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Family Dynamics in Vietnam

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Connecticut College

Family Dynamics in Vietnam

Senior Honors Thesis

by

Linh Vu

Thesis Advisor: Donald Peppard

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Table of Contents

Title page.....1

Acknowledgments2

Introduction4

Chapter One: Gender Wage Inequality.....7

Chapter Two: Determinants of Marriage Entry.....22

Chapter Three: Educational Assortative Marriage Patterns37

Chapter Four: Divorce Overview.....57

Conclusion72

Introduction

The first image that comes to many people's minds, especially the ones of the past generation, when they think about Vietnam, is artillery flying over rice paddy fields during the Vietnam War back in 1970s, or a peaceful Vietnam with women in traditional dresses [áo dài] bicycling around Hoan Kiem Lake [hồ Hoàn Kiếm], one of the major tourist attractions in Hanoi, the country's capital. Vietnam in the 21st century is a different country. Even though agricultural activities still contribute largely to the national economy, many rice fields were replaced with highways and skyscrapers, and bicycles with motorcycles and cars, as urbanization and modernization rapidly spread across Vietnam. Major developments and changes are taking place in this small country in Southeast Asia, which is both thrilling and overwhelming to its government and citizens.

The country's response to these changes is precisely reflected by its economy model, which is a socialist market economy but also fully integrated into the global economy. The shift from centrally-planned to market-based economy, after the economic reform Renovation [Đổi Mới] in 1986 and Open-Door [Mở Cửa] policy, exposed Vietnam to industrialization, modernization and globalization, which underpinned the country's attempt to be a part of the world economy. On the hand, one of the country's top priorities is preserving its unique culture and traditions. Vietnamese culture is a mixture of different influences, Chinese civilization in the 1st century and millennium, Western civilization in the 17th and 18th centuries, and its own indigenous folk culture, which is further enriched by its multi-ethnic nature. Thus, protecting its

national identity is crucial for the country since this identity will provide a foundation for sustainable and stable economic and political developments.

Being one of the fastest-growing economies in the world during the 21st century, Vietnam is going through an immense transformation, which brings various opportunities and challenges to the country's politics and economy, and largely impacts its key institutions, one of which is family. Family is considered the cell of the society, thus, any changes to this unit have tremendous social impacts. Thus, it is essential to examine these changes and their trends, so that the government can address appropriate policy in order realize the country's objective that was mentioned above. My thesis is an attempt to explore this topic. Four family dynamics are being examined, which are wage inequality, determinants of entry into marriage, educational assortative mating patterns and divorce trends in Vietnam in the first decade of the 21st century.

My approach is mainly based on a quantitative analysis, employing econometrics and statistical software STATA to conduct various regressions on the data from Vietnam Household Living Standards Surveys from 2006 to 2010 to test different hypothesis. Chapter 1 analyzes the wage inequality trends in Vietnam, and assumes a decreasing trend in wage inequality given the country's increasing level of modernization and socioeconomic equality. Chapter 2 examines socioeconomic factors that affect the possibility of entry into marriage, and hypothesizes that urbanization, fertility, education and employment are the most important determinants. Chapter 3 scrutinizes the tendency of individuals to choose spouses who are from the same educational background as themselves. In chapter 4, on the other hand, no statistical process was conducted because it was not statistically possible due to the lack of data availability on the topic of divorce. Thus, a qualitative overview about divorce trends in Vietnam in the last decade was conducted instead.

My hope is the thesis will contribute to the body of literature about Vietnam, provide a better understanding about these family dynamics that are occurring in the modern Vietnam, and assist further analysis in these areas in order to aid policy makers in addressing different challenges resulting from the modernization process.

Chapter 1

Gender Wage Inequality

I. Introduction

Gender equality and women's empowerment have been two challenging goals for most countries because of their intricate natures. Women's access to equality can be measured on various aspects, among which is earnings power, and the earnings gap is referred to as the gender wage gap. Some view gender wage gap as a byproduct of individuals' choices in terms of occupations and industries. On the other hand, equally qualified individuals can be treated differently due to employers' discriminatory tastes. Wage inequality has been a persistent issue across borders over time, posing serious problems for governments around the world (Ñopo et al. 2012). Thus, it is essential to distinguish the causes of earnings differences between male and female employees in order to address appropriate policies. In this chapter, I investigate the gender wage differentials in Vietnam from 2004 to 2010. I hypothesize the gender wage gap is present in the Vietnamese labor market.

In Vietnam, traditionally, women were expected to manage domestic chores, while husbands were responsible for families' finances. These values can be traced back to Confucianism where women's values lay in their obedience towards their fathers, their husbands, and their sons [tam tông] or a woman's priority must be aligned with her husband's and his family's (Liu 2001). Thus, working was only viewed as a secondary responsibility for women. With the introduction of Communism, this hierarchy was challenged; simultaneously, female labor was needed due to the agrarian economy's intensive labor nature. Hence, women's

participation in the workforce increased rapidly, which, however, did not ensure the gender wage equality, partly because the traditional values were “embedded in social, economic and political policies” (Bauer et al. 1992, 334). The provisions of Labor Code, a legal framework that lays out rights and obligations for employers and employees, partly steered the focus of labor rights in a more gender balanced manner, shown in its Chapter X with specific provisions to women’s labor in terms of pregnancy, parental leave and gender discrimination (Labor Code 2013). Nevertheless, even with these provisions, women tend to stay in the low-paying industries and are less present in the more powerful positions, as female sectoral location accounted for a quarter of wage discrimination (Liu 2004). This can be explained by the exploitation thesis, which states that patriarchal norms in society result in “women’s segregation in the lowest paying jobs, limit women’s job tenure and mobility, and justify their relatively lower wages” (Seguino 1997, 105).

Since Renovation [Đổi Mới] was introduced in 1986, Vietnam shifted from an agrarian and centrally-planned system to a socialist-oriented market economy, resulting in a rapid economic growth. Vietnamese economy was opened and exposed to the global market, which created heavy pressure on the domestic market. On the other hand, because of the country’s long history of investment in human capital, individuals were also given various job opportunities. Nevertheless, these opportunities were not evenly distributed between genders, as women tended to be over-represented in the state sector, as 46% of females and only 36% of males worked in the government sector (Liu 2004). On the other hand, state sector has a “premium” over private sector, which was around 20% for annual compensation and 10% for hourly compensation in 1998 (Bales and Rama 2001). Renovation also increased husbands’ involvement in the household chores due to social ideals about equality that were advocated by the state.

Nevertheless, it did not decrease wives' role in household work, according to the survey done by Knodel (2004). Women still do the majority of the housework, regardless of their employment status. Thus, modern Vietnamese women in the 21st century are burdened with both home and work responsibilities, which is aggravated by the fact that their work experience is likely to be interrupted by childbirth, heavily hindering their employment outlook.

The approach of this study is to examine whether the wage gap between male and female workers is due to differences among the waged employees or discrimination across the earnings distribution. With the 2000 U.S. bilateral trade agreement and the WTO accession in 2007, Vietnam has been increasingly immersed in the globalization process, resulting in immense changes in its labor market. The chapter is an attempt to scrutinize these changes, and to contribute to the documentation about gender wage differentials in Vietnam's transition to market economy in the 21st century.

II. Literature Review

Gender wage gap can be attributed to gender-specific factors, which are gender differences in qualifications, and labor market treatments of similar individuals or occupational segregation. Thus, the earnings disparity can be explained by gender discrimination and occupational segregation. The pioneer in this field is Oaxaca (1973), who scrutinized the discrimination effect in the wage differentials as the residuals after controlling for sex differentials for differences in characteristics, i.e. the decomposition methodology. The methodology coupled with the procedure proposed by Blinder (1973) results in a technique which is usually referred to as Oaxaca-Blinder method. There are also other methodologies which are built upon the Oaxaca model, such as Neumark (1988) who proposed an alternative

estimator, which is based on the assumption that employers' discrimination is homogeneous between male and female employees, particularly in a deregulated environment where the employers have more autonomy. Oaxaca and Ransom (1994) estimated the wage structure by analyzing the union and nonunion wage differences in the U.S.

Using these different methodologies, researches on wage differentials have been conducted in various countries over time. While the gender gap seems to decline in developed countries such as the U.S., the opposite trend is found in transition countries (Chi and Li 2013). Thus, East Asia is an area of interest in terms of wage differentials. As the region's economy grows, demand for female employees and women's labor force attachment both increase. Nevertheless, unexplained wage differentials are known to be more pronounced even after the 1986 economic liberalization in Vietnam (Ñopo et al. 2012; Sundaram 2009; Zveglic and Rodgers 2004). The gap widened after the industrialization period and it was larger in the more developed and highly industrialized countries in the region, such as China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong (Chang and England 2011). On the other hand, the common traits in heritage and economic development among these countries do not neutralize this gender wage inequality. In China, the urbanization effect improves the wage differentials owing to the greater state influence in larger metropolitan areas (Maurer-Fazio 1999). The glass ceiling effect and sticky floor effect, where the wage gap between male and female employees is larger in higher and lower earnings positions, are found in Hong Kong (Ge et al. 2011).

There are a significant number of studies examining the gender wage differentials in Vietnam using the Vietnamese Living Standards Surveys (VLSS) and the Vietnamese Household Living Standards Surveys (VHLSS). Arguably, Liu (2001) provided the first insights into the field and analyzed the gap in the transitional period after Renovation from 1992-93 to 1997-98,

confirming the existence of gender wage gap in both private and state sectors. There was a trend in closing the gender wage gap where the pay gap was reduced by half between 1993 and 2002. The decrease was present in different percentiles of the earnings distribution in 1990s, resulting from the reduction in the differences in gender characteristics that influence one's employment, such as marital and health status (Gallup 2002; Liu 2004; Pham and Reilly 2007). Nevertheless, the gender wage gap's patterns are manifold. Even though the trend of declining inequality continued during the transition towards market economy, differences in wage earnings power still existed between state and non-state sectors (Imbert 2012; Phan and Coxhead 2013).

My analysis focuses on the most recent time period from 2004 to 2010 by using quantile regression approach, which enables me to specify the differences in wage differentials in the wage distribution. Even though this method is used by Pham and Reilly (2007), I employ Stata command `-rqdeco-` recently developed by Melly (2005) which allows me to implement a counterfactual approach to wage differentials. The command is based on the Machado and Mata (2005) decomposition method, but it allows the explanatory variables to influence the whole earnings distribution, which gives the analysis much flexibility. In other words, the decomposition of the conditional distribution can be separated into three elements: regression coefficients, distribution of covariates and residuals. Thus, the decomposition enables the covariates to affect the wage distribution.

III. Data

The study employs the 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010 Vietnamese Household Living Standards Surveys. I include only the individuals who reported being employed at the time of the surveys and are aged between 15 and 60 years old. Hence, the unemployed and the retired are

excluded. I also exclude the self-employed because they are not susceptible to wage discrimination. The variables of interest are age, province, marital status, ethnicity, employment status, occupation, economic sector, education, experience and wage-related factors.

The dependent variable is the natural logarithm of real hourly wage. Real hourly wage rates are calculated using the hours of work per week and the days of work per month during the 12 months prior to the surveys, including basic income and other payments, such as bonuses, subsidies and allowances. The nominal rates then are deflated by CPI, the inflation measure, in January every year. The natural logarithms of the real rates are used in the main regressions. Other worker characteristics are generated as following: variable “years of schooling” is generated based on the highest education attainment variable. Actual labor force experience is used in the all the surveys except for 2010 where age and age squared are used as proxy for experience (Pham and Reilly 2007).

Occupational and industry sector sex segregation also can potentially affect earnings gap. Occupation variable is categorized into 6 groups: leaders, high-level and mid-level professionals, staff (elementary professionals and white-collar technical personnel), skilled workers, assemblers and machine operators, and unskilled workers. Industrial sector variable includes 5 categories: agriculture, fishery and forestry, energy, mining and construction, manufacturing, finance, and services and tourism. Variable minority is a dummy variable, which equals 1 when satisfies the condition or 0 otherwise, which is when the ethnicity is Kinh, the majority ethnic group in Vietnam. Geographical variables such as region and urban/rural dummy variables are also generated. Variable region includes 7 different regions in Vietnam: Red River Delta, North Eastern, North Western, North Central Coastal, South Central, Central Highland and Mekong

River Delta. Urban/rural dummy variable is included in the study because of the significant difference between urban and rural areas in Vietnam, which originates the earnings differentials.

IV. Methods

I first examine the gender wage gap by using the decomposition method proposed by Oaxaca (1973). The method decomposes the wage differentials between male and female employees into an explained portion, which can be attributed to factors such as education and experience, and an unexplained portion, which is the difference in what an individual could have earned if one were the opposite gender and what one actually earns:

$$\overline{\ln W_m} - \overline{\ln W_f} = (\alpha_m - \alpha_f) + (\bar{X}_m - \bar{X}_f)\beta_m + (\beta_m - \beta_f)\bar{X}_f$$

or

$$\overline{\ln W_m} - \overline{\ln W_f} = (\alpha_m - \alpha_f) + (\bar{X}_m - \bar{X}_f)\beta_f + (\beta_m - \beta_f)\bar{X}_m$$

where α is the average earnings of an employee regardless of his characteristics \bar{X} , such as years of education and working experience, $\overline{\ln W}$ is the natural logarithm of earnings, m indicates male employee, f indicates female employee and β is the estimated coefficient. Thus, the second term on the right-hand side is the earnings differentials that can be explained by the differences in characteristics. The last term is the earnings differentials that cannot be explained, i.e. discrimination. The methodology assumes that male and female employees who share the same characteristics have the same earnings. Additionally, it identifies wage disparity using the mean of the earnings distribution, thus, failing to specify the wage inequality in different quantiles of the entire distribution (Nakavachara 2010).

After obtaining the decomposition on the mean, I examine the earnings differentials across the conditional earnings distribution. The methodology allows me to scrutinize the wage

gap effects in every quantile among the earnings distribution. It also enables estimation on observable characteristics and it is less sensitive to outliers (Koenker 2005). The conditional quantile regression model is

$$Q_{\theta}(W|X) = X_i\beta(\theta)$$

where $\beta(\theta)$ is a vector of coefficients of θ^{th} quantile and can be obtained by minimizing in β

$$n^{-1} \sum_{i=1}^n \rho_{\theta}(W_i - X'_i\beta)$$

where n is the size of the sample. The quantile regression coefficients denote the returns to different characteristics at different quantiles of the earnings distribution. Hence, the conditional quantile function for male is

$$Q_{m,\theta}(W_m|X_m) = X_{m,i}'\beta(m, \theta)$$

and for female is

$$Q_{f,\theta}(W_f|X_f) = X_{f,i}'\beta(f, \theta)$$

The counterfactual unconditional wage distribution is performed by a simulation-based technique proposed Machado and Mata (2005) by the following steps:

- 1) Generate sample u from a standard uniform distribution
- 2) Compute quantile regression coefficients for each group
- 3) Generate sample v from the empirical distribution
- 4) Generate the counterfactual by grouping different sets of quantile coefficients and distribution of observations between two groups
- 5) Repeat Step 4 m times.

Standard errors are estimated by bootstrapping technique.

V. Results

Table 1 shows the results of Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition. It shows that there is a consistently increasing trend in wage earnings of both male and female workers from 2004 to 2010. Interestingly, the wage gap between male and female employees increases from 0.003 (0.3% of males wages) in 2004 to 0.009 (0.9%) in 2008 and becomes -0.013 (-1.3%) in 2010. The wage gap is not significant, compared to the wage gaps 0.28 in 1993 and 0.15 in 2002. Nevertheless, the results are unusual because there is an inverse pattern in 2010 where female employees actually earned more than male employees. The labor market in Vietnam after the global financial crisis in 2008 was not affected tremendously, but specific groups of workers experienced difficulties, including female workers, especially the unskilled ones (Mac 2009). Thus, low-paid female employees were not included in the sample, which can explain the reverse pattern in the gender wage gap since they largely contribute to the gender wage gap. The explained portion, which is the earnings differentials due to differences in endowments, is negative in all four years. This shows that female workers actually have larger endowments of productive characteristics than men. In other words, if male and female employees shared the same levels of endowments, the gender wage gap could be widened, which demonstrates that there is a clear sign of discrimination in the labor market.

Table 2 shows the counterfactual results for five quantiles of the earnings distribution (10th, 25th, 50th, 75th and 90th). There is no clear pattern across the wage distribution. The gender wage gap decreases as the earnings power increases in 2004, but has a U-shaped pattern in 2006, 2008 and 2010. The wage gap in most quantiles of the earnings distribution varies largely during the period from 2004 to 2010. On the other hand, there is an increasing trend at the top of the distribution, i.e., the highest paying jobs, which is due to the increase in the explained portion of

the differentials. At the bottom of the distribution, the explained portions are all negative, which shows that these gaps are underestimated. Discrimination, or the unexplained portions, is statistically higher in the bottom and the top of the distribution, but lower in the middle, which yields a U-shape pattern.

Overall, gender wage differentials are mostly driven by unexplained portions which are more pronounced at the top and bottom earnings distribution, demonstrating the gender-based discrimination in the market. This pattern has been relatively stable over the 6-year period from 2004 to 2010. At the top and bottom of the earnings distribution, the wage gap exists and it is mostly attributed to discrimination or the unexplained portions. Thus, it shows that there are glass ceiling and sticky floor effects in the Vietnamese labor market.

IV. Conclusion

In this paper I identify the earnings inequality between male and female employees in the Vietnamese transitioning market using data from the 2004 to 2010 Vietnamese Household Living Standards Surveys. I test the hypothesis that the earnings disparity exists in the labor market by employing the Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition method. Given that the country's economy is still in the transitioning period towards a market-oriented economy, it is plausible that the gender wage inequality outlook is still uncertain as no clear pattern is discerned in this chapter. On the other hand, using the quantile regression approach proposed by Machado and Mata (2005), the glass ceiling and sticky floor effects for female employees are discerned in the study.

Nevertheless, the study only provides partial understanding about the Vietnamese labor market. The study does not correct for selectivity bias into the work force or wage employment

using the method introduced by Heckman (1976) because of the procedure's intricacy and difficulty relating to identifying instruments whose goal is to estimate the labor market participation decision (Gunewardena 2008). Selectivity bias refers to the fact that the sample is not randomly selected due to the selection of observations in the analysis. In this chapter, as previously mentioned, the self-employed, including housewives, are excluded from the model. Thus, it is not possible to observe the wage at which these housewives might accept marketplace employment. Moreover, there are certain characteristics that cannot be observed and accounted in the model, such as ability or socio-economic background (Bishop et al. 2007). Specifically, failing to control for socio-economic background raises the same concern as selectivity bias as it plays an important role in the employment selection, given that employment in state firms is heavily contingent on not only merits but also connections (Phan and Coxhead 2013). The variable "experience" also can cause potential issues as it is endogenous, that is, it is particularly shorter for women due to their domestic responsibilities (Schafgans 2000).

Regardless, gender wage gap has a significant impact on society and it needs to be amended by government's intervention. As mentioned above, female employees' work experience is often interrupted. The government can subsidize childcare services and encourage women to go back to the labor force. The glass ceiling and sticky floor effects can also be altered if there is an effort to reduce the barriers to better occupations for females.

Table 1. Oaxaca Decomposition of Gender Wage Gap in Vietnam: 2004–2010

Differential	2004	2006	2008	2010
Men	1.385*** (0.01)	1.630*** (0.01)	1.884*** (0.01)	2.345*** (0.02)
Women	1.382*** (0.01)	1.621*** (0.01)	1.876*** (0.01)	2.359*** (0.02)
Difference	0.003 (0.02)	0.009 (0.02)	0.009 (0.02)	-0.013 (0.02)
Decomposition				
Explained	-0.023* (0.01)	-0.012* (0.01)	-0.002* (0.01)	-0.038** (0.01)
Unexplained	0.026 (0.02)	0.021 (0.02)	0.007 (0.02)	0.025 (0.02)

Table 2. Quantile Regressions of Gender Wage Gap in Vietnam: 2004–2010

	2004	2006	2008	2010
Quantile 0.1				
Difference	0.021	0.064	0.013	-0.018
Explained	-0.013	-0.001	0.000	0.015
Unexplained	0.033	0.063	0.013	0.033
Quantile 0.25				
Difference	0.020	0.042	0.031	-0.007
Explained	-0.018	-0.005	0.000	0.022
Unexplained	0.038	0.047	0.031	-0.029
Quantile 0.5				
Difference	0.010	0.004	0.000	0.001
Explained	-0.025	0.013	0.000	-0.030
Unexplained	0.035	-0.009	0.000	0.031
Quantile 0.75				
Difference	0.007	0.025	0.002	0.022
Explained	0.029	0.023	0.011	0.059
Unexplained	-0.022	0.002	-0.009	-0.037
Quantile 0.9				
Difference	0.009	0.054	0.024	0.025
Explained	0.026	0.015	0.009	0.057
Unexplained	0.017	0.040	0.015	-0.032

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Chapter 2

Determinants of Marriage Entry

I. Introduction

Age at first marriage is a topic which receives a large amount of attention due to its significant social impacts. It initiates the formation of a union that serves as the basic unit of every society culturally, economically and politically. In countries where impregnation occurs within marriage, age at first marriage is also the precursor of childbearing. Thus, understanding the social and economic determinants of age at first marriage is fundamental and essential. On the other hand, this is not an easy task; hence, the availability of empirical generalizations about the topic is limited. In this chapter, I attempt to investigate the determinants of entry into marriage in Vietnam from 2004 to 2010. I hypothesize that socioeconomic factors such as education, urbanization, fertility and work force participation largely affect age at first marriage for both women and men in Vietnam.

Early marriage used to be an issue in Vietnam. Girls were wed as early as 13 years old and boys at 16 years old, due to economic reasons (Nguyen and Wodon 2012). Specifically, if a daughter marries, the bride's family will not have to feed her; on the groom's side, marriage brings his family extra free labor, i.e., the wife, and potential labor, i.e., the future children. The cruciality of labor can be explained by the labor-intensive nature of the agrarian economy in Vietnam. It was not until the establishment of the 2000 Marriage and Family Law, which gives males and females equal legal marriage rights, and sets the minimum age at marriage at 20 for males and 18 for females, that early marriage was banned in Vietnam (CEDAW 2005).

On the other hand, there is still a pressure to marry early in Vietnam, especially for women, due to fertility reasons. The earlier a woman marries, the longer her pregnancy exposure period is. Women are usually expected to be married by 30 years old, otherwise, they are considered to be undesirable by male counterparts [ế chồng]. The social pressure for men is less severe. They are expected to establish a stable career and to provide for the family; hence, it is acceptable for them to postpone marriage to focus on creating a family safety net. These expectations in turn can lead to a pattern called hypergamy where wives are younger than their husbands. The marriage pattern fits into the “traditional marriage” criteria, defined by Hajnal (1965), which refers to early and universal marriage.

One other factor that can potentially affect age at marriage is the chasm between rural and urban areas. Rural areas are where most of the agricultural activities are conducted; thus, it follows that the rural tradition usually promotes earlier marriage because of the previously mentioned economic reasons. Urbanization, which began after the 1986 Renovation reforms [Đổi Mới], on the other hand, can potentially delay marriage. The pressures from urban life, such as the competitiveness in the job market or the pricey cost of living, especially in the two dominant metropolitan areas with industrial concentration, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, steer individuals away from marriage.

It is also observed that there was a trend of increasing age at marriage in Asia that coincided with the industrialization period, due to urbanization and schooling (Mensch et al. 2005; Xenos and Gultiano 2008). Education is one of the national priorities of Vietnam. It follows the socialization of education policy where the state is the key factor in developing the mission of education, even before the reunification of Vietnam in 1975. The evidence of this rigorous process is the various literacy campaigns initiated by Ho Chi Minh in 1945, which

increased the country's literate population from 10% to 90% by 2011 (Pham et al. 2007). The effect of educational expansion can lead to marriage postponement because people tend to marry after finishing their schooling. On the other hand, the effect might contain upward bias since those who intend to marry later will stay in school longer, and vice versa, those who intend to marry early will leave school earlier to do so (Mensch et al. 2005). Thus, the effect of education on age at marriage can be ambiguous, which applies to the case of Vietnam where the expansion of education and the rising age at first marriage coincided.

Workforce participation influences age at marriage in a relatively similar manner where individuals may delay marriage because of career goals. In the case of fertility rate, the number of children per married women can reflect the society's demand for children, which acts as social pressure on individuals, especially on women, to bear children (Zhang 2007). Given that these factors play such important roles in the Vietnamese society, it is hypothesized that they are the main determinants of age at first marriage.

The approach of this research is to examine these social and economic factors and their influences on age at first marriage using the indirect measurement Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM) due to the lack of actual age at first marriage's documentation from 2004 to 2010. SMAM, proposed by Hajnal (1953) in his study about the marriage boom in Western industrial countries, is designed to compute a population's mean age at first marriage from the proportion of that population's single people at each age level. SMAM is expressed as

$$SMAM = \frac{1}{1 - p_{50}} \sum_{x=15}^{50} (p_x - p_{50})$$

where p denotes the sum of never-married proportions of the population from age 15 to 50, while 50 denotes the assumption that all first marriages take place by age 50. Hence, SMAM assumes

that individuals generally marry at the same time. This can potentially lead to selection bias in the calculation since SMAM only includes the proportion of the population that remains single, resulting in an upward bias, i.e., true mean age at first marriage can be lower than the estimate (Saxena et al. 2004). Moreover, SMAM does not account for the changes in marriage patterns because it only looks at marriage market at a single point in time; thus, it fails to capture the trends in marriage patterns, which is also a problem for cross-sectional data (Abeysekera 2010; Booth 2001; Carmichael 2011). Another assumption employed by SMAM is that sexual intercourse only happens in marriage, which should not be an issue since cohabitation is not very common in Vietnam. Despite these limitations, I still employ SMAM in the analysis because of its simplicity and minimal data requirements.

There is no analysis that has examined the determinants of entry into marriage in Vietnam using SMAM. Thus, this study will contribute to the literature on union formation and age at first marriage in Vietnam.

II. Literature Review

One of the first marriage frameworks is proposed by Becker (1974, 1981). In his “marital search” model, embedded with foundational assumptions of the economic approach of utility maximization, marriages happen when individuals have successfully assessed the gains from the prospect of marriage. In other words, one decides to marry when it is more beneficial for him to marry someone than to remain single. Thus, age at marriage hinges on the duration of the search and the time when one enters the “search market,” which in turn determines fertility rate and population growth. Based on this theory, various studies have been conducted worldwide, in terms of the relationship between age at first marriage and factors such as economic background,

marriage stability and family background (Becker et al. 1977; Michael and Brandon 1985; Xie et al. 2003). The patterns of age at first marriage have also been observed and it is documented that it has increased among both men and women in developing and developed countries (Smith 1980). On the other hand, given the large variation of economic and social development between each country and region, the trends are unique to each nation.

In Asia, the change in age at first marriage can be explained by the constantly changing nature of family structure and institutions reflected by the demographic and socioeconomic determinants. Delayed marriage, reduced fertility, urbanization and migration to overseas happen as industrialization occurs. Further modernization also brings structural change in the labor market, which increases job opportunities for females, resulting in the change of women's roles in society. Arranged marriage is mainly prohibited, young people have more freedom of marital choices and they put less importance on marriage. Most of the studies in Asia focus on female age at first marriage, or only mention about male age at first marriage as a variable to measure the age gap between spouses. Economic prospects and education play important roles in the likelihood of engaging in a marriage, with a general pattern where education and urbanization delay marriage (Carmichael 2011).

The relationship can be complicated given each country's characteristics. For example, in the case of China, the effect of education is directly linked with housing prices, while in India, the association is less visible due to unobserved factors which can influence both schooling and marriage (Dommaraju 2009; Jia and Yu 2013). The emphasis on individual attributes, which leads to a preference for smaller families, delays age at marriage in Sri Lanka (Abeysekera 2010; De Silva 1997). For the pious regions, religion has a large influence on entry into marriage. Buddhism and Christianity increase age at first marriage, while Islam works in the opposite

direction (Sheela and Audinarayana 2000; Wayachut 1993). The cultural differences between regions further complicate the trends in each country.

To my knowledge, there are only four studies that directly address the issue of age at first marriage in Vietnam. All of these studies address an increasing trend in age at first marriage, with a more significant increase of female age at first marriage than that of male. Arguably, L. Nguyen (1993) and M. Nguyen (1997)'s studies laid out the framework, while Vu (2009) and B. Nguyen (2012) examined the marriage market in Vietnam after the 1986 Renovation. Nevertheless, due to the lack of data availability, these studies could only focus on the determinants of actual age at first marriage during intermittent periods of time. Thus, my analysis focuses on the most recent time period from 2004 to 2010 while combining the SMAM method to scrutinize the determinants of entry into marriage.

III. Data

The 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010 Vietnamese Household Living Standards Surveys conducted by the General Statistics Office every two years are used for the analysis. These are cross-sectional data since the interviews are conducted with different households and individuals. On the other hand, since the surveys include very detailed information on the socio-economic history of each respondent, I am able to construct annual measures for the hypothesis. In this study, all of the respondents are included.

The dependent variable in the analysis is SMAM. The independent variables are chosen based on the study of marriage framework by Dixon (1971). The framework essentially states that entry into marriage depends on three factors: availability, feasibility and desirability. Availability is defined as the sex ratio of individuals of marriageable age, with the assumption of

free choice in marriage as opposed to arranged marriage. Feasibility is measured by the financial and residential dependence of the married couple. It is higher where joint family, a family unit that includes two or more generations, is the norm since the couple has more support from their families. Desirability is determined by the availability of social and institutional alternatives to marriage and childbearing.

Vietnam fits the assumption of free choice marriage with high feasibility and desirability because of its joint family structure and high social pressure to get married placed upon individuals. In this study, the variable measure availability is the ratio of total males aged 28-31 to total female aged 25-29 (*MF*). The three-year age gap is adapted to reflect the typical SMAM gap in Asia (Polachek et al. 2009). To measure feasibility, the percentage of males aged 28-31 who are employed (*Work_M*), the percentage of males who are working in agriculture (*Agr_M*) (presuming that marriage is more probable among farmers), the percentage of total population living in urban area which serves as a proxy for province-specific characteristics (*Urban*) (assuming that marriage is more feasible in rural than urban areas) and the gross domestic product per head (*GDP*) are used as variables. *Work_M* and *Agr_M* can potentially be collinear with each other, i.e., the correlations between them are too strong. Nevertheless, they are still used in the model in order to discern the effects of both the labor market and the agrarian culture in Vietnam. The number of children per 100 married women aged 15-50, which reflects the desirability of children (*Children*), the percentage of females employed at age 25-29 (*Work_F*) and the percentage of females who are literate at age 25-29, which implies the opportunity cost for females to engage in marriage (*Educ_F*), are the variables to measure desirability.

IV. Method

I use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression as the analytical tool because it can show the direct relationship between age at first marriage and the socio-economic determinants. According to Woodridge (2009), the model is presented as

$$y_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{i,t} + u_{i,t}$$

In my study, the equation would be

$$SMAM_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 MF_t + \beta_2 Work_M_t + \beta_3 Agr_M_t + \beta_4 Urban_t + \beta_5 GDP_t + \beta_6 Children_t + \beta_7 Work_F_t + \beta_8 Educ_F_t$$

where t denotes different years from 2004 to 2010. I will run two separate regressions, one is for females and the other one is for males in order to discern the effects of the independent variables on each gender. The difference between two β_0 from each equation will show the gap in age at first marriage between females and males. To my knowledge, no research has been conducted on this particular gender issue using SMAM. Thus, my model can appear to be basic, but I hope to provide a framework to assist further in-depth research in this field.

V. Results

In multiple regressions, different variables remain in male and female models and some are dropped out because of collinearity. This is also mentioned in Dixon (1971); specifically, SMAM is highly correlated with desirability, less with feasibility and least with availability. Thus, we expect some desirability variables to be omitted from the models. The results are shown in the following equations:

$$\text{SMAM (Males)} = 21.19 + 1.5MF - 0.01\text{Work_M} + 0.05\text{Urban} - 0.001\text{Children}$$

$$(9.05) \quad (0.375) \quad (0.004) \quad (0.013) \quad (0.005)$$

$$+ 0.003\text{Work_F}$$

$$(0.001)$$

$$R^2 = 0.712$$

$$\text{SMAM (Females)} = 21.47 + 1.3 MF - 0.04\text{Work_M} + 0.08\text{Urban} - 0.03\text{Children}$$

$$(5.368) \quad (2.602) \quad (0.02) \quad (0.114) \quad (0.033)$$

$$+ 0.001\text{Work_F} + 0.103\text{Educ_F}$$

$$(0.001) \quad (0.036)$$

$$R^2 = 0.658$$

There are some interpretations that can be drawn from these results. Firstly, the SMAM gap between males and females is not significant. Secondly, in terms of availability, the sex ratio *MF*, reflecting the gender unbalance, largely affects age at first marriage of males in Vietnam. This supports the increasingly unbalanced sex ratio in Vietnam because of the traditional preference for sons in families (Vu 2013). As families deliberately choose to have sons over daughters, the availability of males overwhelms that of females, resulting in the marriage squeeze for males.

With respect to feasibility, the proportion of working males aged 28-31 decreases the age at first marriage for both men and women. Also, living in urban area increases age at first marriage for males, which supports the original assumption that urbanization delays marriage.

In terms of desirability, the number of children per 100 married women acts as social pressure on both genders, shown by its negative relationship with SMAM. The higher the number of children is, the lower age at marriage for both males and females will be. Fertility is a universal concern, and even more so in Vietnam with its agrarian economy and its intensive labor need. Moreover, ancestor worship, where the future generation takes care of their

ancestors' souls after their death, increases the need of having children, especially sons. Female participation in labor force, as expected, has the opposite effect as male participation rate has on age at first marriage. Thus, it is more challenging for females who work to simultaneously enter the marriage market. Literacy level of females has a similar effect on SMAM of females, as being literate increases the age at first marriage. Females with education or work have alternatives other than entering the marriage market, which delays their marriage.

VI. Conclusion

In this chapter I have identified the determinants of entry into marriage for males and females in Vietnam using the Vietnamese Household Living Standards Surveys from 2004 to 2010 conducted by the Vietnamese General Office of Statistics. My hypothesis is that socioeconomic factors such as fertility, education, urbanization and work force participation influence age at first marriage, measured by SMAM, in various directions, based on the marriage framework proposed by Dixon (1971). The hypothesis is examined by ordinary least squares method.

On the other hand, there are various unobserved factors that can potentially affect entry into marriage, such as individual characteristics that cannot be controlled for in the equation, e.g., ability (Marchetta 2012). Thus, the results maybe heavily affected by omitted variable bias, which can lead to over- or underestimating the estimates used in the regression. Specifically, omitting ability variable creates an upward bias for the estimate of education, assuming that ability and other variables are uncorrelated, since individuals with high ability level will be more likely to have a high educational level. Also, the increasing Western influence on Vietnamese culture can potentially erode the tradition of universal marriages in Vietnam (Jia and Yu 2013).

For example, traditionally cohabitation is not a common practice in Vietnam; nevertheless, it is possible that the practice has become more popular, and the possibility of premarital pregnancy can alter marriage's function as the gate to fertility (A. B. Sorensen and A. Sorensen 1985). Thus, this is an area where more research is needed in order to have a more accurate measurement of age at first marriage, since SMAM fails to capture the exposure to sexual intercourse before marriage.

Nevertheless, the chapter provides an insightful look into the marriage market in Vietnam. The narrow gap of SMAM between males and females illustrates the positive change in the marriage market. Spouses can have more equal stances in the family, since younger partners have less power and less say in the relationship when the gap is wide (Carmichael 2011). Moreover, a small SMAM gap shows better spousal communication and leads to more stable relationships, so spouses tend to be more committed to their marriages (Palamuleni 2010). On the other hand, the government can facilitate the entry into marriage process for female workers by providing a more flexible maternal leave and childcare system. Hence, appropriate policies and further studies are much needed on this topic of entry into marriage.

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Chapter 3

Educational Assortative Marriage Patterns

I. Introduction

Marriage is perceived as one of the most important life decisions. It serves as an institution which creates a lifelong commitment supported by society and law between two individuals. Marriage patterns are indicators of various aspects of society, such as social openness and inequality (Kalmijn 1991; Mare 1991; Park and Smits 2005). Thus, it is crucial to examine the way individuals choose partners in marriage because the selection process determines the quality of these matches (Bumpass and Sweet 1972; Oppenheimer 1988). In the present study, individuals' mating preference for similarity in educational background in Vietnam is investigated. Grounded on previous research, I hypothesize that people tend to marry within their educational groups, i.e. educational homogamy. I also expect educational hypergamy, where women marry men with higher levels of education, to be less prevalent in the marriage market, and hypogamy, where women marry men with lower levels of education, to be the least common trend among these three educational marriage patterns.

To my knowledge, in the Vietnamese context, no research exists on educational assortative marriage patterns. Marriage in developing countries like Vietnam plays an important role in the society and individuals' lives. Until 30 years ago, being unmarried is considered to be unacceptable for men above 40 years old and women above 30 years old (Phạm 1999). This pressure is particularly strong for women, because reproduction is one of the priorities in

Vietnamese families. Thus, marriage is not simply individual choices and it is usually influenced by their friends and families.

Arranged marriage was effective when the preferences of parents and children diverged. The most important factor that parents usually looked for in potential children-in-law is family compatibility [môn đăng hộ đối] where two families came from the same social class background. Nevertheless, with educational expansion, education became accessible for individuals and it gave them more bargaining power, not only relatively to their parents, but also in the marriage market (Belanger and Khuat 2001). This, combined with the 1959 Marriage and Family Law which provides protection for women from various marriage practices including forced and arranged marriage, led to a decline in arranged marriage and an increase in educational assortative mating trends (Emran, Maret-Rakotondrazaka and Smith 2012; Jayakody and Vu 2008).

Young adults now have more freedom in choosing their partners. They look for complementary traits in potential partners, who they will be more likely to meet at school or at work (Oppenheimer 1988). As the vibrant economy in Vietnam becomes increasingly competitive, education level plays an important role in the selection process. Young people estimate their potential partners' future characteristics based on the incomplete information that is currently available, which is education in many cases. They consider education as an indicator for their families' future economic prosperity. As a result, educational homogamy was induced (Kalmijn 1998; Oppenheimer 1994; Qian 1998).

The approach taken in this study is to examine education as a key determinant of the marriage selection process in Vietnam. There is no Vietnamese study that has examined the effects of education on marriage selection separately. This article is an attempt to fill the

incomplete documentation about the importance of educational mating and its patterns in Vietnam from 2004 to 2010. In other words, it will discern individuals' preference in their spouses' educational levels.

II. Literature Review

Although mate selection process is influenced by a host of factors that are beyond individuals' control, educational assortative mating is a very useful measure of assortative mating (Eckland 1968). Educational institutions create marriage markets for young adults in which they compete for most suitable partners with attractive resources and provide theirs in exchange (Mare 1991; Torche 2010). Education background also indicates desirable life styles and cultural interests and resources of individuals, which serve as crucial signals in the marriage selection process (Dimaggio and Mohr 1985; Hou and Myles 2008; Torche 2010). Thus, many studies have been done to examine whether educational assortative mating exists and how the pattern differs between countries and in time, and they have discerned a common pattern of educational similarities in marriage (Epstein and Guttman 1984; Jaffe and Chacon-Puignau 1995; Kalmijn 1991; Mare 1991; Schwartz and Mare 2005).

There are a large number of researchers that focus on educational assortative marriage in Asia. Cross-national studies on the association between economic development and educational assortative marriage have included countries neighboring to Vietnam, such as China, South Korea and Hong Kong, but not Vietnam itself due to the lack of available data during the periods of interest (Smits and Park 2009; Smits et al. 1998). Extensive research on each of these neighboring countries has been done because they have very distinct cultural and economic development backgrounds. After World War II, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore

experienced the “Asian Economic Miracle” between 1960 and 2000. Coincidentally, these countries were considered to be more “westernized” than others in Asia. In other parts of Asia, it was until 1990 that Malaysia, Thailand, and later Indonesia and China showed rapid economic growth. There was also a growth lag in countries in South East Asia, such as the Philippines, Laos and Cambodia (Smits and Park 2009). Thus, these characteristics explain the difference in educational assortative marriage patterns. Educational homogamy and hypergamy are found in China (Han 2010; Qian 2012); homogamy is present in South Korea (Park 1991; Park and Smits 2005; Seong 2002); while a trend in educational intermarriage prevails in Hong Kong (Zhuang 2008).

In Vietnam, although educational assortative marriage patterns have not been observed, one can argue that educational hypergamy and homogamy exist because of Confucianism. Confucianism is widespread from class to class (Phạm 1999). Confucian traditions focus on formal education, using it as a tool for upward social mobility and emphasize traditional family orientation. Women are expected to fulfill a subordinate social role because they are the sole care-taker of domestic matters (Nguyen 2005). This leaves the role of a bread-winner for men, which creates a strong tendency for women to seek men with higher educational levels because of the close association between education and economic prosperity. On the other hand, modernization and globalization, which led to an increase in females’ labor force participation and more equal division of labor within families, emphasized the role of education, an important determinant of employment, for both men and women. Thus, individuals, tend to place importance on education in their partner choices, which induces homogamy (Smits and Park 2009). As a result, one can expect a higher level of prevalence of homogamy than that of hypergamy in the modern Vietnamese society. Nevertheless, there is no clear-cut conclusion in

regard to this subject. Although this paper cannot decompose the patterns on specific details, such as fertility rate, economic openness or gender inequality, it can document and provide a framework for the trends in educational assortative mating in Vietnam, which can be used as reference for future analysis.

III. Data

The analysis relies on the 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010 Vietnamese Household Living Standards Surveys which are conducted by the General Statistics Office every two years. The surveys are useful because of their large sample size, which can lead to potential depth and precision in the analysis of educational assortative patterns. The data set is the most detailed and official information about different aspects of households and communities in Vietnam, including socioeconomic factors and marriage-related determinants. The data provide information on household members' health, households' income, expenditures, assets and accommodation as well as the variables that are the focus of this study: marital status, relationship with head of household, education and age. Although the interviews followed the same procedures, they were not conducted with the same households. Thus, the data set is cross-sectional, which prevents me from controlling the effects of unobserved individual characteristics over time. I use the data set for my study, nevertheless, because it is large, informative and detailed.

Because the data set is only available for households and communities, data on couples are generated by the following procedure. I employ a methodology constructed by Le and Pham (2009) to create a unique identification number for each household using its geographical location, such as province, district, commune, area, and household number. The next step is to

create a couple within each household. “Currently married” individuals are selected based on marital status variable; “the head of household” and “spouse” are selected based on relationship to head of household variable; “the household identification” number is sorted; and finally husband and wife’s information is matched to household identification number. Among all individuals, 14,374 from 2004 survey, 14,678 from 2006 survey, 14,656 from 2008 survey and 14,962 from 2010 survey are matched as husbands and wives.

In assortative marriage study, there are two types of marriage that can be used, which are first marriage and prevailing marriage. In this data set, information on age or date of marriage is not available, thus, prevailing marriage is used in this chapter. Although prevailing marriage can be used to study the implications of assortative mating, it does not reflect the impact of union dissolution and remarriage on the overall trend in educational homogamy, thus, it tends to overemphasize a declining homogamy rate over time (Blossfeld 2009; Mare 1991). I try to limit this effect by controlling for age of wife from 18 to 44 years old, which is the age group in which people are mostly first married. The sample size is contracted to 24,016 individuals from four surveys.

Education attainment is observed as specific levels of degree attained, starting with *no schooling* and ending with *doctor degree*. I categorize education into five groups: lower than high school (<12 years of schooling), high school (12 years of schooling), some college (12-13 years of schooling), college (13-16 years of schooling) and beyond college (>16 years of schooling). The changes in educational attainment for husbands and wives in this study are shown in Table 1. In general, the educational distribution did not change substantially for both women and men. Overall, husbands and wives have achieved similar levels of education. Homogamous marriage is the most significant educational assortative marriage pattern, and its

trend is roughly consistent over time (80.35% in 2004, 80.39% in 2006, 80.4% in 2008 and 80.39% in 2010). Hypogamous marriage only constitutes to less than 10% of all marriages. On the other hand, there is a slight decrease in hypergamous marriage over the same period (12.22% in 2004, 10.48% in 2006, 10.88% in 2008 and 10.01% in 2010), while the overall marriage rate stays relatively stable (61.27% in 2004, 61.35% in 2006, 62.45% in 2008 and 62.68% in 2010).

IV. Methods

I use log-linear models for contingency tables to analyze educational assortative marriage patterns because they can control for differences among educational structures over time. Namely, they discern the patterns that stem from variation in the marginal distributions of husbands' and wives' education from the ones that reflect the association between their traits (Schwartz and Mare 2005). I produce the contingency table by cross-classifying the husband's educational attainment with the wife's educational attainment by year. The four different surveys yield a 100-cell table ($5 \times 5 \times 4 = 100$). Each cell represents the number of marriages between individuals with the same levels of education. The diagonal cells in the table illustrate educational homogamous marriage.

I start with a baseline model which assumes that there is no association between husband's and wife's education. It represents the variation in the distribution of husband's and wife's education by year

$$\log F_{ijk} = \lambda + \lambda_i^H + \lambda_j^W + \lambda_{ik}^{HY} + \lambda_{jk}^{WY}$$

where H is husband's education ($i = 1, \dots, 5$), W is wife's education ($j = 1, \dots, 5$), and Y is year ($k = 1, \dots, 4$). Thus, F_{ijl} represents the expected frequency of marriages between husbands and wives from education categories i and j , respectively, in year k .

Next, the two-way interaction between husband's and wife's education, which is the pattern of assortative mating, is added to the model. There are three main models that I employ. I use homogamy model to generate the summary estimates and crossing model to further examine the causes of trends in the homogamy parameters if applicable. Homogamy model is based on one parameter illustrating the odds that husbands and wives have the same rather than different levels of education. Crossings model, on the other hand, uses a series of barriers to marriage between different educational groups. A homogamy model is

$$\log F_{ijk} = \text{Baseline model} + \gamma_{ok}^{OY}$$

where $O_o = 1$ if husband's education is the same as wife's education and 0 otherwise. γ_{ok}^{OY} measures the change in the likelihood of homogamy in year k compared to the baseline year (2004). A crossing model is, according to Schwartz and Mare (2005),

$$\log F_{ijk} = \text{Baseline model} + \gamma_{ijk}^{HWY}$$

where

- 1) $\gamma_{ijk}^{HWY} = \sum_{q-j}^{i-1} \gamma_{qk}^{CY}$ for $i > j$
- 2) $\gamma_{ijk}^{HWY} = \sum_{q-i}^{j-1} \gamma_{qk}^{CY}$ for $i < j$
- 3) $\gamma_{ijk}^{HWY} = 0$ for $i = j$

The parameters measure the hindrance of overcoming educational barrier q in year 1 compared to the baseline year (2004). The parameters are presented in Table 2 (Schwartz and Mare 2005). Each parameter is equivalent to one move across levels of schooling of spouses. Lastly, as mentioned above, the marriage tradition in Vietnam might result in hypergamy, that is, women tend to marry men with more education. The model is

$$\log F_{ijk} = \text{Baseline model} + \gamma_{ij}$$

where $i > j$.

V. Results

The four models are used in different combinations to detect the patterns of association between education levels of husbands and wives. Table 3 presents the test for these models, which includes the number of degrees of freedom (df), the likelihood ratio (G^2) and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC). Lower G^2 and more negative BIC specify a statistically better-fitting model (Han 2010). On the other hand, because the sample size is large, BIC is used as the main indicator (Zhuang 2008).

The baseline model, which does not allow interaction between husband's education and wife's education, has a substantially high BIC. It fits the data poorly relative to other models which include the spouses' education's interaction. In other words, the interaction between spouses' education is significant. In other models, I combine different parameters to examine the trends. Model 2 is the homogamy model that examines the tendency for couples to marry within the same educational groups. Model 3 is crossing model which examines the difficulty of crossing educational barriers. Models 4, 5 and 6 incorporate different parameters for changes in the marriage patterns. Model 4 is the combination of Model 2 and Model 3, crossing and homogamy models. Model 5 represents homogamy and hypergamy trends. Model 6 has three different parameters, which are crossing, hypergamy and homogamy.

The BIC indicates that homogamy model fits the data the best. That is to say, homogamy exists based on the data from 2004 to 2010. The next step is to analyze the trend yearly. Table 5 shows the trend of the odds that husbands and wives have the same levels of education resulted from Model 2. As the model is based on the interaction between spouses' education and then estimates the year variance by the homogamy model, the odds present the relative odds of the trend rather than the absolute odds of homogamy. In the 6-year period, the odds of educational

homogamy are persistent. From 2004 to 2008, husbands and wives were three, four, and five times more likely to have spouses who had the same educational levels as themselves than they were to marry someone who did not. The result is consistent with the trend in the percentage of homogamy in Table 1; the odds of homogamy slightly increase from 2004 to 2008.

Nevertheless, from 2008 to 2010, it shows a much more significant decrease in the odds of homogamy. The odds decrease from 4.06 to 2.09 times the odds of intermarriage, or by 48.52%. Husbands and wives were still two times more likely to have spouses who are in the same educational categories as themselves, but this is much lower compared to the previous years from 2004 to 2008 where individuals were three to four times more likely to have the same levels of education as their spouses. This change is also more remarkable than the change in homogamy percentage. The decline can possibly be a result of the financial distress in 2008 where unskilled females workers experienced tremendous difficulties (Mac 2009). This effect strengthened both cohabitation and transnational marriage trends in Vietnam as these tactics could be used as efficient economic tools. While cohabitation decreases the cost of living because partners can pool their resources and share the cost, the brides in transnational marriage can earn money abroad and send it back to their families (Belanger and Tran 2011; P.A. Nguyen 2007). These trends were also reported to be more common among individuals with low educational levels; as a result, both homogamous and hypergamous marriage declined. On the other hand, as mentioned above, because the analysis is drawn from prevailing marriage, this decline might be overemphasized.

Overall, these results are expected as the literature suggests that educational homogamy exists in Vietnam. Nevertheless, the decline in homogamous marriage can equate to an increasing trend in intermarriage in regard to educational attainment. As Vietnam's economic

development level increases, the trend in educational homogamy is expected to decline based on the general openness hypothesis which uses educational homogamy as an indicator of social openness (Smits et al. 1998). On the other hand, the decline in homogamous marriage might not be permanent and further studies are needed to track this issue more thoroughly. Hypergamy, where women marry men with higher education than themselves, is not found in the data. This can be explained by the fact that women are getting more bargaining power in the marriage market. There is a constant growth in the sex-ratio, measured by the proportion of males to females in the population, for age group 20-40 from roughly 90% in 1979 to more than 100% in 2009, showing the consequence of male offspring preference in the Vietnamese society (Vietnam General Statistics Office 2011; Vu 2013). Women value education and jobs as much as men do, which ultimately gives them more independence and less tendency look for men who have more secure future outlooks. In any case, the study is able to discern educational homogamy marriage patterns in Vietnam from 2004 to 2010.

VI. Conclusion

Education has a prominent effect on marriage as it is a key element in the mating selection process. Using data from the 2004 to 2010 Vietnamese Household Living Standards Surveys, I examine the trends in educational assortative marriage in Vietnam, using the log linear analysis methodology. There is no evidence of hypergamy, while homogamy shows strong yet inconsistent patterns in Vietnam from 2004 to 2010. The odds of educational homogamy increase from 2004 to 2008 and decrease from 2008 to 2010.

Nevertheless, these trends should be interpreted with caution. In this research, I only focus on prevailing marriages. Consequently, the results may be subject to biases resulting from

union dissolution, establishment of new unions and educational change after marriage, although I try to limit this effect by choosing the more recently formed unions. The study also analyzes the trends in marriage in a relative short period of time (6 years), which makes it challenging to analyze other effects that potentially affect marriage market, such as educational expansion, labor market structure and economic development level.

The problem of omitted variable bias, where causal factors are not included in the models, also exists in the study. The bias can be a result of unobserved individual ability as well as unobserved parental and individual preferences, and it is very challenging to identify the direction of the bias. For example, individuals who are raised by more progressive parents will have more freedom in their spouse choices and their parents also invest more in their education. In other cases where parents are less supportive of individuals' decisions, individuals can either choose to obey or resist their parents' preferences, which leads to either higher education if they oppose the pressure of early marriage or lower education if they resist the pressure of demanding education. Furthermore, even though education is considered as one of the prominent factors that affect marriage, it is not the only one. Education is tied with income in regard to marriage selection, and the complexity of the relation between these two factors makes the selection process much more intricate.

Despite this inherent intricacy, assortative patterns have important implications. An increase in homogamous marriage can indicate greater social distance between social groups as people tend to marry within their own educational groups, which in turn generates intergenerational effects such as increasing income inequality across families and widening gap between social classes. Thus, further studies are needed in this area, given the changing context

of marriage in Vietnam with the coexistence of traditional values and modern practices such as cohabitation and cross-border marriage.

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of Husband's and Wife's Educational Attainment in Vietnam: 2004–2010

Wife's Education	Husband's Education					Total
	<HS	HS	Some College	College	Beyond	
2004						
<HS	74.16	8.80	0.38	0.64	0.06	84.05
HS	5.74	5.90	0.22	1.50	0.00	13.37
Some College	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.51	0.03	1.50
College	0.16	0.29	0.00	0.45	0.06	0.96
Beyond	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.03	0.03	0.13
Total	80.38	15.37	0.93	3.13	0.19	100.00
<i>N</i> = 6,270						
2006						
<HS	75.68	8.09	0.35	0.62	0.03	84.78
HS	5.12	6.05	0.07	1.11	0.00	12.35
Some College	0.31	0.28	0.31	0.14	0.00	1.04
College	0.21	0.38	0.03	1.11	0.07	1.80
Beyond	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.03
Total	81.32	14.80	0.76	2.97	0.14	100.00
<i>N</i> = 5,872						
2008						
<HS	75.24	8.53	0.22	0.51	0.11	84.62
HS	4.58	5.82	0.11	0.81	0.00	11.32
Some College	0.44	0.48	0.33	0.33	0.00	1.58
College	0.29	0.48	0.04	1.36	0.26	2.42
Beyond	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.07
Total	80.59	15.31	0.70	3.00	0.40	100.00
<i>N</i> = 5,460						
2010						
<HS	77.37	7.63	0.46	1.51	0.06	87.02
HS	6.86	1.97	0.06	0.25	0.00	9.13
Some College	0.58	0.12	0.06	0.06	0.00	0.83
College	1.54	0.62	0.12	0.62	0.06	2.95
Beyond	0.03	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.06
Total	86.38	10.33	0.74	2.43	0.12	100.00
<i>N</i> = 6,504						

Table 2. Parameters for Crossings Effects on Educational Assortative Marriage

Wife Education	Husband's Education				
	< HS	HS	Some College	College	Beyond
< HS	0	γ_1	$\gamma_1 + \gamma_2$	$\gamma_1 + \gamma_2 + \gamma_3$	$\gamma_1 + \gamma_2 + \gamma_3 + \gamma_4$
HS	γ_1	0	γ_2	$\gamma_2 + \gamma_3$	$\gamma_2 + \gamma_3 + \gamma_4$
Some College	$\gamma_1 + \gamma_2$	γ_2	0	γ_3	$\gamma_3 + \gamma_4$
College	$\gamma_1 + \gamma_2 + \gamma_3$	$\gamma_2 + \gamma_3$	γ_3	0	γ_4
Beyond	$\gamma_1 + \gamma_2 + \gamma_3 + \gamma_4$	$\gamma_2 + \gamma_3 + \gamma_4$	$\gamma_3 + \gamma_4$	γ_4	0

Table 3. Log-linear Models of Educational Assortative Marriages in Vietnam: 2004-2010

Model	Description	df	G ²	BIC
1	Baseline	49	11846.948	11302.42
2	Homogamy	30	7.170e-13	-333.3824
3	Crossings	22	8.740e-13	-244.4804
4	Crossings, homogamy	19	1.209e-12	-211.1422
5	Homogamy, hypergamy	27	1.022e-12	-300.0442
6	Crossings, hypergamy, homogamy	16	9.464e-13	-177.8039

Table 4. Homogamy Parameters for Educational Assortative Mating in Vietnam: 2004-2010

Year	Parameter	Odds	Z-value
2004	1.26***	3.54	21.78
2006	1.44***	4.26	23.29
2008	1.53***	4.60	23.56
2010	0.73***	2.09	10.77

Note: *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<0.001

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Chapter 4

Divorce Overview

I. Introduction

Divorce is a topic of interest in various professional and academic fields. It puts an end to union formation and breaks down family, the production unit of any society (Isen and Stevenson 2010). Thus, the social implications of divorce are significant. Although divorce is one of the solutions to some marital problems, and it might even help to maintain the ethical boundaries of marriage, its negative impact on the involved parties, including not only the partners, but also their children, families and friends, is unavoidable. As a result, divorce deserves large policy consideration. In Vietnam, the issue is still highly stigmatized and it is seen as the last resort to resolve marriage conflicts. This chapter is an attempt to give an overview about divorce in the fast-changing culture in Vietnam during the first decade of the 21st century.

Divorce is considered a taboo in Vietnam. Natal parents normally do not welcome women who initiate the divorce process. These women suffer from a public scorn and even kill their children's hopes for marriage into good families because they are considered as a disgrace to the family (Arnett 2001; Locke et al. 2013). This goes back to the Confucian influence resulted from an entire millennium of Chinese domination in Vietnam. This system of social values and ethics of behavior is based on "duties and obligations of [the] family" and serves as a core of the patriarchal society (Walsh 2011, 65). Thus, the family's interest is prioritized over individual needs. Among individuals, women and men are not treated equally. Women are

supposed to prioritize the needs of the men in the family, whether it is their father, their husband or their son [tam tông].

Nevertheless, gender inequality was challenged as the French Indochina War approached Vietnam in 1930s. Women participated in every aspect of the war, from supporting base to combat line, and this was achieved after much effort from the Communist Party with its women's liberty movements initiated by Ho Chi Minh (Long 2008). The issue was pushed further by the economic renovation in 1986 [Đổi Mới], which started with an economic liberalization process and was accompanied with various social exposures to the Western values and traditions, one of which was feminism. Moreover, with the establishment of various women organizations, such as the Vietnam Women's Union in 1930, along with the globalization process that exposed the country to outside influences, women's rights were significantly improved with education and employment opportunities that were made available to them (VWU 2005).

On the other hand, Confucianism is still deeply rooted in the culture, and women and men are still treated differently. Women remain the main caretaker of children; they are responsible for family happiness, and often referred to as the "flame keeper of the family" [người giữ lửa trong gia đình]. The metaphor itself reflects the social expectation of women, not only to be the ones who are in charge of domestic chores, such as cooking, as they have to look after the actual kitchen flame, but also to be the ones who resolve family conflicts at their costs. They are to blame if divorce happens. With this context, the chapter aims to give an overview of divorce in Vietnam in the last decade from 2000 to 2010, and to contribute to the literature about divorce in Vietnam, since the topic is not under much scrutiny.

II. Literature Review

There are various theories about divorce and the reasons leading to the dissolution of marriage, most of which are based on the context of the Western culture. Built on the specialization theory of family by Oppenheimer (1997), where wives specialize in domestic chores and husbands focus on activities outside of home to maximize the level of utility produced by the family, Isen and Stevenson (2010) shed light on divorce by explaining that the benefit of union formation had shifted from production efficiencies to consumption efficiencies, in the context that the level of leisure and consumption had been increased after industrialization took place. Since family disposable income enables consumption complementarities, divorce will happen more often among those who have a lower level of disposable income. Another common approach is through the search theory proposed by Becker (1981) where the marriage market is viewed as a labor market, and potential matches are similar to potential employers and employees. Marriage happens after individuals select the optimal gains that they can get from their match, and divorce takes place due to the intrinsic problem of information asymmetry, i.e., when people have wrong expectations of their future spouses (Becker et al. 1977; Lichter et al. 1995; Weiss 1997).

In the East, the emphasis of family is placed upon the kinship system, which serves as a basic organizational unit where most social activities occur, e.g., labor division and resources distribution (Thornton and Fricke 1987). Divorce is a relatively new concept in Asia where marriage is considered as a universal and sacred life event which binds not only the two individuals but also their two families together. Divorce rates are lower here compared to other parts of the world. It is seen as a failure by persons who are involved with the couple, such as their families, friends and colleagues (Quah 2003). Although there are mixed views about the

effect of modernization on divorce, the common finding is that, with the rapid economic and social developments in Asia, the divorce rate is higher. Factors such as urbanization, increasing female labor force participation and overall high level of education led to lower level of interdependence in the family and loosened the family ties (Chen 2012; Heaton et al. 2001; Park and Raymo 2013).

Young people not only seek individual fulfillment and satisfaction but also express more negative views and attitudes about marriage than the older generation (Dommaraju and Jones 2011; Hirschman and Teerawitchitchainan 2003; Westley 1998). The divorce rates vary between different regions in the continent: it is low and stable in South Asia and Southeast Asia but is rising in East Asia (Choe et al. 2002; Jones 2010). The more economically advanced countries, such as Japan, Taiwan and Korea, have higher and increasing divorce rates. They also have lower marriage rates, higher age at first marriage and higher frequency of cohabitation and out-of-wedlock births (Yang and Yen 2011).

In the case of Vietnam, divorce is usually mentioned in studies as a cause or result of other social phenomena. For example, migration from rural to urban areas due to economic liberalization leads to the breakup of households as men tend to start a second family in the city where they migrate to (Summerfield 1997). In my knowledge, a study about Vietnam conducted by Le (1986) gives the most detailed look about its divorce culture, including the reasons leading to divorce and the regional divorce disparities between rural and urban areas throughout the 1970s and the first half of the '80s. Interestingly, as mentioned above, women were still to blame when it comes to divorce, as the author discusses about how young wives created bad habits for husbands as they showed too much sacrifice in marriage, which later on led to family conflicts because of wrong expectation between the couples. Given the dynamic cultural landscape of

Vietnam, changes have occurred, and this chapter is an attempt to fill the gap in literature by recording these changes and giving a more updated overview about divorce in the 21st century.

III. Divorce in Contemporary Vietnam

Even though divorce was briefly mentioned in the Marriage and Family Law in Vietnam in 1959, allowing women to file for divorce, it was not until the 1986 Marriage and Family Law that the divorce procedure was formally established in Vietnam (Malarney 1998). Family dissolution was not a problematic issue in Vietnam, since the country has one of the lowest divorce rates in the world with 1 divorce per 10,000 persons or less than 2% for individuals above 15 years old since 1990s (Bhasin 2011; GSO 2011).

Nevertheless, in anticipation of the effects that globalization and modernization had on the marriage market, the state laid out the divorce procedure in a way that could potentially impede divorce. The process' complication is reflected by the law, stating that two parties have to show a serious reconciliation attempt first before being able to get a divorce, and the reconciliation effort is more demanded if the intention of divorce only comes from one of the two parties. Furthermore, if a child is less than 1 year old or if the mother is pregnant, it is prohibited for the husband to file for a divorce (Winsensale 1999). The most recent Marriage and Family Law in 2000, with its emphasis on family as the cells of the society, shifted its focus to women and children, who receive "special scrutiny," in order to protect these most vulnerable participants, as the Court now recognizes divorce "by consent and the agreement on property and children on the basis of ensuring the legitimate interests of the wife and children" (Kte'pi 2013; Walsh 2011-109). This perhaps serves as a response to the rising domestic violence issue that was criminalized under the same law.

On the other hand, the state provided a mixed response to domestic violence. State officials are said to encourage an abused woman to return to her husband, and to provide a mediation process to resolve domestic violence, which shows the state's priority of family interest over individual needs (Kwiatkowski 2011). Domestic violence is the second most common reason for divorce, after divergence in lifestyle, but a lot of women still choose to stay in marriage even though they are not happy with their marriage, due to the fear of social stigma, economic or child custody uncertainty. Thus, not only should the statistics of divorce be interpreted with caution because of the concealing culture and enduring discrimination, but also women are still subjected to heavy social pressure and principles (Bland 2011).

Women also suffer from a double standard, i.e., they are supposed to remain chaste before marriage but also to accommodate their husbands' sexual needs during marriage, while husbands are more permitted to seek extra-marital "entertainment" (Do and Fu 2010). Women's role in the family remains primarily reproduction. The pressure of having a child is intensified by the strong preference for sons, because sons can carry on ancestor worship practices and they have better economic productivity. Thus, women are held responsible if there is no son in the family (Johanson et al. 1996). In fact, there is evidence showing that couples who do not have a son have a higher probability of divorce (Dahl et al. 2004). The likelihood of having a divorce is also higher among couples who do not have any children, due to a "lack of attachment" (Dan 2014).

These traditional values and principles coexist with the modernity wave from the West after the economic renovation in 1986, and the turn toward modernity is increasingly more widespread among youth in Vietnam. Education and employment were made accessible for women, which increases gender equality, but also puts more weight on their shoulders, as they

have to “be excellent at work and perfect at home” [giỏi việc nước, đảm việc nhà] (Long 2008; Nguyen and Thomas 2004). Moreover, in contrast to Confucian ideology, what is perceived as “Westernization” in Vietnam brings forth an open social life with expressive forms of romantic love, sexual desires and drives. In fact, Vietnam had the highest rate of abortion in the world in 1999 (Gammeltoft 2003). Premarital sex, unmarried cohabitation, multiple dating, internet dating and shotgun marriage due to unplanned pregnancy are not so uncommon, especially in urban areas where modernization and liberalization happen more speedily (A. Nguyen 2007).

Although these practices are still discouraged by the majority of the population owing to their negative reflection of the involved parties, the change in sexuality perception is undeniable. This in turn leads to an increase in the number of women and children who are engaged in the sex industry due to the growing demand for sexuality. Along with the traditional perception of masculinity and patrilineage, this openness in sexuality creates social pressure and opportunity for men to engage in sexual activities, including extramarital ones, since sexual services acquisition demonstrates masculinity (Horton and Rydstrom 2011). Moreover, given their gendered privilege, husbands can blame their wives for not providing enough emotional and physical support, thus men’s engagement in extramarital activities is more accepted by society. Hence, even though infidelity is only the third most common reason for divorce, the reality tells a different story. As a result, it is not surprising that young women are reported to have much less expectation of having a happy family life compared to their male counterparts, and a lot of them seek happiness in foreign marriage markets (Nguyen et al. 2011; Walsh 2011).

The influence of globalization and modernization on divorce in Vietnam is not all negative. The positive impact can be seen in the increasing level of independence among women. Young women have higher levels of earnings, given the opportunities opened to them in the job

market (Nguyen and Thomas 2004). Personal happiness is more valued in marriage; the youth are more comfortable talking about sexuality, which leads to better sex knowledge, greater marriage communication and longer marriage (Bui 2010). The higher level of social openness also applies to divorce. The divorce rate is reported to have doubled every four years from 1975 to 2000, and increased by half in a six-year span from 2005 to 2011 with 88,000 divorce cases (Lan 2008; Nguyen H. 2011). Divorce is less of a taboo, and divorced women are less looked down upon by the society as they are praised for their bravery for filing divorce, even though some view the increased independence among women as an undesirable cause for the high rate in divorce (Bland 2011; “Vietnam faces sharp rise in divorce cases” 2011). In fact, more than half of the divorce cases are initiated by women, and they reported to have more comfortable lifestyle and freedom after divorce (“Major Causes of Divorce” 2013; “Premature Divorce Trends in Vietnam” 2013).

According to the GSO report in 2011, divorce and separation are mostly associated with those of low educational background, infertile females, non-working males, Kinh ethnicity and urban residents in areas such as Ho Chi Minh City (Arnett 2001; GSO 2011). Divorce mostly happens within the first five years of marriage among young couples who are less than 30 years old, referred to as “premature divorce” [hôn nhân xanh], resulting from their impetuous decisions to marriage (“Premature Divorce Trends in Vietnam” 2013; Trinh 2013). This explains the fact that the most common reason for divorce is divergence in lifestyle, constituting 66% of all the cases (“Vietnam Faces Sharp Rise in Divorce Cases” 2011). Even though arranged marriage practice was banned in Vietnam after the establishment of Marriage and Family Law in 1959, parents still remained involved in the process as divorce rate was higher among couples who did not ask for their parents’ approvals (Vu and Hoa 2008).

IV. Conclusions

The study shows that, given the low divorce rate of 2% and the high reported happiness level of 98%, the marriage life in Vietnam is on the other hand very complex and constantly evolving owing to the increasing level of modernization and globalization in both urban and rural areas. The decreasing scale of discrimination against women and increasing acceptance of divorce, accompanied by the youth's determination to pursue happiness, make it reasonable to speculate that the divorce rate in Vietnam will continue to increase in the future. Nevertheless, the traditional principles' and values' prominent position in the society might offset this trend and keep the divorce rate relatively low compared to that of its neighboring countries and many developed nations in the world. Thus, it is still very difficult to predict what will happen to the marriage culture in Vietnam.

Divorce undoubtedly provides an escape from an unhappy marriage and gives individuals a second chance to find happiness. Nevertheless, its negative consequences on society are indisputable. Lower well-being, poverty and mental issues are only some of the repercussions of divorce for the involved parties, their children and families (Behrman and Quinn 1994). Thus, it is necessary for the government to adapt its policies to this changing social landscape by establishing a more structured educational program for young individuals about marriage life in order to equip them with essential life skills before making this life- changing decision. This is highly relevant in Vietnam since it is reported that young adults lack marriage skills, because marriage and sex education are downplayed in its educational system.

A more appropriate understanding of divorce and life after divorce is much needed. Divorced women still suffer heavily from family dissolution, as it is less likely for them to have custody over their children, and also harder for them to remarry (Dahl and Moretti 2004; Locke

at al. 2013). Thus, continuing research in this aspect is of high priority, since a more comprehensive understanding about the nature of divorce and its implications will help the society make its transition to a market-oriented economy and a globalized culture smoother, particularly in Vietnam where there is not much research that has been done about divorce.

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Conclusion

Family is highly valued and plays a central role in Vietnamese culture; hence, the country's family dynamics deserve much attention from scholars and policy makers alike. Vietnamese family culture is rife with complexities due the mixture of influences from the Western doctrine of individualism and the Confucian traditional values with its focus on family unit. On the other hand, the country is also becoming more exposed to different cultural influences as a part of globalization, which induces the government to create appropriate policies to protect its culture and identity. Thus, these family dynamics are a central element of the country's growth strategies in cultural, political and economic aspects.

The thesis attempts to provide an understanding about four different family dynamics in Vietnam: wage inequality, entry into marriage, assortative marriage and divorce. With the exception of the last chapter on divorce, the analytical approach of running different regressions in STATA in the other three chapters provides a useful data analysis for fathoming how significant these changes in dynamics are.

Chapter 1 identifies a complex pattern of gender wage inequality in Vietnam, as the wage gap between male and female employees fluctuated over time. The wage gap is lower compared to that in the late 20th century and beginning of the 21st century which can be seen as result of the government's effort to promote modernization and equality in the labor market. On the other hand, as the Vietnamese economy is still a young economy in the transition process to a market-oriented economy, it is uncertain as to which direction the gender wage inequality is headed to. Nevertheless, the glass ceiling and sticky floor effect, where the wage gap between male and

female employees is larger in higher and lower earnings positions, are also discerned. Thus, it is essential for the government to facilitate female employees' work experience in the labor market.

Chapter 2 looks at the marriage market in Vietnam, and discerns that urbanization, education, fertility and employment are the most important factors affecting an individual's decision to marry. The results show that fertility pressure decreases age at first marriage; while urbanization, education and labor force participation delay age at first marriage for women. This is consistent with the patriarchal family structure which expects men to be the breadwinners and women to be the caretakers of the families. Again, the role of government to protect women's rights is reemphasized as this traditional structure can heavily impede their education and employment outlook.

Chapter 3 follows chapter 2 and examines specifically the link between marriage and education. It is concluded that individuals choose their spouses based on these spouses' level of education, as they are more likely to marry someone who has the same education level as themselves. This is consistent with the Confucian ideology which focuses on education, viewing it as a necessary and useful tool to enter both the marriage and labor markets. On one hand, this highlights the tendency of individuals to choose spouses who possess similar characteristics as themselves, in terms of education and social background. On the other hand, this also indicates greater social distance between social classes as a result of an increase in education and future income inequality across families.

In the last chapter, an overview about divorce trends reveals the story behind the low 2% divorce rate in Vietnam. The rate signifies the culture where divorce is a taboo and is highly discouraged, since the interest of family is usually placed above that of individual. Nevertheless, modernity offsets this trend and brings more freedom to individuals, especially women, in regard

to divorce initiation. The coexistence of these two opposite forces makes the outlook of divorce in Vietnam murky, thus, it is important for the government to have appropriate policy for the involved parties in divorce, i.e., the partners and their children.

The thesis focuses on some key elements of family dynamics in Vietnam. The topics were chosen based on personal interest and statistical constraints of the available data, thus, the thesis is by no means an exhaustive research about family dynamics in Vietnam in general. Even in each topic, the study only briefly touches on different issues. Hence, I hope the study will trigger and potentially serve as a valuable resource for more in-depth and focused analytical work on family dynamics in Vietnam.