese are overly curious, but more sincere and she would like to stay in Viet Nam in a long term rather than Taiwan.

5.1.3 Discussing Yingtao's case

In the case of Yingtao, it seems her gender identity is much stronger than national identity since she did not stress the importance of understanding her culture in her relationship, instead require certain respect to her country and related decisions such as visit home every year. The social context analysis in Section 4.1.3 already pointed out a large number of Vietnamese brides are housewives due to their lack of education and language ability that made it difficult for them to find job in Taiwan. For that reason, they have to be dependent on the husband and his family. However, Vietnamese women from the new generation prove that they can work and live better on their own. Throughout her story, she has negotiated for an identity of both emotionally and financially “independent woman”, “unconventional woman” (who does not cook or clean), and “fancy migrant worker” (who knows how to take care of her appearance) from her co-workers, Taiwanese boyfriend and his family which were in the beginning contrast to what Taiwanese thought about Vietnamese women as “dependent”, “traditional”, and “poor” women.

Yingtao has communicated her identity in a straightforward (e.g., she is expressive and fight with her boyfriend all the time), indifferent (e.g., she chose not to care about people who told her that she should live as a “real” migrant worker), and lighthearted (e.g., by making jokes) and confident manner (e.g., thinking of herself financially better than the students or thinking of herself better and more attractive than her partner) that make her relationship work and she seems to successfully negotiated this identity among her closest Taiwanese people which is shown in their changes of attitudes towards her throughout the time.

The most experienced women like Bun Cha and Yingtao (in the third story) tend to revisit traditional gender roles as a way to find happiness as this act negotiates men’s more investment in the relationship. Whereas the students tend to show serious criteria with an emphasis on education for their ideal partners as part of their identity, the migrant workers like Yingtao tend to have a more relaxing view on the choice of love. There was big identity gap in the beginning for Yingtao, but as it she concentrated on herself and her career where she found financial independence, she also gradually gained confidence to successfully negotiate and defend her identity as she is finally accepted by her boyfriends’ family and co-workers.

5.2 Discussing existing stereotypes and communication strategies employed

The interview with Yingtao's Taiwanese boyfriend validates the informants' feelings towards Taiwanese people's perception of them as he revealed the stereotypes towards Vietnamese women exist in Taiwanese society and this is highly associated with the "Vietnamese brides" stigma. He also shared his strategy is to be a bridge between both sides – his parents and his girlfriend, and talk positively about one to another.

To be honest, most Taiwanese men have prejudices towards Vietnamese women, but there is also good impression, for example (Vietnamese women) know how to take care of people. I think if we are sincerely good to Vietnamese women, they will be good to us as well. In fact, my parents were not ok with this in the beginning. I had to spend a time to talk positively about one to another and negotiate with both sides to let them realize that the other side also thinks for them. Since we had been together for 2 years, my parents started developing good impression towards her. However, most Taiwanese men's impression on Vietnamese women is that they have a very nice shape. [laugh]

Because you interviewed me so I told you this, otherwise I would not let Yingtao know about this to prevent her from overthinking. When I started dating Yingtao, there were also people asking me what was happening. Sometimes people will go online and see PTT (a Taiwanese gossiping forum) to at least understand how other people think. I think relationship is our own business, it is more important that we are happy. I do not really care how people talk. I think my friends have good intention, not prejudice at all. It was just their reaction when they heard about the news. Eventually in Taiwan, the situation of buying Vietnamese brides is still existing. I think because you use money to buy a marriage, it is highly possible that they (the brides) will later run away for money. You would rather to get to know the woman yourself. I believe there are people who did that for money, but there are ones who did not. (Y.B., interview, July 2, 2021)

The interviews revealed strong defensive reactions in the way Vietnamese women communicate their identity in love and dating practice, especially to 7 informants (Man, Bun Cha, Be Ga, Hy, Niuroumian, Xiaolongbao, Yingtao) who have daily interactions with Taiwanese. The act of defending national identity by refusing relationship with Taiwanese are practiced by students who are more sensitive to cultural situations rather than migrant workers who mostly stay in the working environment and networks of Vietnamese, and this happened to student of more advantaged educational and family background. Through offline (for both students and migrant workers) and online communication (mainly for students in my research) with Taiwanese, the Vietnamese women learnt about Taiwanese's stereotypes towards them, then present, negotiate and defend their identity through employing different

strategies matching with their characteristics, preferences and social status to tackle with stereotypes related to their identity.

The women in the stories have tried to negotiate a new identity of Vietnamese women in which national and gender identities are intertwined to tackle with the stereotypes as the consequences of Vietnamese bride phenomenon that Vietnamese women are portrayed as “easygoing”, “money lover”, “cheap”, “brides”, “traditional”, “low educated” “dependent”, and “poor”. These traits were also verified by Yingtao’s boyfriend. For example, he said: “The majority of Vietnamese women come to Taiwan for earning money. Because they want to earn money, how do they not love money?” (Y.B., personal communication, August 8, 2021). However, he believes that most Vietnamese women came to Taiwan are independent since they come for work and rely on their own during the time here. He also included that some of the traits such as “easygoing” “cheap” are similar to the stereotypes towards some Taiwanese women who date Westerners or live aboard in developed countries in the West.

It is evident that the women in my research tried to communicate their identity in a reverse direction to the above stated traits no matter the trait “traditional” which Yingtao’s Taiwanese boyfriend referred as “caring” is not necessary a bad one. In the new identity, they are constructed as being independent, hard-to-get, sentimental, non-materialistic, unconventional, open-minded but faithful women from better economic and educational background.

However instead of mere defensive reaction, this also reflects the current development of Viet Nam as Yingtao said even migrant workers are “not necessarily from difficult families”.

In the case of Bun Cha, when she failed to negotiate the desired identity with Taiwanese partners, she chose to withdraw and find a romance partner out of Taiwanese and Vietnamese society to complement her identity. Dua Hau has not fully withdrawn, she still keeps herself open to dating possibility with Taiwanese in future, however, her preference towards Vietnamese women showed some sort of identity defense. Yingtao found balance in her relationship by less defending her national identity and not put much expectation on her romantic partner and his family, instead concentrate on herself. Yingtao’s boyfriend confirmed his awareness of the stereotypes of Taiwanese towards Vietnamese women and expressed his strategy to protect their relationship by talking positively about his girlfriend to his family and vice versa. This highlights the roles of the Taiwanese partner as a bridge between his Vietnamese girlfriend and his own family. For that reason, the Taiwanese partner plays a very important role in the negotiation process of a Vietnamese woman in love and relationship.

In love and relationship in Taiwan, the Vietnamese women negotiate their national identity by employing different strategies including “becoming a better other”, “relationship refusal”, “false identity” and “negotiation of country’s love and respect”. “Becoming a better other” means some women emphasize to make effort to be an equal partner to their Taiwanese partners while some other women try to prove that they deserve better than some Taiwanese men. “Relationship refusal” refers to the act that the women chose not to develop relationship or keep her relationship a secret from friends and family in order to avoid the label of “potential brides” and pressure from the family. “False identity” was applied by women who have similar look to Taiwanese or women from other countries other than Viet Nam to attract attention. And finally, “negotiation of country’s love and respect” is a negotiation in romance practice between a Vietnamese and a Taiwanese in which a Vietnamese woman expects or negotiates with her Taiwanese partner some certain love and respect towards her country and culture.

At the same time, the informants express their gender identity through “expression of femininity and affection” which is the way one dresses up and express affection, and “adoption of femininity” which the women revisit traditional gender roles to encourage their romantic partners to invest more in the relationship while keeping it balance by reciprocating in feminine ways. Besides, the students tend to negotiate their identity through selection of “better and equal partners” while both groups negotiate the “potential Vietnamese bride” label.

In addition, the women also employ personal communication techniques to negotiate their identity, that are being (1) naïve (e.g., Xiaolongbao only focuses on love and neglects some culture situations such as her boyfriend calls their relationship “an accident”), (2) positive (e.g., Be Ga chose to think positively and concentrate only on self-development to obtain admiration of Taiwanese), (3) lighthearted (e.g., Yingtao employed jokes to avoid following the norms/stereotypes), (4) indifferent (e.g., Niuroumian insisted staying true to her good nature with the hope that one day her quality identity will be validated by her boyfriend and his family), (5) defensive (Bun Cha and Mam chose not to date with Taiwanese, Dua Hau argued with Taiwanese who asked her rude questions).

5.3 Discussing Vietnamese migrants’ identity in love and marriage

Empirical results from both socio-culture analysis and interviews suggested that there is an extremely strong connection between the concepts of love and marriage for Vietnamese female migrants. Most informants said when they are dating or in love with someone, they also think of marriage, even Be Ga who said marriage is not so important to her still expects to have a “happy ending” being together with her boyfriend. And even though most informants are open to premarital sex (except Mam who decided to be just opened-minded instead of practicing this) and premarital cohabitation (except Yingtao), the women place a high emphasis on love and sentiment which is emotional connection in their relationship. This suggests that the love of Vietnamese migrant women falls into the category of companionate love in the Sternberg (1988)’s triangle of love. Besides, Lynd (2020)’s research showed dating culture in Taiwan is categorized near empty love (decision/commitment) as commitment is a dominant factor of relationship to Taiwanese. The views shared in commitment between Vietnamese and Taiwanese are close enough, however, there is still a gap in the levels of commitment whether it is a mere long-term relationship or a marriage-targeted relationship, and a gap in whether the relationship emphasizes intimacy or emotional connection.

The results also show that even though sharing similar education background, due to gender differences, Asian males and females have different levels of absorbing Western culture. For example, in the case of Bun Cha, as growing in Ha Noi in a better-off family background and studying in an environment supporting her exposure to English and English-speaking cultural products, she soon adopted Western concepts in love, dating and relationship while reserving some sort of traditions which made her more advanced than her male peers. This made her culturally close to women in big cities in Taiwan who find it difficult dating Taiwanese men, and this could also be the reason why she could not find connection with Taiwanese men in the end.

Even though most informants bear in mind a certain age of marriage, the fact that most of them are not urged to get married by their families even though some of them already passed age 25, and the fact that some parents show full support to their lesbian children demonstrate current social change in Vietnamese society which results to the growing openness of Vietnamese young people as well as their Vietnamese parents. However, the fact that these parents are ones sending their children abroad to be students and workers could imply that they are more open-minded than average people.

Empirical results suggests that love is an important component of migrant women's welfare, even to ones who do not date or currently do not have a romantic partner, they still long to have "somebody who cares" (in the case of Mam) or seek for love (in the case of Dua Hau). To most informants, love means "care" and real actions instead of mere words. Most women consider their romantic partners as an extended family and expect equal treatment. Family love is important to Vietnamese migrant women of all background, it could serve as a substitute for romantic love to support them through the ups and downs in a faraway place from home. Acceptance and openness of families from both sides also play certain roles in transnational relationship even though to most informants, they are independent from their family in making decisions on love and relationship.

The research found many evidences that migrants' identity plays an important role in the Vietnamese women's experience of romance abroad. Women who have more daily interaction with Taiwanese or have Taiwanese romantic partners are those who are more exposed to this experience of identity in which national and gender identity play an important role. The women have been expressing and negotiating their identity before, inside, outside and after a relationship or potential relationship. The success in identity negotiation and negotiating strategy are important in their decision to whether involve or continue being in a transnational relationship.

The legacy of Vietnamese brides in the past could be seen in the new identity of Vietnamese women in the way that the new generation of young Vietnamese migrant women tend to avoid the label of future "Vietnamese brides" even to those currently in relationship with Taiwanese, for example Be Ga refused to meet the parents of her boyfriend of more than 3 years in the capacity of a girlfriend, being afraid of them pressuring the two to get married since her boyfriend is 12 years older and under marriage pressure from his family. At the same time, the young Vietnamese women try to communicate differently, using different strategies to tackle existing stereotypes about Vietnamese women as the consequences of the Vietnamese bride phenomenon. Finally, in transnational relationship or potential relationship between Vietnamese and Taiwanese, national identity is important and could be a dealbreaker if the Taiwanese partners fail to pay respect to the women's country and culture.

5.4 Discussion on socio-cultural context

From both context analysis and interview, it is evident to conclude that the new generation of Vietnamese women came from better socio-economic background even to ones who are blue-collar migrant workers. The living environment of Taiwan provides certain freedom for Vietnamese migrant women in expressing their femininity and affection without being fear of social norms against women back in their home country. However, the fact that most Vietnamese female have to deal with some levels of discrimination in Taiwan urges some fundamental changes in the system to tackle with this issue.

Bun Cha and Dua Hau represent the growing group of modern urban women in Vietnamese society that is similar to one in Taiwanese social context. They are the women stuck in the middle of the East and the West, the new and the old, the tradition and the modern. Their experience towards Vietnamese men also suggested that late marriage, non-marriage and low fertility will possibly be the issues that Viet Nam has to face in future. Thus, there is an urge to reconsider strategies and the mindsets towards gender equality, especially in education from now in both Viet Nam and Taiwan in closing the cultural gaps between male and females from the same culture not to worsen the situation in future.

The results from context analysis and informants' experience reveals that the Taiwanese society has not yet adapted to the new identity of the new generation of migrant women. Throughout the interviews with the students, I have learnt that educational environment in Taiwan could be an issue. According to some informants, even in the most international universities and programs, Taiwanese students often hangout together in a group and communicate privately with each other on Line groups and this would make other international students feel excluded. The lack of intercommunication between Taiwanese and international students although in the same class would deepen the cultural gap between the two groups. And for migrant workers, their migrant worker status and working environment could also be problematic as migrant workers in Taiwan are limited in choice of work, employers, and residency as well as naturalization. This made their status obviously lower than other international residents as they do not share equal right as other residents.

It is notable that some behaviors of Taiwanese men such as asking improper questions, giving inappropriate comments or showing off would be less sensitive in another social context if it was not in a conversation or relationship between a Vietnamese woman and a Taiwanese man. For example, there would be nothing new that men are known for their behaviors of showing off in order to pursue their potential partners in the realm of love and dating (Iredale et al., 2008). Men employ this practice with various different purposes whether for sex,

friendship or relationship. However, most Vietnamese women in my research are aware of the stereotype of Vietnamese women as “money lover” in the eyes of Taiwanese. Thus, women in my study (Bun Cha and Dua Hau) would whether show their unimpressedness or showing off equivalent experience of materialism back in their country. Due to the inconvenience to interview the men who made such comments or did such behaviors, I could not be sure if the people who said were aware of the stereotypes, however, as mentioned in the above, Yingtao’s boyfriend already confirmed the existing stereotypes towards Vietnamese women in Taiwanese society. And even in the cases that the men making such comments or giving such questions had no discriminatory intent, the feelings of the women are existent and this requires more sensitivities and understandings from the Taiwanese partners in order to solve this problem.

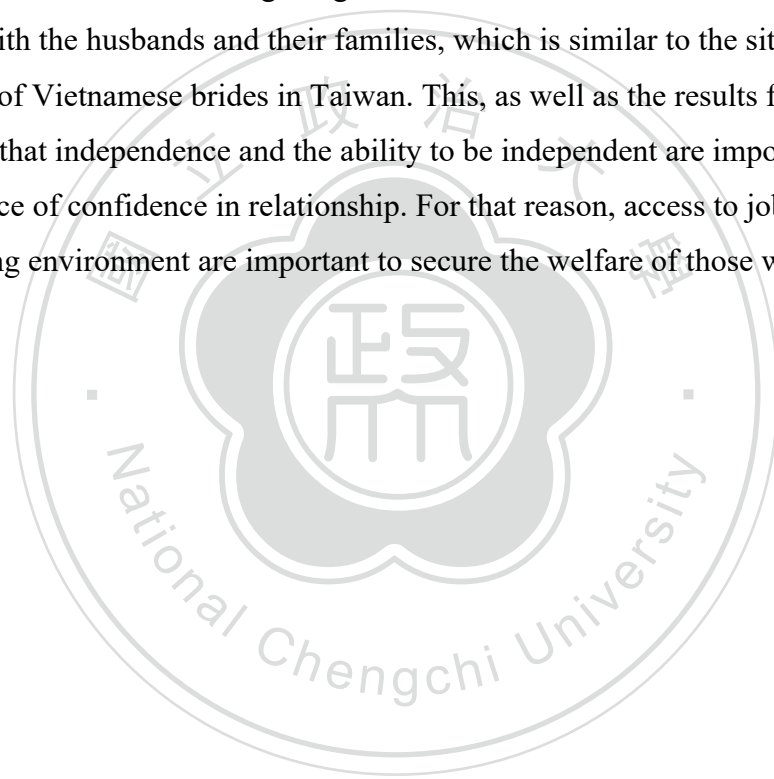
There are results from interviews that support the socio-cultural context analysis. First, the new generation of Vietnamese migrant women have different traits from the previous generation analyzed in Section 4.1.3. For examples, most informants came independently instead of arriving all together at a large number, they have different choice of work other than homemakers or simple labor, they are not from economically disadvantaged background, and finally, they do not couple with an “undesirable partner”. Secondly, the common age gaps of transnational couples mentioned in Section 4.1.5 have been verified. Most of the informants (except Niuroumian dating her classmate) dated or have been dating with a Taiwanese partner of at least 5 years older, with Be Ga dating a 12-year older boyfriend, and in an humorous way, she said she is not the only one “collecting antiques” (dating with older people) amongst those dating Taiwanese. Thirdly, the results from interviews also confirmed the gap in love triangle between Viet Nam and Taiwan and gap in material values mentioned in Section 4.1.5. And finally, the research also found that gift exchange as well as the sense of ceremony are important to Vietnamese women, as when I shared the draft of my thesis with Yingtao, she jokingly commented:

You forgot one detail! I’m not financially or emotionally dependent, however, gifts are a must! It is impossible to be lack of! (Y., personal communication, August 14, 2021)

All other informants from the research also showed their expectation to receive gifts on special events no matter how small the gift is. It could be a bar of chocolate (Mam) or a rose (Bun Cha) depending on the woman’s preference, however, this is a sign that their feelings are considered and taken care by their romantic partners.

There are also results from interviews that don't support the socio-cultural analysis. First, most informants do not have or have much pressure from the family to get married, some are even open to the idea of being unmarried for a lifetime no matter of their current relationship status. Secondly, all women show high level of openness to premarital sex and cohabitation (only Yingtao opposes to cohabitation, and Mam opposes to both but stay open-minded to others who engage in those behaviors).

Finally, when I tried to find an example of a multicultural nation that has successfully created a discrimination-free environment for migrant women, nothing was found, no matter it was Canada or an European country. From what I found, a large number of female migrants reported in those countries are marriage migrants who are vulnerable due to their dependence in relationship with the husbands and their families, which is similar to the situation of the first generations of Vietnamese brides in Taiwan. This, as well as the results from the interviews show that independence and the ability to be independent are important to migrant women as a source of confidence in relationship. For that reason, access to job opportunities and equal working environment are important to secure the welfare of those women.



Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Findings

National and gender identities often intertwined with each other and play important roles in identity construct of Vietnamese migrant women in Taiwan. They have been accumulated through the women's growing up and development process, however, Taiwan provides a context to inactivate these identities. Whilst in gender identity, the results suggest that the women adopt gender roles in finding balance in heterosexual relationship, a stronger level of national identity tends to lead to more defensive reactions that could harm or reverse the development of the relationship.

By gradually learning Taiwanese people's stereotypes targeting at heterosexual (looking) Vietnamese women as a legacy of Vietnamese bride phenomenon, the young Vietnamese migrant women in Taiwan have employed their national and gender identities, together with different online and offline communication strategies to negotiate their desired identity during their love journeys. The women not only negotiate negative stereotypes, but also turn some over-positive stereotypes to fewer positive ones in avoiding pressure.

As a result of economic development as well as improvement of women's status in Vietnamese society, the new generation of Vietnamese migrant women who are students and migrant workers, come from better family, education, and socio-economic background. This implies increasing challenges to potential transnational relationships between Vietnamese and Taiwanese in future due to large identity gaps existing. In many cases, the lack of sensitivity of Taiwanese partners and lack of understanding towards this Southeast Asian country by asking questions or giving comments associated with the stereotypes would complicate the situation. It is the job of the government to either enhance the life quality of migrants to help them adapt to the new culture, at the same time improve the openness and understanding of Taiwanese society towards other cultures.

6.2 Limitations

First, it is regretful that a major part of the research was conducted online due to the pandemic outbreak and level-3 COVID alert between May 15 – July 26, 2021 in Taiwan, the

author was unable to visit and interview the informants in person which caused some limitations to observation that could benefit the research.

Secondly, identity is always on the state of ‘being’ as well as “becoming” as it is a concept that has been changing with time (Hall, as cited in Samuel, 2010), thus the identity of Vietnamese women will continue changing in future together with the change of the societies in both Viet Nam and Taiwan. Even in the case of Dua Hau, the identity of a lesbian woman can also be changed together with her personal growth and development, for example her current realization of more genderfluid at the time of this thesis submission. This study serves as a snap-shot research featuring the most current identity negotiated by young Vietnamese women as it could provide materials for communication as well as improve understandings of Taiwanese regarding Southeast Asia.

Thirdly, the difference in the periods of staying in Taiwan between informants could influence the results. In fact, some migrant workers such as in the case of Yingtao tend stay longer than an average Master student who finish his/her study in two years, and for that reason, they have stayed long enough to adapt better to Taiwanese culture at some points. For informants who have been in Taiwan for a shorter time, it is difficult to predict how they will change in future. For example, Xiaolongbao, an informant dating with a Taiwanese boyfriend who was not featured in the three stories, has been in Taiwan for only 6 months and is probably still in the honeymoon state as she was very positive in the interview even though she did not have much experience with other Taiwanese other than her boyfriend, and she also did not know clearly her boyfriend’s position in her factory as well as his background.

Finally, the research could be bias since approachable people tend to share positive stories about themselves rather than negative stories. For examples, author was introduced to a potential informant who have been dating with Taiwanese for years, however, eventually the friend introducing informed that she suddenly cancelled the appointment due to an unexpected event happened to her relationship that made her not in a state of mind to receive the interview.

6.3 Suggestions to future researches

First, qualitative methodology adopted in this research could result into rich narratives, however, a quantitative on Vietnamese women’s identity based on some constructs and

findings from this research, and conducted on a larger scope of samples will make the data more comprehensive.

Secondly, the first story of Bun Cha shows that Western values have an influence on the newly coming migrants' identity. The scope and the depth of this influence in different aspects of life, especially in comparison with Taiwanese is a promising topic for future research.

Thirdly, the second story of Dua Hau demonstrates some potentials on the use of internet in research on migration. I would like to suggest researchers to pay more attention on how migrants as well as queer groups from different countries make use of internet to find dating partners in a comparative research between countries for future studies.

Fourthly, the third story of Yingtao suggests potential of a longer-term research specifically for transnational relationship between Taiwanese and Vietnamese in learning the changing experience of the women throughout different stages of relationships.

Finally, due to cultural and geographical similarities of some Southeast Asian countries, as well as common features in migrating phenomena from these countries to East Asian countries, all the above-suggested researches could be applied for and compared between larger communities of migrants in different host countries.

6.4 Suggestions to Taiwanese government

Throughout the interviews with both Taiwanese and Vietnamese informants, the concerns on the social situation of Vietnamese migrant women in Taiwan in the context analysis have been confirmed. Even in the case that the Taiwanese conversation participants did not have discriminate intention when asking sensitive questions or giving sensitive comments, the feelings of the Vietnamese migrant women are existent. Even though the women could choose for themselves suitable communication strategies to tackle with the issue, the nature of problems are rooted in social context and this can only be solved and changed completely at macro management level which is the job of the government.

At the time of working on this thesis, a news made the headlines in Vietnamese news media featuring Korean city government of Mungyeong's campaign to encourage old peasants to marry Vietnamese students in Korea in order to expand their aging population. This local government even went further by appealing for the collaboration of marriage intermediaries

in fostering the process. Korea is another East Asian country where Vietnamese women who are marriage migrants and migrant workers in the waves of “Global Cinderella” (Lan, 2006) share more or less the same fate. Unfortunately, VFS are also caught up in the vortex of prejudice that all Vietnamese women come to Korea to get married (Ngoc-Anh, 2021b). This incident provides a lesson learnt to Taiwan that encouraging Vietnamese or Southeast Asian female to get married with Taiwanese in order to increase transnational marriages and birth rate could produce a counter effect since the women in this logic are seen as a tool of population growth instead of a human who have the rights to make choice. Instead, based on the interviews conducted with informants who are VFS and VFW in Taiwan, I would like to suggest the following points in order to improve life quality of migrants, at the same time benefit Taiwanese society as a whole.

For migrants

1. To regularly assess and analyze the living quality and welfare of migrants in order to provide them most helpful support and to guarantee their access to necessary resources.
2. To give them more access to formal and nonformal education (e.g., scholarships, cram schools) including language and cultural education (e.g., Taiwanese cooking class)
3. To lift ban on migrant workers working out of their contracted company, because this, in fact, could not completely prevent the workers from working illegally. Instead managing this publicly will benefit the management system as a whole, avoid illegal acts, at the same time, provide more opportunities for migrant workers learn about Taiwanese cultures and languages out of their usually small social network of migrant workers from the same country.
4. To provide more equal job opportunities, better job-seeking platforms replacing intermediaries, and fairer treatment, especially for blue-collar migrant workers.
5. To provide access to counselling in the languages of the countries who have a large number of migrants in Taiwan.
6. To provide more funding to NGOs working with migrants to target at the most pressing migration issues.

For Taiwanese society

7. To make multi-culturalism and internationalism universal by including multi-cultural content in textbook for schools since elementary level, practice Model United Nations in

schools at different level, engage international students in both volunteer or paid activities at local schools instead of only international schools.

8. To apply sophisticated and proper communication methods to raise adults' awareness towards Southeast Asian countries' cultures and its women through the power of media and public communication to tackle false stereotypes and avoid causing stress to migrant women during the stay in Taiwan.



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Appendices

Appendix 1: The age structure of Vietnamese female migrant workers in Taiwan between 2009 and 2019

(Source: 外籍勞工在台人數－按國籍別、年齡及性別分 - 統計值 (98 年~108 年), 2021)

Year	Total	Age under 25	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55 and above	Unclear
2009	43,144	8,257	16,329	16,209	2,343	6	-
2010	41,568	8,768	14,710	15,104	2,979	7	-
2011	44,853	10,780	15,086	15,295	3,684	8	-
2012	42,496	11,152	14,606	13,122	3,606	9	1
2013	50,852	15,843	17,975	12,797	4,217	20	-
2014	56,330	18,024	21,191	12,504	4,565	46	-
2015	59,693	18,487	24,646	12,267	4,211	81	1
2016	64,452	17,473	26,915	14,441	5,510	112	1
2017	73,772	18,003	30,902	17,518	7,149	200	-
2018	77,729	16,673	33,353	19,364	8,075	264	-
2019	77,873	15,872	33,447	20,044	8,173	336	1

Appendix 2: Statistics of Vietnamese in Taiwan who currently hold a valid residence permit (ARC) in Taiwan by occupation – March 2021

(Source: 外僑居留人數統計表11003, 2021)

Job	Male	Female
Government Officers	0	0
Business Personnels	55	168
Engineers	113	29
Accountants	0	2
Lawyers	0	0
Reporters	0	0
Teachers	13	20
Doctors	0	1
Nurses	0	2
Missionaries	54	126

Skilled craftsmen		49	28
Blue-collar workers	Total	147,943	80,353
	Construction workers	1,053	27
	Manufacturing workers	143,725	55,489
	Domestic workers	6	82
	Caregivers	1,192	23,600
	Interpreters (blue-collar)	176	247
	Chefs (blue-collar)	5	1
	Workers of mixing ration and feeding	82	27
	Farming workers	139	34
	Crew members (blue-collar)	772	23
	Other (blue collar)	793	823
Crew members		2	1
Other (employed)		2,207	8,527
Unemployed		4,067	6,767
Homemakers		0	10,854
Students		1,432	2,270
Other (unemployed)		20	39
Children under 5		251	244
Total		156,206	109,431

Appendix 3: List of informants

No	Nick-name	Year of birth	Home-town	Occupation/Level of education	Years in Taiwan	Time of interview	Dating experience in Taiwan
1	Bun Cha	1994	Ha Noi (original from Quang Ninh)	Currently graduated from Master program	2 years	21:00-22:30 June 29, 2021	Previously dated with Taiwanese, currently married to her Caucasian husband
2	Dua Hau	1998	Ho Chi Minh city	Language student, will enroll in university in Fall 2021	2 years	13:00-15:30 June 30, 2021	Lesbian woman, dated with Vietnamese girlfriend in Taiwan
3	Yingtao	1994	Bac Giang	Blue-collar worker	8 years	17:00-17:44 20:24-21:24	Dated with a Vietnamese boyfriend and been dating with a

						July 4, 2021	Taiwanese boyfriend
4	Mam	1993	Ha Noi	White-collar worker, Master	3 years	20:00-22:00 June 28, 2021	Single, no dating experience
5	Be Ga	1996	Can Tho	Undergraduate student	4 years	22:40-00:41 June 29, 2021	Been dating with two Taiwanese boyfriends
6	Niuroumian	1994	Ho Chi Minh city	Master student	Less than 1 year	15:40-17:55 June 30, 2021	Been dating with a Taiwanese boyfriend
7	Bun Bo	1996	Binh Phuoc	Master student	Less than 1 year	14:00-15:00 July 1, 2021	In long distance relationship with her boyfriend in Vietnam
8	Luc Binh	1999	Tien Giang	Blue-collar worker	3 years	20:00-21:00 July 3, 2021	Dated with a Vietnamese boyfriend
9	Xiaolongbao	1994	Thai Nguyen	Blue-collar worker	6 months	09:00-10:00 July 4, 2021	Been dating with a Taiwanese boyfriend
10	Xiaokeai	1999	Soc Trang	Blue-collar worker, will enroll in university in Fall 2021	3 years	10:30-11:30 July 4, 2021	Been dating with a Vietnamese boyfriend
11	Sushi	1996	Hai Duong	Blue-collar worker	3 years	11:25-12:28 July 4, 2021	Single mom, lesbian woman, dated with 2 Vietnamese girlfriends
12	Yingtao's boyfriend	1988	Taipei	University graduate	4 years	July 2, 2021	Never dated Vietnamese before meeting Yingtao