Accumulating Masculinity:
Polygyny and the Transnational Families of
Taiwanese Expatriates in Vietnam

Ching-Ying Tien

PhD
July 2014
Declaration of Originality

'I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, except where due acknowledgement is made in the dissertation. Any contribution made to the research by others is explicitly acknowledged in the thesis. I also declare that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, except to the extent that assistance from others in the project's design and conception or in style, presentation and linguistic expression is acknowledged.'

Signed [Signature]

Date 15. July 2014
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Abstract

Drawing on the cases of Taiwanese expatriates in Vietnam, this research aims to examine and understand the reality of the cross-border triangular relationships, and the special logics and sentiments of the three parties involved in these relationships. The commercial logics, forged against the background of massive economic disparity between Taiwanese investors and lower class Vietnamese women, structure their relationships. These logics, however, fail to address the complexities of these relationships. In the context of capitalist Confucian society, men’s economic capital, social capital, and together with sexual capital all link to their masculinity and symbolic capital. The men in my research construct temporary homes away from homes, which proved their ability and masculinity. While their relationships initially appear to be purely commercial, it was discovered that affect also plays an important role. For these Vietnamese women, being mistresses of foreign men is sacrificing for their families, as well as egoistic for themselves. They could arguably be considered as traditional women who are willing to enter polygyny, yet modern ones who are ready to accept open relationships and gain capitals from them. The first wives, who remain behind in Taiwan, should not be pictured solely as victims, since they are able to negotiate “modern” choices and courses of action that are often camouflaged under the foliage of Confucian tradition. Here, polygyny is not restored but strategized to make their marriages work under modern economic deployment and becomes a unique post-traditional marriage arrangement. The work shows that economic globalization not only changes the pattern of wealth accumulation but also alters the structure of transnational families.

Keywords: economic capital, cultural capital, symbolic capital, masculinity, transnational family, expatriate, first wife, mistress, triangular relationship
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Chapter 1: Introduction

"The chains of marriage are so heavy. So it takes two to carry them, and usually three."—French proverb

In 2005, when I first visited Vietnam on a personal trip, some male friends working in a Taiwanese company in Binh Dương province, on the periphery of Ho Chi Minh City, invited me to a karaoke bar with them. On arriving, they ordered several hostesses to accompany us. It was a relatively small karaoke bar, looking like a private house from the outside, with about four or five private rooms upstairs. In it, customers can order food and drinks—even a Taiwanese-style hotpot—and, of course, enjoy singing karaoke. When we arrived a number of hostesses came into our room in sexy yet not overly revealing dresses; they lined up in front of the karaoke TV screen for us to choose. Those chosen sat next to the friend who had selected them, and the others left to make way for the next group of candidates. After five or six rounds, everyone was arranged, and the hostesses started to serve drinks, fruit and other food for their charges, and then proceeded to beguile my friends by dancing on their laps as if performing a show.

To make the atmosphere even more steamy, two hostesses stood on the coffee table and danced. The hostess sitting next to me looked so young. She smiled at me at the very moment I was wondering how she felt sitting next to me. In broken Mandarin, she told me that she was twenty years old, and came from a nearby province. She had just got this job after being introduced to the bar by a
friend. We did not have a chance to engage in a detailed discussion since it was too noisy in the room to talk. My friends were singing, playing games with the girls, and laughing. They were playing drinking games where, if the man lost, he had to give a tip to the hostess; and if the hostess lost, she would have to drink a glass of beer, take off a piece of her clothing, or do some other provocative performance.¹ The atmosphere was fun and hyperactive. All of us became slightly drunk and could not stop talking and playing, even though we could hardly hear each other over the loud music.

The above situation may sound crazy when I reveal that I am a woman—"crazy" because karaoke bar frequenting is usually a gendered activity in which lots of men participate, but only a few of them would readily admit or mention in front of a woman. This implies that people are clearly aware of the different moral criteria which apply for men and women, and also for men in front of women. This is similar to whenever I tell people about my "cross-border mistresses keeping" research; men’s reactions are usually excited and kind of admiring, always wanting me to tell them more about the mistresses. On the other hand, women’s reactions are more like: "how could they (the businessmen or the mistresses) do that?" These working-in-Vietnam men I mentioned above are really good old friends of mine, especially one of them who I have known for more than fifteen years. We have participated in each other’s major life events, bad and good, and would never judge each other in a "moral" way. When I

¹ In Vietnam, the hostesses do not necessarily belong to the karaoke bar, but have a symbiotic relationship with the bar. Their income comes from tips given by customers, and they usually earn six or seven times more than factory workers’ earnings. The income of the karaoke bar comes from the use of the stateroom, food, and drink fees. The hostesses in a karaoke bar do not necessarily have sexual relations with customers; they can reject a customer if they do not like the customer.
originally heard of their karaoke bar experiences, my first reaction was to ask them to take me there next time. As mentioned, this was a gendered event, and I was particularly curious about what was going to happen inside the bar and exactly what fascinated the men. The above shared experience certainly made them more open to me. A few years later while doing my fieldwork in Vietnam, my old friends also became my key informants. They helped me a lot, and introduced me to other local Taiwanese businessman friends.

When we finished our party that day and left near midnight, contrary to the noisy karaoke bar, it was surprisingly quiet and empty on the street. There were several hostesses coming off work and leaving the karaoke in T-shirt and jeans, looking much the same as college students. There were also men on motorbikes outside of the karaoke waiting to drive the girls back home. It was as if, what happened inside the karaoke bar was just a show. And now the show was over, what had been put on was kept in the bar, yet the plot of the show was still lingering in my mind, or maybe all of our minds.

After a short time in Vietnam, it became clear to me that it was de rigueur for Taiwanese businessmen to have local girlfriends or sex partners (Pao Yu², 炮友). Newcomers to the company are usually dragged to a karaoke bar to experience the way of having fun with a view to finding an appropriate Pao Yu. While some men would prefer to frequent different Pao Yu from time to time and call themselves 炮兵團 (Pao Ping Tuen, literally meaning artillerymen; here

² In this thesis, all Chinese wording are transliterated with Wade-Gilos Romanization system implemented in Taiwan, except the names of authors from China, whose name are translated with Hanyu Romanization system implemented in China.
meaning a group of men that pays for sex). Karaoke parlors like this one are places where many Taiwanese men encounter local women in Vietnam. Often these casual liaisons turn into more serious relationships, stable “fake” marriages, or even second families, including children, which exist in a parallel universe to their families back in Taiwan.

I was both confused and intriguing by this experience. At the time, I had not yet decided to pursue a PhD degree, nor had the topic of Taiwanese men’s relationships with Vietnamese women come into my mind. These everyday gender relations seemed to naturalize the heavily gendered political-economic relations obtaining between Taiwan and Vietnam. As one of the biggest investors in Vietnam, Taiwanese capital has aggressively flowed into its Southeast Asian neighbor, which has in turn offered its citizens up as low wage workers. More than a million Vietnamese\(^3\) work in Taiwanese factories, among which more than half are female workers, typically under harsh labor regimes (2007; Chan and Wang 2004). And tens of thousands more Vietnamese work as transnational labor migrants in Taiwan\(^4\). The relations of casual sexual availability, commercialization and exploitation I observed in the karaoke parlor had their own social logic; but also seemed overdetermined by this larger economic context.

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\(^3\) According to Vietnam’s Labor Code in 2008, a foreign company in Vietnam can only hire skilled expatriates not exceeding 5% of the company’s total number of employees. Since there were more than 3,500 Taiwanese companies and more than 40,000 Taiwanese businessmen in Vietnam, not including the middle-level supervisors hired from mainland China, I estimated that there were more than a million Vietnamese employees working in those Taiwanese companies.

\(^4\) 78,093 contract workers and 27,262 reside in Taiwan as foreign spouses, census data 2010 (http://sowf.moi.gov.tw/stat/week/list.htm).
Based on these observations, a number of questions surfaced. It seems that men would like to have a woman who is family-oriented for marriage and another who is courtesan-like for entertainment. Was this a division of sexual and reproductive labor emerging in the Taiwanese family, mirroring the geographical and economic organization of Taiwanese capital accumulation in Vietnam? Were the relations between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women purely commercial, or was there more “authentic” affection involved? In the case of fake marriages, were the men’s motivations purely strategic – given the economic advantages a local partner could bring – or were they also sentimental? Was I witnessing the re-emergence of polygyny, and what did this say about Taiwanese patriarchy in the current phase of capitalist accumulation? Given that some of the men I went on to study maintained families in Taiwan and Vietnam, what was the nature of these new cross-border families, and what were the experiences of the Taiwanese wives within them? Did they know about the Vietnamese families? If so, what were their options and possibilities for agency? Did they consider their husbands’ Vietnamese families legitimate? And what are the Vietnamese women’s experiences?

A big picture involving affection, sexuality, embodiment and transnational Asian capitalism seemed to be encapsulated in this encounter in the karaoke lounge, and so I knew that I had to pursue it. Therefore, in this thesis, I wish to pursue why Taiwanese businessmen keep mistresses and form stable relations in Vietnam, and explore the logic and sentiments of the cross-border triangularity among Taiwanese expatriates in Vietnam, their wives in Taiwan, and their mistresses in Vietnam.
Research design

In the context of economic globalization, Taiwanese investment in Vietnam has led to long- and short-term professional migration and the creation of long distance or cross-border families. Though the process has long existed, the term "globalization" was not popular until 1990s. Scholarly opinions are widely divided on when does globalization begin and how it is defined (Held and McGrew 2007, 2; Eriksen 2007, 1; Larsson 2001, 9). In this research, I am not intending to define globalization but trying to discuss the economic part of globalization that affects my subjects most directly. In order to do so, I sum up the economic globalization as: the process of capitalists' profits pursuing across the global markets, in which goods, services, labor, and capitals are flowing transnationally, and thus form closer links between different economic systems.

Researches on the dynamics created by Asian businessmen's extramarital affairs while working overseas, to date, are limited. One is concerned with the international division of labor in familial and intimate relations between Taiwan and China (Shen 2005). Another highlights social mobility and self-improvement among women connected to Hong Kong businessmen in southern China (Lang and Smart 2002). A third suggests that “Pao Erhnaï” phenomenon is based on a collective imagination constructed by both men and women using patriarchal logic (Tam 2005). In the case of transnational relationships between Taiwanese businessmen and Vietnamese women, there is only one existing study which
interprets the phenomenon of keeping a mistress as part of the businessmen's capital accumulation practices (Kung 2004).

Here I would like to borrow from Pierre Bourdieu's theory and extend it to the practice of mistress keeping among Taiwanese businessmen in Vietnam. Bourdieu offers the following formula to explain the cultural and social reproduction model which conceptualized practices as the outcome of the interaction of habitus, capital and field:

\[
((\text{Habitus}) (\text{Capitals})) + \text{Field} = \text{Practices} \quad (\text{Bourdieu 1984, 101})
\]

In the formula, habitus refers to a system of internalized dispositions where practices were carried out in accordance with the outside structural principles of the social world. Habitus is neither free-will nor the pure consequence of outside structure, but an unconscious and non-static outcome of the interplay of both. Therefore, habitus is a structuring structure as well as a structured structure (Bourdieu 1984).

For Bourdieu, capital takes the form of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. Economic capital mainly consists of those resources that can be directly converted into money. Cultural capital is linked to the accumulation of elements such as knowledge, skills, tastes, posture, material belongings, credentials, etc. and comes in three forms—embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. Social capital principally refers to the social connections of an individual or group. Symbolic capital is the form that the "fundamental" species of capital take when
recognized as legitimate within a particular social field. Thus prestige or social superiority within a particular milieu, for instance, could be forms of symbolic capital that resulted from the conversion of the other forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986).

Field here is defined as a structured social space which contains people who dominate and others who are dominated. Bourdieu puts it:

> A field may be seen as a structured space of positions in which the positions and their interrelations are determined by the distribution of different kinds of resources or 'capital'.[...] A field is always the site of struggles in which individuals seek to maintain or alter the distribution of the forms of capital specific to it. The individuals who participate in these struggles will have differing aims—some will seek to preserve the status quo, others to change it—and differing chances of winning or losing, depending on where they are located in the structured space of positions’ (Bourdieu 1991, 14)

Bourdieu indicates that social spaces are configured as different fields in which competitions and struggles occur. Individuals in the same field share common ground and ideas, and individual practices aim to create and accumulate capital that protects and promotes ones position in the field. Therefore, social life itself is a non-stopping struggle for capital, while a field is where the struggle takes place as well as being the power distribution zone.
Based on his theory, we can see individual practices as a dynamic outcome of one’s internalizing the structural value of the field into an integral part of one’s habitus. At the same time, the field is also affected and changed by the externalizing of individual habitus (as indicated by Figure 1). Bourdieu uses this reproduction theory to indicate how the ruling class manipulates symbolic violence to produce/reproduce their superior social class, and legalize/rationalize the ideology and structure that benefit them.

Figure 1:

I would suggest that mistress-keeping is a part of their social-reproduction in the field of Taiwanese businessmen’s sub-cultural context in Vietnam. These men in my research externalized their Confucian Capitalism habitus in the field and used their economic capital to keep mistresses in Vietnam. The mistresses here
is an objectified cultural capital that identifies these men as in the same group of whom can sufficiently support multi-wives as those upper-class people do. That is to say, their economic capital was used to obtain cultural capital, and both converted into their symbolic capital. In so doing, they further confirm their status and masculinity.

In this thesis, I wish to draw from these existing studies, and the other, related ones discussed above, in a critical and eclectic way to explain my own exploration of the formation, maintenance and everyday reality of the cross-border triangular relationships between Taiwanese businessmen, their Vietnamese mistresses, and their Taiwanese wives. I will adopt elements of the economic, cultural and social mobility-focused explanations discussed above, but complement these with a number of new perspectives. Important here is what I feel to be the relative lack of discussion of women's agency and structures of identification within polygynous "families" that ostensibly follow a rigid patriarchal logic. While the Taiwanese and Vietnamese women I have studied sometimes appear to be complicit in the reproduction of the "feudal" gendered hierarchies one finds in the polygamous family, they have also found the means to exercise power and agency within the confines of this structure, and indeed to occupy their established roles within it in a strategic and critical way. As I will argue in Chapter 4, for a Taiwanese woman whose husband has a "little wife" in Vietnam, it is far from clear that divorce is the best or most empowering strategy for dealing with the situation in the context of Taiwanese society. Rather, accepting her role as the "elder sister" within the transnational polygamous family, and thereby strategically legitimizing and normalizing this
kinship structure, may prove to be the more successful course in terms of her current life situation and future.

I also wish to address the lack of attention that has been paid to the affective dimension of Pao Erhnai-type relationships. While most appear to discount the possibility of there being "authentic" emotions in such apparently commodified relationships, I wish to argue that such affects are indeed present, although their authenticity may often operate in a bounded or reflexive sense. Important here is the need of professional Taiwanese migrants, disembedded from their homes by flows of venture capital, to reconstruct a homely, familial space in a social context that is most often experienced as empty and alienating. For this end, mere transacted intimacy is not sufficient, and relations of exchange blur into those of a less calculated mutual reciprocity. From the point of view of Vietnamese women, too, relationships that may have been entered into in a strategic way may come to take on a different character. "Ms. Vo", who we will meet in Chapters 1 and 3, is a "little wife" who has become a successful real estate speculator, and is quite capable of being financially independent and supportive for her three children in Vietnam. Nevertheless, she is willing if she absolutely must to migrate to Taiwan with her "husband", to accept a lower status within his family, to put up with the possible scolding and bullying of his first wife, and to bear the stigma attached to Vietnamese second wives in Taiwan.

Another innovation I will introduce is to take this triangular relationship seriously as a form of transnational family. Clearly, my subjects form a structure
somewhat different to that of the "conventional" monogamous transnational family, typically divided across national borders by labor or professional migration and held together by communications, remittances, return visits, and the flow of love and caring (Parreñas 2005a, 296; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001, 369). While many Taiwanese businessmen in Vietnam pursue a series of more or less casual affairs, a significant proportion seek to establish stable and lasting relationships with women there. These relationships may lead to either official or "traditional" marriage, business collaborations, cohabitation, or children. My key informants were all in such lasting relationships, and the men and their Vietnamese second wives all considered themselves to be part of a family that included the man's original family in Taiwan, headed by a figure the Vietnamese women universally referred to as "Bà lón" or "the big lady". (The perspectives of those Taiwanese wives who were aware of their husbands' second families in Vietnam are somewhat more complex, as we shall see in Chapter 4).

My study will make an original contribution to knowledge in the study of transnational families created by professional migration within Asia by introducing these critical new perspectives, and also by means of the novel and committed research strategy I have pursued. In order to pursue this research object, I have used a methodology of multi-sited ethnography (Clifford 1997), carrying out my research in both Taiwan and Vietnam in order to properly map the dimensions of the transnational polygamous family and to seek out the perspectives of all principal adult members (more discussion of methodology follows below).
The coming chapters pursue at length some of the questions that came to my attention after my initial experience in the karaoke lounge in Vietnam:

1. To what extent can we say that the apparent emergence of a division of sexual and reproductive labor in the transnational Taiwanese family simply mirrors the geographical and economic organization of Taiwanese capital accumulation in Vietnam, and to what extent are other logics (social, cultural, affective) at play here?

2. How significant are the commercial and exchange-oriented aspects of the relations between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women, and conversely how important are the non-instrumental and "authentic" affection that make up these relationships?

3. What is the nature of the cross border polygyny we are witnessing? Is it simply a return of feudal kinship structures and patriarchal ideologies, or is it informed and structured by markets, capital flows and the hypermasculine logic of East Asian capitalism?

4. How do the members of the Taiwan-Vietnam transnational family conceptualize their roles and strategize to amass and exercise agency within this novel structure? If this new polygamy allows men to accumulate masculine power, does it also reveal the contradictions in their masculine roles, and expose them to critique and challenge by their
wives and children?

5. What are the Taiwanese wives’ perspectives on the Vietnamese second wives’ claims to belong to a transnational family, and how do they understand their options and possibilities for agency as “stay behind” wives in contemporary Taiwanese society?

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### Methodology & Structure

**Methodology**

This research is based primarily on an anthropological fieldwork methodology, involving participant observation, interviews, genealogies, focus groups and general ethnographic observation. My fieldwork was conducted in Taiwan and Vietnam, and my key informants fell into three categories:

1. Taiwanese men sojourning in Vietnam and keeping local mistresses or second wives
2. Vietnamese women romantically involved with Taiwanese men
3. Taiwanese wives whose husbands were working in Vietnam

The interviews in Taiwan were conducted during two periods: from November 2007 to February 2008, and from October 2008 to March 2009; and in Vietnam
from February 2008 to September 2008. In Taiwan, my main field locations were Kaohsiung, Tainan, Taichung, and Taipei, while in Vietnam, my main field locations were Ho Chi Minh City and nearby provinces such as Binh Dương, Đồng Nai, and Long An, where the Industrial Zones in which my informants' factory compounds were located are to be found. In most cases, my interviews were held in the residences of the informants, but sometimes also in cafés, tea houses, restaurants, worship hall, and even in cars. The interviews included formal interaction lasting from two hours to five hours each time, informal conversations that were unable to be timed, and other communication forms (i.e. phone calls, MSN, Facebook, and email). With these communication tools, I was able to stay in touch with my informants after leaving the field, especially Facebook which allows me to observe their interaction with their families. I used several different methods to reach potential informants. To begin with, I used my own personal social network for potential informants in all three categories, and used snowball sampling for referrals. In Vietnam, I had a readymade starting point due to the fact that some of my old friends had relocated there from Taiwan to work. They introduced me to their peers and social networks. I also made contact independently with Vietnamese women who were involved with Taiwanese men, a process I will discuss at greater length below.

In the process of completing my university ethics approval, I identified a significant ethical issue around contacting and working with first wives in Taiwan. This involved the risk that the Taiwanese wives may not have known about their husbands’ families or second wives in Vietnam or, if they did, wished

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5 Yet due to the relationships built up during the fieldwork, some informants have been keen to let me know their updates via email, Facebook, and phone calls after my fieldwork concluded.
knowledge of this not to spread to their families, friends and peers in Taiwan. As a consequence, I made it a parameter of my research not to work with wives in Taiwan whose husbands I had worked with in Vietnam, and vice versa. This meant that I was using different networks to contact informants in both Vietnam and Taiwan. While for the purposes of my research it would have been ideal to be able to connect with members of the same polygamous families in both Vietnam and Taiwan, the absolute priority an anthropologist has of protecting the interests of her interlocutors meant that I was unable to do this.

Contacting eligible subjects in Taiwan turned out to be the most difficult part of my fieldwork. In addition to using my own social networks, I made contact through Buddhist and Christian charity groups, since I found that stay behind wives tend to be strong participants in such activities. I also placed advertisements for potential informants on internet forums, Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) and blogs that target Taiwanese first wives. (I had been reading and joining the discussions on BBS and website forums from time to time long before I started this research.) Some members of the open forums were happy to support this research, but in most cases, I was introduced by key informants to other informants. I also interviewed a few of the adult children of some of the Taiwanese wives, as they were able to express an inside and alternative views of their familys’ transition through time.

Eventually, I worked with ten wives aged between thirty-five and fifty-five years. One of these women later withdrew because she was worried the experiences she had suffered and revealed to me might cause some embarrassment to her
husband or disgrace him. (In accordance with my ethics approval I did not subsequently use any of the information she had given to me). As for the remaining nine wife informants, five of their husbands ran companies in Vietnam, two of them were managerial level employees, one was doing international trade, and the other one’s husband ran a karaoke business. Five of these women were fully aware of the details of their husbands’ overseas affairs, one of these five had chosen to divorce her husband, and another one of the five divorced her husband 2 years after our interview. The other four expressed a more ambiguous position on their husbands’ infidelities (see Chapter 4). Their educational levels varied from diploma to university degree. Five of the wives were not employed while the four others worked either to kill time or for reasons of financial security. All of them had children aged from nine years old to adult when we met. Two of the wives had their children studying overseas, while the children of the others were studying in Taiwan. Five of them had to take care of the parents-in-law, yet none of them lived together with their in-laws on their husband’s side. Two of them had housemaids to help with the chores. I was also able to contact other family members, friends, neighbors, and colleagues of some of the first wives, with their consent and help, to give me a fuller understanding of their family and social situations.

In Vietnam, my focus was on businessmen who have been with their mistresses for a relatively long period of time – at least two years. However I also included in my research men who had been involved but broken up with their mistresses, and one who just had arrived in Vietnam and who was looking for a mistress. Most of the men were in the manufacturing industry. I am aware, however, that
this focus on manufacturing could have affected the findings of my research. As Yi-Chia Tseng has pointed out, those investing in the service industry are more likely to have interaction with locals and be immersed in local lifestyles, while those in manufacturing tend more to live in an expatriate bubble (Tseng 2010). Since most of my informants were working in manufacturing, I accept that their life-experiences and attitudes toward locals may not represent all businessmen in Vietnam. Nevertheless, Taiwanese men sojourning in Vietnam are overwhelmingly working in the manufacturing sector, as Table 2 shows.

Table 2: Taiwanese Investment in Vietnam by Industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Cases (%)</th>
<th>Amount (million USD)</th>
<th>Amount (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Light Industry</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>34.82</td>
<td>4346.10</td>
<td>22.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Heavy Industry</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>32.51</td>
<td>10330.04</td>
<td>52.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Agriculture and Forestry</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>16.02</td>
<td>1157.26</td>
<td>5.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Construction</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>1407.66</td>
<td>7.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Service Offices</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>816.32</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Hotel &amp; Tourism</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>833.20</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Processing Industries</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>304.11</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Food Processing</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>131.91</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Finance &amp; Banking</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>133.20</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Aquaculture</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>78.98</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Other Services</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>73.95</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Culture, Health &amp; Education</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>38.24</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Communications</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>11.80</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>19662.77</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


www.taiwanembassy.org/public/Attachment/9102817252471.xls. accessed on 4th September 2011

All of my twenty businessman informants were interviewed in Vietnam. Three of
them were approached in an informal business study group in Vietnam affiliated to a Taiwanese university, while others were introduced by acquaintances or other informants. Fourteen of them were business owners, and two among this fourteen had been relocated to Vietnam from China. Five of the businessmen were managerial level employees, and one was the son of the business owner, and its future owner himself. I had an unequal number of self-employed and wage earning informants as I found in the course of my fieldwork that not many of the employee informants were fitting subjects for my research. I attribute this to multiple reasons: first of all, due to the age bracket many employees I had contacted were single; second, their income level was lower than the business owners, which might have limited their capacity to keep a mistress; and finally, because of the nature of their employment, company employees tend to come and go, thus not necessarily having the opportunity to build up a social network in Vietnam.

The businessman informants were aged between thirty-four and sixty-six years at the time of interview. One was a new arrival; others had been in Vietnam from four to up to twenty years. Their educational levels were varied from middle school to university degree. Six of them had master's degrees. Almost all of the businessmen were working in manufacturing, and only one was working in a manufacturing-related consulting company. All of the businessmen spoke Mandarin, yet Taiwanese was preferred by some informants as they felt more comfortable and secure when speaking in Taiwanese. None of their wives knew about their mistresses and second wives in Vietnam, although one guessed his wife must have known. Seven of the men had had children with
their mistresses, whereas the others did not want to have children in Vietnam.

The recruitment of mistress informants was not easy at the beginning as I was instructed by my ethics committee not to approach them through the Taiwanese men in case their mistresses did not know the men were married in Taiwan. There was no particular locale in which I could find the mistresses living closely together. It was not until I met a Mandarin teacher in Ho Chi Minh City, who had taught many women who were involved with Taiwanese men, that I was able to get access to significant numbers of local interlocutors. My Vietnamese friends also helped me to make contact with some local women who were involved with Taiwanese businessmen. In the end, eight of the eleven mistress informants with whom I had an ongoing relationship were introduced to me either by acquaintances or snowball sampling, and three were approached in a Mandarin class. Nine of the women were Vietnamese mistresses, one was a Chinese mistress relocating in Vietnam, and one was an aspiring mistress-to-be. Most of them were in their twenties, two in their thirties, and another two in their forties when the interviews were conducted. Six of them were co-habiting with their Taiwanese businessmen “husbands”, as they typically called them; whereas the others were staying in places the men rented for them and visited on weekends. Five of them had had a traditional wedding ceremony with the men, although they could not register their marriages. Four of them kept working after becoming involved with the businessmen: two in their husbands’ companies; one running her own business funded by her husband; and one as a bank employee. Five of the mistresses had been together with the businessmen for more than ten years, and four of the five have had children with the men. Most
of them used Mandarin to communicate with their men at a fair to good standard (this is why they were learning Mandarin). Two used English, and only one used Vietnamese. The education level varied from nine years education to college degree. All were clear that their husbands had wives in Taiwan (although one told me she did not know this at the outset of her involvement).

**Thesis Structure**

My study is broken up into nine chapters:

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

In the Introduction, I disclosed how and why the mistress-keeping practice of Taiwanese businessmen in Vietnam came to my attention, and the design and the methodology I employed to conduct this research. Based on anthropological fieldwork, my research is focusing on those stable triangular relations that have been continued for more than two years and is aiming to understand the logic of the relationships by using a framework of social reproduction of the family.

**Chapter 2: Contexts and Perspectives**

This chapter reveals the background of the cultural proximity of Taiwan and Vietnam, and the cross-border investments between Taiwan and Vietnam under the new global market deployment. Through the literature review, we can have a more clear view of the cross-border families as well as the mistress-keeping phenomenon. How scholars explain the phenomenon by using economic and cultural logic and the limitations of these logics were also discussed in this chapter.
Chapter 3: The Gender and Cultural Logics of Triangular Families

This chapter introduces the gender and cultural logics in both Taiwanese and Vietnamese society that deeply affect people’s thinking and practices. This chapter argues that the new global economic deployment not only changes the manufacturing structure of industries, but also shifts the structure of cross-border families in which the first wives are able to negotiate “modern” choices and courses of action that are often camouflaged under the foliage of Confucian tradition.

Chapter 4: The economics of keeping a mistress and its limits

Tracing the histories of economic transformation in Taiwan and Vietnam, this chapter examines the phenomenon of Taiwanese businessmen’s mistress-keeping behavior in Vietnam. It provides a basic context to understand the overseas extra-marital relations at first glance, and make sense of people’s knowledge and interpretation of the mistress-keeping phenomenon.

Chapter 5: True Affections of Taiwanese Businessmen and Vietnamese Mistresses

This chapter examines the sexual and emotional relationship between the businessmen and the mistresses. Departing from general argument which sees the relationship as purely a money-sex exchange, this chapter argues that though the relations start from commercial traffic, they would not be able to continue without affection. The two parties involved in the relations are conscious of both the commercial and affective characteristics that make their
relationship stable and sustained.

Chapter 6: Stay behind Wives and Their Strategies
This chapter presents how the Taiwanese wives generally perceive their lives when their husbands are away. Through ethnographic data, it argues that, although the wives face similar situations (a husband (possibly) having an affair in Vietnam), they could have different ways of dealing with the situation i.e. employing traditional Confucian ideas as a strategy to secure family union, drawing on the modern feminist notion to give up the unworkable marriage, or choosing not to know or pretending not to know.

Chapter 7: Home, Family and the Locality
This chapter focuses on the men’s values and points of view, and reveals that the meaning of family for these men has shifted from the traditional kinship family into overlapped families across the border. It argues that the men make themselves at “home” in an enclave in Vietnam both socially and spatially. The notion of “family” and “home” no longer sticks to the same place, but roams with the subject through a transnational space.

Chapter 8: Money and Power within the Family
This chapter represents the logic of remittances of the men and the wives. It argues that the money remittances flowing in the transnational families carry different meanings for the senders and the receivers. Besides, the mistresses’ concern for their partners’ money denotes the nature of their relationships and their role as the businessmen’s family members. Furthermore, the gift
remittances flowed between the overlapping cross-border families and their meaning could thus change unexpectedly.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This chapter summarizes my research findings and suggests that in the field of Taiwanese businessmen in Vietnam, mistress-keeping is part of their social reproduction that re-confirms their masculinity and establishes their social status. In addition, the work presents the voice of the wives and the mistresses and addresses the affects part in the triangular relationships, which have been neglected in earlier researches.
Chapter 2: Context and Perspectives

Vietnam-Taiwan economic relations

Since 1986, large amounts of capital have flowed out of Taiwan. At that time, direct investment in the People's Republic of China (PRC) was not allowed due to strict government policies, so that most of this capital poured into America and Southeast Asia. The restriction on direct investment in China was relaxed in 1990, and between then and 1993 some 33.8% of Taiwanese overseas investment went to China. While political tensions remained, in 1993 the Taiwanese government's Go-South Policy (Nanhsiang Chingtse, 南向政策) provided new impetus for Southeast Asian investment. This new policy aimed to prevent businessmen from over-concentrating their investments in China. Many businesses thus turned their attention to Southeast Asia, and the amount of Taiwanese foreign investment in Southeast Asian countries increased from 1170 million US dollars (1993) to 4975 million (1994), while over the same period the amount of investment in China dropped from 3168 million US dollars (1993) to 962 million (1994) (Investment Commission 1997). Beginning in 2002, the Taiwanese government initiated a new policy called 'Proactive Liberalization with Effective Management' (Chichi Kaifang, Yuhsiao Kuanli, 積極開放・有效管理), which again encouraged investment in China. As a result, investment in China grew from 2784 million US dollars to 7723 million from 2001 to 20026. The same trend has continued over recent years, alongside continued investment in Southeast Asia.

Meanwhile, from 1986, the Vietnamese government implemented its "Đổi mới" (Renovation) policy of market liberalization and limited social and political reforms. Economic reforms included the commercialization of State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), the advent of a private sector, and measures aimed at attracting foreign investment (Fforde and Vylder 1996, 14-15). Milestones in this process included the Foreign Investment Law of 1987 and the Corporations and Private Enterprises Law of 1990. Membership of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) followed in 1995, and then accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2006. Vietnam's government has made continuous amendments to its foreign investment regulations in order to meet the needs of contemporary foreign investors, and has consequently become an important investment target in Southeast Asia (Wang 2001; Ku 2009).

Vietnam's reforms coincided with an offshore movement of capital from developed East Asian nations. In Taiwan during the 1990s, because of rising exchange rates, difficulties in getting industrial land, and increasing production costs, labor-intensive industries were relocating abroad. As we saw above, most of them were targeting China or Southeast Asia, where labor costs were significantly lower, hoping that this kind of investment would be more profitable and that it would help them to maintain their competitiveness (Wang 2001).\footnote{According to a longitudinal survey conducted by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, in the 1990s what pushed Taiwanese companies to invest and/or relocate overseas was mainly the sharp appreciation in the exchange rate and rising labor and land costs. The main attractions overseas were cheap labor costs (67%), developing overseas markets to become a global business (54%), and attempting to sell products from within the local market (30%) (MOEA 1992). However, as time passed, according to a survey conducted in 2000s the reasons to invest overseas changed into developing local market share (61.25%), cheap labor costs (53.75%), cooperation with foreign customer's requirements (35.37%) (MOEA 2007).}

Partly due to this Go-South policy, Vietnam became the second-biggest
investment target for Taiwanese businesses, with China remaining the biggest. And Taiwan was the biggest foreign investor in Vietnam for the period 1988-2011 (See Table 1).

Table 1: Foreign Investment in Vietnam from 1988 to 2011

(Units of investments: million US dollar)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Cases (%)</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Amount (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>2,175</td>
<td>17.16</td>
<td>23,030.29</td>
<td>11.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>7.19</td>
<td>22,914.51</td>
<td>11.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>2,759</td>
<td>21.76</td>
<td>22,599.99</td>
<td>11.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1,472</td>
<td>11.61</td>
<td>21,204.42</td>
<td>10.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>18,760.40</td>
<td>9.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>British Virgin Islands</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>14,794.96</td>
<td>7.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>13,238.65</td>
<td>6.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>8,338.42</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>5,875.31</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>5,558.38</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Brunei</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>4,769.64</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>4,658.06</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>3,684.39</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>2,954.19</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>2,227.07</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>1,951.32</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1,183.01</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>825.11</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>618.39</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>277.40</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total (Including Others) | 12,677 | 100.00 | 198,222.87 | 100.00 |

*This form is counted year by year, does not include the cases already withdrew.

Source: Vietnam Ministry of Planning and Investment.
Moreover, the actual figures for Taiwanese capital and investment projects in Vietnam are undoubtedly higher than the official records show, since there are countless numbers of small and medium-sized Taiwanese enterprises hidden behind Vietnamese fronts without any formal foreign investment registration (Jentou Kungszu, 人頭公司) in order to avoid tax and other impositions on foreign investment. According to a rough estimate made by Taiwan’s Ministry of Economic Affairs of both official and unofficial investment, there are more than 3500 Taiwanese companies located in Vietnam, and the amount of Taiwanese capital there is estimated to be in the tens of billions of US dollars.

Cultural proximity

The relationship between China and Vietnam has always been complicated. Sometimes they are as close as siblings (China the big brother and Vietnam the little brother) who share a similar culture, yet sometimes are enemies fighting over Vietnam’s independence. In the 3rd century BC, Chin Dynasty China (秦朝) occupied Nam Viet (northern Vietnam) and ruled over it with unified law, currency, writing characters, and measurement units. Followed in the 1st century BC, the Han Dynasty (漢朝) set up nine prefectures in Vietnam as outposts. And later in the 7th century AD, Tang Dynasty (唐朝) also constituted Vietnam under Tang’s protectorate. Nevertheless, at the same time Vietnam also fought strongly to keep its cultural identity and national independence. In the 10th century AD, led by Đinh Bộ Lĩnh, Vietnam successfully staged an uprising against the Tang. Followed by the Early Lê Dynasty, and by the later Lý
Dynasty, Trần Dynasty, and Hồ Dynasty, Vietnam was consolidated independently till the 15th century, when the Ming Dynasty China (明朝) again invaded Vietnam and set up an administration for about two decades. For centuries, China unilaterally considered Vietnam a young family member, not another country, who was in need of Chinese civilization. Chinese culture and values, including Confucianism, the political system, religions, ethics, family values, gender culture, and so on, were thus introduced into Vietnam with Chinese political power. In the 10th century, the Early Lê Dynasty in Vietnam had imitated the Chinese bureaucracy and had set up civil and military officials. Chinese characters were used as official woddage till the 19th century.

This cultural proximity later becomes an incentive for Taiwanese who inherited the thousands of Chinese cultural features and values, to invest in Vietnam. In the early stages of Taiwanese investment in Vietnam, Taiwanese businessmen largely depended on ethnic Chinese Vietnamese citizens as interpreters, intermediaries, partners, and sometimes even as fronts behind which to hide their investments (Kung 2001). It has always been difficult for foreigners to set up a company in Vietnam without local language proficiency since there is a lot of red tape to go through. Given the capacity of Taiwanese and Sino-Vietnamese to communicate in the lingua franca of Mandarin, and the perception among Taiwanese businessmen that their local counterparts were familiar with the same Confucian cultural values and meanings, early encounters led to the deployment of an imaginary of transnational Chinese community and kinship. Investors believed they could use this ethnic solidarity
as a makeshift bridge with which to enter a Vietnam conceived as a Confucian “little brother”.

The perception of cultural proximity-in-inheritance is also apparent in the foreign bride phenomenon in Taiwan, where those contemplating a foreign mate will “naturally” look to Vietnam as somewhere to find a bride who still bears traditional female Confucian virtues, qualities not to be found in women from other Southeast Asian neighbors such as the Philippines, Indonesia, or Thailand. Fully 25% of foreign brides in Taiwan are Vietnamese (Tien 2005). This vision of a Confucian Asia deploys a kinship metaphor wherein Sinic nations like Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan (and sometimes Japan and Korea) are considered “advanced” elders while still industrializing Southeast Asian countries are seen as straggling younger brothers. These conceptions are in many ways consistent with Aihwa Ong’s analysis of the way Chinese transnational capitalism has been imagined as a fraternal network for profit accumulation in an economically integrated area including China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and some ethnic Chinese communities in Southeast Asia (Ong 1999, 7). The feeling of cultural proximity and the image of fraternal network not only makes Taiwanese investors heavily reliant on local Sino-Vietnamese for running business, but also enables them to use Confucian logic to understand Vietnam. This cultural and temporal logic was constantly brought out during my fieldwork, especially in the perception, nearly universal among Taiwanese businessmen residing there, that Vietnam’s current state is analogous to a previous stage of Taiwan’s own modernization. My interlocutors frequently expressed the opinion that today’s Vietnam is the same as Taiwan thirty to forty years ago, and that if
the Vietnamese only worked as hard as they had, and learned from the Taiwanese experience, Vietnam would definitely become as successful as Taiwan, and join the ranks of the so-called Four Asian Tigers.

**Cross-border families**

Taiwanese investment in Vietnam has led to long-term professional migration and the creation of long distance or cross-border families. Analyses of transnational Asian families formed through business and lifestyle migration have most often focused on the so-called “astronaut” family, where husbands stay behind in Asian countries to work while wives and children migrate to western countries like the United States, Canada and Australia for education and better living environments (Waters 2002; Man 1995; Ho, Ip, and Bedford 2001). While the phenomenon of intra-Asian transnational families formed through labor migration—particularly the migration of female domestic workers—is well studied (Constable 2010; Lan 2006; Chang and Ling 2000), those created by professional migration are less researched (Willis and Yeoh 2003). Studies of professional South Asian migrants in the Middle East (Vora 2008) are somewhat relevant to my own research, but differ significantly in terms of the structure of the transnational family and the racial and class dynamics experienced by migrants in the host nation.

My own research focuses on Taiwanese male businessmen, including investors and managerial-level employees, from Taiwan currently living in Vietnam. They are usually considered as elite with professional skills, managerial knowledge, and global mobility (Peng, Hsu, and Lin 2005). These long and short-stayers
are businessmen who go abroad without their families to further their career aspirations while their wives remain in Taiwan to take care of their parents, parents-in-law, and children if any. In accord with the Confucian stereotype of "male-breadwinner, female-caregiver," these men live and work apart while their wives stay at home managing the family. Unlike astronaut wives, who face an unfamiliar living environment, the wives in my research do not move into new settings. Nevertheless, they also face significant difficulties, and must deal with a range of unfamiliar problems in a familiar environment. Not least of these is the role shift that Taiwanese wives experience, whereby they come to take on a more central and authoritative role in the family in the husband's absence, a development that frequently comes into contradiction with the maintenance of the fiction of the husband's continued primacy. In addition, while these wives and mothers appear to remain stationary at home, they also keenly experience the transnationalization of their own families, and must negotiate new roles for themselves in these newly spatially disembodied structures.

A strong precedent for Taiwan-Vietnam cross-border families exists in the experience of transnational kinship networks between Taiwan and China. As we saw above, the offshoring of Taiwanese industry in the 1980s and 90s coincided with the establishment of four Special Economic Zones in China's Eastern seaboard provinces to draw in foreign investment and technology. Taking advantage of China's similar cultural and linguistic context, numerous conventional industries facing a fall in profits in Taiwan moved their manufacturing bases to the PRC mainland (Wang 2001). In 2009, the daily number of people traveling into China from Taiwan was more than twelve
thousand, and the Taiwanese expatriate population in China had exceeded one million.⁸

Cases of whole families migrating to Vietnam are rare, especially for managerial level professional migrants. For a starter level managerial employee, the expatriate employment packages usually include double the salary obtainable in Taiwan (usually it will be remitted into an account in Taiwan), dormitory, all meals, a small amount of pocket money for local expenditure, and approximately four to six return air tickets per year. While a higher level manager could of course negotiate better conditions. Some companies offer family accommodation in the company dormitories, but wives who do accompany their husbands to Vietnam often return after a year or two, citing boredom and isolation in the factory compound. According to my female informants who had spent some time with their husbands in Vietnam, a typical day for them in the company dormitory started with breakfast prepared by the housekeeper, followed by chatting with the few other wives who were also living in the dorm. After lunch, they might play with their pre-school age children, and then wait for their husbands to come home from work. The wives sometimes took a taxi to go shopping together, but the novelty of this exercise soon wore off. Most of the house chores were taken care of by the housekeeper unless the wives particularly wanted to do it themselves. Day after day, it becomes monotonous for them.

Education for children is also a big issue. International English schools may not be preferred because of the incompatibility of their syllabi and ethos with the Taiwanese education system. Those sending their children to senior high school in Vietnam must then support them through higher degrees in private colleges in Vietnam or foreign universities, something that is typically deemed expensive for the quality, since the typical Taiwanese expat package does not include a subsidy for children’s education. The Taipei School in Ho Chi Minh City⁹ is usually considered to be of low quality, and the common perception is that children will be “spoilt” by the artificially high status they enjoy in Vietnam as the children of expatriate elites. The small size of the school, with only one or two classes per form, is also a disincentive, as people feel that their children will not have the normal opportunities for social interaction. While Taiwanese companies do not overtly discourage family migration, corporate ideology clearly prefers a lone male professional expatriate not encumbered by the responsibilities of keeping a family in Vietnam. Generous provisions for return trips to Taiwan are made, with mid-level management executives typically returning for a week to ten days every two to three months, with air travel fully subsidized by the employer.

As opposed to the packages given to high-skilled Western expatriates in Asian countries that cover a relocation fee for the family of the expat (Fechter 2007; Lan 2011), Taiwanese employment packages for overseas positions usually do not cover moving expenses, housing fees, or tuition fees for children. While they do offer a salary premium compared to jobs held in Taiwan, the expatriate

⁹ A Taiwanese public school set up for Taiwanese children in Ho Chi Minh City.
employment packages of Taiwanese companies tend to shift the cost of keeping a family in Vietnam onto employees. Nevertheless, due to the weakness of the Taiwanese job market in recent years, many are willing to be posted overseas, since the opportunities there are so much greater than those available at home.

While independent business owners theoretically have a greater capacity to relocate their whole families to Vietnam, since they can determine household living conditions for themselves, most nevertheless choose to leave them behind in Taiwan. Some do so out of consideration of the needs of parents and parents-in-law; others because of children's educational needs; and still others because their wives and children did not find living in Vietnam suited to them at all. Furthermore, those Taiwanese businessmen usually are not planning to stay in Vietnam for good. Living separately thus becomes an acceptable arrangement for the time being. For these reasons and others, professional migration from Taiwan to Vietnam tends strongly to create cross-border families, and transnational living arrangements become naturalized.

The Mistress Keeping Phenomenon

Ever since Taiwanese investment in China took off in the 1980s, the issue of "keeping a mistress" (Pao Erhnai, 包二奶) has constantly turned up in the Taiwanese mass media. This term originally comes from Cantonese. The word "Pao" (包) signifies monopolizing, and "Erhnai" (二奶) denotes a second wife. The term thus suggests that a man monopolizes a woman by means of money, forming a stable relationship akin to having a second wife. Their relatively high economic status permits the men not only to support their families in Taiwan,
but also to establish second families in China. The popularity of this practice is reflected in the slang saying about Taiwanese businessmen abroad: “Nine out ten have a second wife, and the last one just denies the fact” (Shihke Taishang Chiuke Pao Haiyu Yike Pu Chengjen, 十個台商九個包，還有一個不承認). A whole publishing industry has sprung up in Taiwan around this phenomenon, with books on topics such as balancing affairs and family, preventing “seasickness” (Yun Chuan, 暈艙, meaning that a man was mystified and fooled by a hostess), justifying having a second wife, and teaching Taiwanese wives how to prevent extramarital affairs by spying, becoming bestsellers.

Erhnai were usually portrayed as young sexy materialistic women who, in order to wheedle money out of Taiwanese men, will actively accost the men and trap them in the extra-marital liaisons, like:

_Taiwanese wives should be careful about their husbands’ karaoke bar frequenting as the hostesses are usually seductresses_.10 The Erhnai are pretty, hot, and sweet talking which Taiwanese men can hardly resist11. They (Erhnai) could be the secretary, customer, colleague, or waitress. They ogle Taiwanese men no matter whether the men are married or not, as long as the men are rich12.

These kinds of messages indicate the Erhnai are attractive and from poor economic backgrounds. In order to obtain a better living, they are calculating

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10 台商「夫人幫」進駐 「相」夫教子防二奶, Chinatimes, 8th July, 2002.
11 台商難抵二奶的「勾」, NOWnews, 15th June, 2008.
and purely money-oriented. Businessmen on the other hand are portrayed as innocent as they inherently cannot resist sexual seduction, especially when they are overseas alone. These messages at the same time make those Taiwanese wives whose husbands are working in China feel insecure and panic stricken.

With China's economic growth, and with the increased investment from other countries, labor costs as well as labor demand in coastal China increased sharply. In the late 1990s these factors, in addition to the Go South Policy promoted by the Taiwanese government, brought about a turning point in Taiwanese overseas investment. Investments shifted from China to Vietnam, where the labor cost was only about 65% of China's. Those companies who preferred to stay in Taiwan because of the subtle political confrontation between Taiwan and China, but who still desired to cut their costs, also took the opportunity to move into Vietnam (Liu 2005; Hsu 2006).

In the new Vietnamese context, the positions of males working abroad alone and single girls struggling for better lives remained the same. With the relocation of Taiwanese businessmen to Vietnam from China, the same economic disparity between wealthy expatriates and poor locals, the perceived similarity of Vietnamese and Taiwanese cultures, and the influence of patriarchal Confucian ideology, the Pao Erhnai phenomenon was set to reproduce itself.

In the China context, the Erhnai of men from Hong Kong and Taiwan usually demanded a legal marriage and regular "wage" (Tu 2004). Tu indicates that
these mistresses are usually from rural provinces of inland China. They came to coastal provinces for working opportunities to help out their families. By being someone’s mistress, they can support themselves in the coastal areas as well as support their inland families better than by working in a factory. In my fieldwork I found that many Vietnamese mistresses are from similar backgrounds as those in Mainland China, yet a legal marriage doesn’t seem as important to them as for Chinese Erhnaí. It is often heard that Chinese mistresses came to challenge the first wife in order to get a legal status, but rarely is this heard of in the Vietnamese context. This is possibly because of the greater distance between Taiwan and Vietnam than that between Taiwan and China—a separation that arguably makes the mistresses in my research more inclined to be satisfied with their informal relationships, and also the not-so-tight regulation in Vietnam.

By greater distance, I mean both literally and conceptually. After the “cross-strait direct links (Liangan chihhang, 兩岸直航)\textsuperscript{13} were permitted, it now only takes about forty minutes to fly from Taipei to Guangzhou, where most Taiwanese businessmen base themselves. Furthermore, the airfares between Taiwan and China are also cheaper than between Taiwan and Vietnam. The more similar language and cultural backgrounds make it easier for the wives to come and go to China, while in Vietnam the language is a big barrier for the wives. For these reasons men in Vietnam return to Taiwan less often than those in China, and their first wives visit Vietnam less frequently as well. This greater

\textsuperscript{13} Started in 2003, Taiwanese businessmen and their families in China were allowed to fly directly back to Taiwan without a transfer by using a chartered flight. Later in 2009, direct flights between China and Taiwan were permitted.
distance forms a firewall by means of which the men keep wives and mistresses separated. Additionally, the household registration system (hukou, 户口) is also significant. In China most mistresses are from inner provinces. Without a hukou, they are not able to stay in the coastal cities, nor will they be able to register any children they have with the businessmen. In my research, the Vietnamese mistresses are mainly from rural areas as well, yet the household registration system (hộ khẩu) in Vietnam is less restrictive. Therefore they are able to stay in Ho Chi Minh City freely and to co-habit with their men as do real husbands and wives.

**The economic logic of compensated relationships**

A common explanation for the *Pao Erhnaï* phenomenon reported in the mass media is the socio-economic inequality between Taiwanese men and Chinese or Vietnamese women (Yang 2005; Hsueh 2001; Liu 2000; Lin 08/01/2001; Lin 17/05/1998; Lin 2002). Scholarly explanations too have stressed the economic aspects of these relationships, and in most cases have excluded the possibility of their having any authentic affective content at all. In such economic domination arguments, money obviously plays a pivotal role, and the men are represented as exercising monopoly control over economic resources. They pay money, and their wives and mistresses provide sensuous and emotional services under the duress of poverty and obligations to kin back in the countryside. We do know that money is always involved in the relationship between the men and their mistresses. However, this point of view may overlook and over commodify the relationship.
Based on this economic viewpoint, Hsiu-Hua Shen in her research on Taiwanese men's extra-marital relations in China (2005) explains the triangular relationship between husband, wife and mistress in terms of an international division of labor in familial and intimate relations. The Taiwanese businessmen in her study divide family labor into two parts: Taiwanese wives take on the social reproductive duty of maintaining normative families while Chinese second wives are viewed as sex and entertainment providers. The economic support that men provide to their wives and the money they give their mistresses are conceptualized as wages paid to them to play their roles within the international division of labor in family and intimacy. For the men in Shen's research, the cross-border triangular relationship is depicted as labor outsourcing. They regard themselves as good breadwinners – bringing lots of money home – and the financial support they give to their families legitimizes for them the right of extramarital sexual consumption abroad. They regard the exchange that takes place in the extramarital affairs themselves as a fair and reasonable trade in which they offer money and the mistress returns the debt with her body.

This kind of explanation, which makes not only the mistress but also the wife a wage laborer, overly emphasizes the predominance of economic factors. It overlooks important cultural, affective and social factors which I will argue in the forthcoming chapters are very much present in cross-border extra-marital relations. I would not deny the importance of economic disparities and other market driven logics in triangular transnational relationships. However, in primarily economic arguments it seems quite clear that issues of female agency and identity have been ignored. The mistresses are depicted as cynical
materialists who would exchange their bodies for money or material comfort. Economic factors alone however explain neither why these men engage in long and short term relationships while sojourning in China or Vietnam; nor why Chinese and Vietnamese women choose to become involved with these professional migrants. If financial exchange explained everything, then how could it be that I found in my own research cases in which Vietnamese mistresses actually lent money to their Taiwanese inamorata when they failed in business?

In a variation on the dominant economic explanation, I-Chun Kung (2004) contributes a different perspective on why Taiwanese businessmen keep mistresses in Vietnam. In her research Kung points out that Taiwanese firms in Vietnam often rely heavily on Vietnamese women. In the pursuit of capital accumulation the businessmen not only employ a large number of female laborers, but they also keep mistresses or take Vietnamese wives (even if they are married in Taiwan). They use the Vietnamese woman’s name to serve as a faithful proxy or “front” for their local business interests, regarding these local women as an “admission ticket” into Vietnam’s marketplace (Kung 2004). This kind of explanation for having a second wife overseas is also found in the book The Customs of Cambodia (Chenla Fengtu Chi, 真臘風土記14) published in the 13th century Yuan Dynasty (元朝) China. The book mentions that Chinese people sojourning in Chenla (Cambodia) would sometimes marry a local

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14 The book was originally written by Daguan Zhou (周達觀), a Chinese diplomat of Yuan Dynasty, recording the customs and life in Angkor.
woman to help them with trading business, because in Chenla trading was always handled by women (Zhou 1992).

Hsu in his research also observes that Taiwanese business owners in Vietnam often find someone who has citizenship to serve as their front (Jen Tou, 人頭) in local business negotiations (Hsu 2006). While this practice is less universal than it was in the past, there is still a motivation for foreign investors to use local fronts. Đổi mới saw Vietnam open its markets significantly to foreign investors, but there are still quite a few industries preserved for Vietnamese nationals only. In addition, Hsu indicates that a foreign investor establishing a company in Vietnam needs to obtain more than twenty expensive licenses including a doorplate license, a land-trimming license, and a wall-building license. Furthermore, the legal minimum wage in a foreign invested company, in 2006, was forty five US dollars per month, while in a local company it was only fifteen US dollars per month. The negative side of this strategy is that it runs the risk that the company might be stolen by the “Jen Tou”, who is on paper its owner – something which Hsu’s evidence suggests to be a real concern among Taiwanese investors in Vietnam. Consequently, businessmen seek to diminish the risk by finding a “Jen Tou” who is trustworthy, and hence they often turn to local “little wives”, girlfriends or mistresses to play this role (Hsu 2006).

In Kung’s research, twenty out of twenty six surveyed Taiwanese companies who use “Jen Tou” were under a Vietnamese female’s name. All of these females were wives or mistresses of the Taiwanese investors. Local women thus become useful assets for capital accumulation. Kung further indicates that
the mistresses in such marriage/concubine-like relationships were considered by Taiwanese businessmen as having both sexual as well as economic utility. These relationships were considered by Taiwanese businessmen to be one part of their investment – for which they pay compensation for labor and sex. In addition to keeping a mistress or entering into both true and fake marriages, some businessmen even requested their sons to marry the daughter of an influential Vietnamese official in order to gain more profits (Kung 2004).

Although this research does offer a different interpretation of why Taiwanese businessmen keep mistresses in Vietnam, it ignores the voices of these Vietnamese women and does not attempt to understand the material and affective strategies they may deploy in their involvement with Taiwanese men. Are we to believe that these Vietnamese women have no idea that they are being "used"? If they do know they are being used, why then do they still want to be the mistress of a Taiwanese man? Besides, not all Taiwanese businesses in Vietnam use "Jen Tou." In fact, most of them are registered as foreign companies; and there are also many managerial-level employees who need no "Jen Tou" yet keep mistresses. So purely economic explanations are still not able to tell us why businessmen want to have mistresses in Vietnam or in China. Furthermore, in Hsu's research he mentioned that businessmen would use someone they trust—their mistresses—to be their "Jen Tou". Therefore, rather than saying that businessmen need someone with citizenship to be their "Jen Tou" and therefore keep mistresses, I would say that the front must be someone trustworthy to the businessmen, so they pick their trusted mistresses to be their "Jen Tou".
"Culturalist" explanations of polygyny and patriarchy

Another perspective on the Pao Erhnai phenomenon seeks to explain it in terms of the persistence of historical cultural patterns of Confucian patriarchy and polygyny. An old Chinese proverb says that "After necessity comes luxury; man will begin to think of indulging himself in wine and sensuality (Paonuan Szu Yingyu, 饋暖思淫欲). This saying attributes men's debauchery to the attainment of prosperity, and posits that it is male nature to pursue erotic satisfaction as a fringe benefit of success and status. Kuang Nai Shan, in exploring historical and contemporary prostitution in China, shows that in feudal China, men could have concubines as long as they could afford to, whether they were noble or common people. While today gender relationships have undergone significant transformation, Shan argues for the continued cultural significance of the traditional practice of polygyny (Shan 1995).

Siumi Maria Tam sees the Pao Erhnai phenomenon as a cultural activity. Her study about Hong Kong businessmen's mistress-keeping in China emphasizes that polygyny existed in a widespread manner in traditional Chinese society until last century. Because of this cultural background, the masses incline to consider well-organized polygyny to be a proof of man's capability to support an extended family. The patriarchal cultural background plus the economic differentiation between the two enable the men of Hong Kong to consume Chinese women. One the other side, Hong Kong women are restrained by the patriarchal culture, which makes them tolerant of polygyny as long as the men are supportive to the family in terms of money. Tam stresses that "Pao Erhnai"
is a social phenomenon as well as a collective imagination; This collective imagination, constructed by both men and women who bear the traditional patriarchal thinking, re-creates and continues the practice of polygyny (Tam 2005). For Hong Kong businessmen in China, "Pao Erhnai" is not a purely economic phenomenon, but rather one deeply rooted in patriarchal culture. Economic is a necessary yet not a sufficient condition.

The record of polygyny in Confucian society can be dated back to about the 7th Century BC. In The Book of Rites (Lichi, 禮記) it says, betrothal rites are necessary for marrying a wife, but not for buying a concubine (Pin tse wei chi, Pen tse wei chieh, 聘則為妻，奔則為妾). In feudal China, concubines could be freely transacted as personal possessions. People considered having concubines an honor, especially among officials and rich/powerful people, which demonstrated their capability and status. Rich people can have as many concubines as they can afford, while the daughters of poor families could hardly avoid the destiny of being concubines. These records reveal the cultural background of gender inequality and commodification of women that had long existed in Chinese history. It was not until 1930 under the ideological trend of gender equality that monogamy became the lawful form of marriage. In modern Confucian society, globalization has brought transformation in many ways, yet it may not necessarily have brought liberty to women.

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15 The Civil Law of Republic of China (R.O.C), announced in 1930, is now used in Taiwan. In the marriage law of the People's Republic of China (P.R.C), announced in 1950, polygyny is also illegal.
L. H. M. Ling argues that globalization has not brought Asian women liberty and gender equality, but instead a twofold feminized role. She extends the notion of "hypermasculinity" developed by Ashis Nandy in his critique of the globalized economy, and suggests that it operates across cultural, spatial, and systemic divides to feminize Asian women under traditional Asian gender stereotypes combined with a Western patriarchal view of feminized Asian women (Ling 1999). Ling argues the division of labor resulting from globalization makes men from more developed countries superior to those from less developed ones and makes women from less developed ones in an even more inferior status.

Anne Allison, in her book NightWork, makes a similar argument about how the commodification of women's sexuality in hostess bars catering to Japanese businessmen's need and desire to "feel like men" (Allison 1994). Based on her fieldwork experiences as a hostess, Allison concludes that men go to hostess bars not for sex, but to enjoy an atmosphere in which masculinity is "collectively realized and ritualized (1994, 28)" when men are entertained, delighted, teased and bewitched by young attractive women. Going to hostess bars is thus about enacting the idea of male dominance rather than the simple consumption of commodified sexual services.

Ling notes that the roles of female labor migrants to the Western countries from developing Asian countries remain largely restricted to domestic and sex work. That is to say transnational Asian women suffer a hyper-feminization in which Asianness itself is feminized (Ling 1999). This gendered relation is, I would

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16 This term was brought out by Ashis Nandy in The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988)
argue, reproduced in the relationship between “advanced” Taiwan and “developing” Vietnam, in which the former plays the role of an active/appropriating man and the latter of a submissive/available woman. In this way, contemporary East Asian masculinities are in part structured by the sets of unequal social relations that are produced by and embedded in markets. In the context of Taiwan and Vietnam, an East Asian, Confucian hyper-masculinity is the result of this hierarchy. It is the Confucian cultural idea of male centrality that allows men to convert their economic capacity into woman-consuming practices. For Taiwanese men possessing, buying or keeping young, beautiful and alluring mistresses enables them to feel they are charming, rich, and powerful. Thus the macro-economic “drama” of Taiwan-Vietnam relations are played out in micro social relationships between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women.

This logic is also evident in cross-border marriages in Taiwan. The reason many Taiwanese men seek Vietnamese women to marry is not necessarily out of concern about their economic status in Taiwan but, as I argued above, because they want to marry a wife who is submissive and docile in nature, and who exemplifies the Confucian four female virtues (szu te, 四德)\textsuperscript{17}. In this way they hope to establish and enhance their masculinity (Tien and Wang 2005). With economic growth and the trend toward gender-equality in Taiwan, the developmental gap between Taiwan and Vietnam makes the mostly rural and working class Taiwanese men who marry Vietnamese or Chinese wives more

\textsuperscript{17} including: fidelity and piety, proper words and deeds, physical charm and craftsman-like needlework.
powerful in their marriages compared with men of a similar class in domestic marriages.

The continued influence of Confucian patriarchal ideology in contemporary Taiwanese society makes people more likely to accept men’s extramarital affairs and more disposed to regard men’s pursuit of sexual “entertainments” as natural. Shu-Ling Hwang has shed a light on the “flower-drinking custom” in Taiwan (Ho Hua Chiu, 喝花酒), where the flower symbolizes woman, and flower-drinking thus means drinking accompanied by hostesses. Taiwanese businessmen are accustomed to making deals at “hostess” bars, thus coupling economic negotiations with sensual pleasures. She points out men are regarded as needing female bodies to meet their desire, and thus people take the practice of sex-buying as men’s demand, right, and nature (Hwang 2003). Through the “flower-drinking” custom, their masculinity is recognized, their male power affirmed, and the manipulation of sexual ideology is enhanced.

Mei-Hua Chen in her research also indicates that men’s visiting prostitutes is a way to confirm their masculinity by subduing women sexually as a social ritual to build manhood. Quite a few informants in her study emphasized that this is one kind of “compulsory masculine practice,” or a “growing-up ritual” among young men (Chen 2003). “Joining in the fun on the occasion” (Feng Chang Tso Hsi, 逢場作戲) is usually used by men in Taiwan to explain this kind of practice. Even though general people would regard visiting prostitutes as unethical, it is acceptable, especially among certain men who regard it as cultural ritual.
These researches reveal the continued influences of traditional patriarchal logic on Taiwanese society. Culture does affect people’s lives in all respects, including men’s keeping mistresses. However it would oversimplify the phenomenon if we purely attribute the mistress keeping to a Chinese cultural background. Even though brothel frequenting and/or flower drinking are considered by the male customers as a way to confirm and enrich their masculinity, it could not explain why those Taiwanese businessmen would form stable relationships with their mistresses, instead of a one-off relation, not to mention bearing the social stigma of cheating on their wives.

Besides, the patriarchal explanation, situating men at the center of the relationship and regarding wives and mistresses as submissive and docile as in feudal times, does not accord with contemporary gender relations. In my own research I found that men’s fantasies around their own hypermasculinity, for instance, were often “punctured” by fears of their wives finding out about their affairs, and anxieties around not being able to control their mistresses as well. In addition, the fact that this mistress-keeping phenomenon occurs almost exclusively overseas and not in Taiwan cannot be explained by traditional patriarchal logic alone. Explanations based purely on the continued salience or re-emergence of traditional East Asian cultural patterns of patriarchy and polygyny are unable to account for the transnational nature, among other things, of the triangular cross-border families I found in my research. Clearly one needs also to take account of the patterns of mobility and accumulation created by contemporary Taiwanese capitalism and its operations in Southeast Asia. Rather than restoration of traditional polygyny, what we are looking at is
the re-invention and reproduction of this traditional ideology in a very contemporary context.

Social mobility and cosmopolitan identity through relationships with foreigners

As I have discussed above, media treatment of extra-marital affairs and second marriages between Taiwanese businessmen and women in China or Vietnam stress the “fair” nature of these relationships and the species of capital (economic and embodied) exchanged within them. Such explanations are, however, blind to the underlying structural violence of these relationships, born of the significant economic, social and gendered inequality between the parties. This power differential means that, on the women’s part, these liaisons may not necessarily be chosen but rather forced by circumstances. In addition, this view of the relationship as an exchange mutually beneficial to each party obscures the extra-economic logics driving the young women to become mistresses. The difference in economic power is, I would argue, a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the formation of relationships between Taiwanese businessmen and Chinese and Vietnamese women. It is necessary to look for other logics, cultural, gendered, social and affective, in explaining why these males and females choose to be financial supporters and dependents.

The popular figure of the “mail order bride” is very much grounded in the stereotype of a money-oriented, feminized Asia. Nicole Constable, in her study of Filipinas who marry foreigners, argues that the popular knowledge in the
West about mail-order brides is that they are from poor and less developed countries, so money is an essential factor for them (Constable 2003a). She points out that uneven global development leads people from “superior” countries to take people from the rest as “inferior others,” to see them as women with lower demands and less autonomy, and construct them as victims.

Much of the literature dealing with cross-border marriages has proposed that females with the hope of better lives seek social mobility by choosing to marry men from “upper-class” countries (Lee 2006; Hsia 2002; Thai 2005). Hung Cam Thai argues in his research on Vietnamese women marrying American citizens that Vietnamese girls with a high educational background and high income experience difficulties in finding an ideal partner domestically because of the nature of the marriage gradient in Vietnam, whereby women are expected to marry partners of a higher status. Their high socioeconomic status contradictorily reduced their prospects for marriage; therefore, many of them married low wage and low status Vietnamese expatriates who had immigrated to United States after the Vietnam War (Thai 2005; 2008). These marriages occur not only because these girls have difficulties in getting married in Vietnam, where traditional gender ideology is still active, but also due to their attraction to the cosmopolitan and upward dream of American life. In Thai’s research, however, most of these Vietnamese men in the United States are blue-collar workers or other wage laborer – waiters or taxi drivers – with lower social status than the girls. Marrying an American offers the girls upward mobility due to the economic difference between the two countries. But, at the same time, affects a downward mobility in terms of nationally defined class
status. Rhacel Parreñas (2001) has called this “contradictory class mobility (2001, 150)”\textsuperscript{18}. Nevertheless, because of their imagination of the exotic life in a modern country, the middle class urban women in Thai’s study chose to marry working class Vietnamese-Americans even while knowing the potential for downward social mobility. Similarly, Constable finds in her study of Filipinas who marry foreigners that exotic imaginings, the yearning for a western life, and an expectation of gender equality and female respect are all reasons why the women would like to marry out to western countries (Constable 2005).

In their research on the “cross-border polygyny” phenomenon in south China, Graeme Lang and Josephine Smart argue that the prospect of social mobility for the mistresses motivates sometimes already accomplished young women to form liaisons with relatively much wealthier, more knowledgeable and cosmopolitan businessmen from Hong Kong (Lang and Smart 2002). When women are economically insecure and possess low mobility chances, they tend to choose men with better resources even though the men are married. Having become second wives, the local women then have the chance to gain upward mobility by means of overseas migration or improving their capability by attending private English language and business colleges and the like. In the case that their supporters are company owners or managers, Smart and Lang found that it was very possible the women might acquire good positions in the company, or even become employers themselves.

\textsuperscript{18} The term “contradictory class mobility” is brought out by Rhacel Parreñas to depict migrant workers from lower developed countries with middle to upper social status, doing low status and non-skilled work in higher developed countries. Although working overseas brings them upward mobility, the non-skilled and stigmatized domestic work brings them downward mobility as well.
Mei-Hsien Lee’s study applies a slightly different interpretation. She finds that some Vietnamese women of low socio-economic status do indeed regard marrying Taiwanese men as a means of social mobility but that this means more than just straightforward socio-economic advancement. For them, romantic love and free choice in marriage are not a priority and even undesirable as cultural values in that these connote selfishness as opposed to the Confucian idea of self-sacrifice for the family. In order for her family to live a better life, it is a good daughter’s “debt of soul” to sacrifice her romantic dreams and marry a foreign stranger so she can provide her family with remittances and other financial support (Lee 2006). Lee emphasizes that this kind of cross-border marriage may seem ostensibly to be based on money, and therefore these families are often criticized by peers for having “sold” their daughters. Nevertheless, Lee argues that the marriages latently embody cultural meanings around traditional female virtues and self-sacrifice in a Confucian context, since the young women marry to help their families move upward, and live a better life. Philip Taylor also looks into the issue and suggests that while a Vietnamese daughter’s sacrifice for her family by marrying a wealthy foreigner could be viewed as a passive strategy enacted in a patriarchal context where she has limited choices and agency, it is also true that through this sacrifice she earns respect and status in her home town (Taylor 2007). The respect and status one earned by sacrificing her own romantic love under limited choices and agency conversely empower her and gain her more choices and agency.

Regarding upward mobility, Catherine Earl points out that Vietnamese women who migrate from rural to urban areas, especially those who are educated, thirst
for a professional job which not only brings in money, but also mobility into higher status. They are eager to act as urbanites, exhibit their urbane lifestyles, and show the distinction between themselves and common people, thus forming a sub-culture of rural-urban professional migrants from the south (Earl 2004). For these women, motorbike ownership and the frequenting of cinemas and cafés, among other activities, become proof of their purchasing power and middle class lifestyles. Lien Huong Nghiem, however, suggests that working class migrant women do not necessarily realize their aspirations for higher status and recognition in the city (Nghiem 2004). After migrating to the city to work in factories, these female workers do not attain their dream of becoming urban women, but instead encounter a dilemma. They are eager to practice an urbanized style of dressing, and lifestyle, and invest in their appearance as modern, fashionable women, but stressful, exhausting and repetitive factory work and low wages make it difficult for them to achieve their dream.

In Pei-Chia Lan’s research, she notices the phenomenon that being a friend with foreigners from countries perceived to be superior becomes a way of showing one’s cosmopolitanism, familiarity with exotic or upper status culture, language, and life style, thus reinforcing one’s symbolic capital (Lan 2011). Those Vietnamese women who become mistresses of foreign businessman may be acting on similar grounds. It is possible that going out with a foreign businessman shares a similar meaning with owning a motorbike in Earl’s study: they both can prove the woman’s higher status and display their cultural refinement, cosmopolitan tastes and urbane competence. “Moving upward”, then, is not only a matter of simple material gain or linear economic
advancement, but also involves cultural and social practices which include non-quantifiable advantages like recognition for having played a valued gendered and cultural role (the "good daughter"), the social mobility of one's family, and the transformation of one's identity into that of an urban and worldly person.

**Conclusion**

This chapter explores the cultural proximity of Taiwan and Vietnam, as well as the cross-border investments between the two countries under the new global market deployment. Since 1980s, Taiwanese venture capitals have largely flown overseas due to the rising production and labor costs. Coincided with Vietnam's reform and the cultural proximity, Taiwan has become the Vietnam's biggest investor. The new global market deployment has led to long-term professional migration and created many cross-border families. Among those businessmen investing in Vietnam, many have extramarital relationships with local Vietnamese women, thus forming the so-called "mistress-keeping" phenomenon.

Public tends to consider the "mistress-keeping" as an exchange—the men pays money, the mistresses pay their bodies—while some researcher also take the economic viewpoint to explain the relationship. One explains the cross-border triangular relationships as an international division of labor in familial and intimate relationships between Taiwan and China (Shen 2005). Another interprets the phenomenon of "mistress-keeping" as part of businessmen's capital accumulation practices (Kung 2004). Although money does play an important role in these relationships, these claims overly emphasize the
predominance of economic aspects and overlook the cultural, social and affective factors.

Polygyny has long existed in Chinese history. Based on a cultural viewpoint, Tam suggests that the “Pao Erhnaï” phenomenon is based on a collective imagination constructed by both men and women using patriarchal logic (Tam 2005). Culture affects people’s lives in every aspect. Yet it would be oversimplifying this phenomenon if we purely attribute the mistress keeping practice entirely to the Chinese cultural background, and would omitted the voices of wives and mistresses who are also involved in these relationships.

While we can gain a basic understanding of the “mistress-keeping” phenomenon through these early research findings, we see that there is a lack of discussion on women’s agency and structure of identification within polygyny families that ostensibly follow a rigid patriarchal logic. Besides, social mobility also plays an important role in people’s decision-making processes. Therefore, to understand the forming and the nature of cross-border triangular relationships we need to develop a holistic approach—that is, taking all economic, cultural, social, and affects factors into account.
Chapter 3: The Gender and Cultural

Logics of Triangular Families

Polygyny in Taiwan

In a piece of news\(^\text{19}\) reported in Liberty Times on 12\(^{\text{th}}\) July, 2011 in Taiwan, the story revealed that a fifty year old Taiwanese man named Han-Yen Hu (胡漢欽) who owns the biggest crane company in Taiwan, has four wives and is a father of fourteen children. While Hu has given each of his four wives a property to live in, he now plans to spend more than thirteen million US dollars to build an eight-story luxury mansion for the whole family (See Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Future home for Hu and his four wives discussed above.

Resource: Liberty Times Net
Accessed on 17\(^{\text{th}}\) October, 2011

His plan was that in the future his wives could run cafés, clothing shops and restaurants on the ground floor, and all the family members could live together upstairs. In the report, Han-Yen Hu said that for him his happiest moment was when, not long ago, all of his wives “together” gave him a diamond ring as his birthday gift. The point here, however, is not the actual value of the diamond ring itself. Since none of his wives worked, they bought it with Hu's money. He emphasized the word “together” as it implies that he is good at managing his four wives. His wives told the reporter that they were happy with their marriages as they were like sisters, often going shopping and having afternoon tea together. His friends also attested that only when a man is financially and emotionally capable of supporting and managing his wives and children should he be allowed to keep more than one wife.

This piece of news received mass attention and was heavily discussed over news channels, TV programs, and online forums in Taiwan. Many men expressed their admiration for Han-Yen Hu; some said this is what they fantasize about and they would do the same if they were as rich as Hu, while other commented that the man must be very potent to deal with four wives. Siumi Maria Tam indicates that people in a Confucian society popularly consider well-organized polygyny to be proof of a man’s economic status and income earning ability (Tam 2005). In this instance the expressed admiration of Han-Yen Hu’s position provides an interesting insight into the public’s (mostly men’s) opinion towards rich men’s polygyny. The apparently happy coexistence of his wives not only dispels the possible notoriety of the man as an unfaithful husband, but it makes him a capable and successful man.
In Taiwan, it was not until 1935 that bigamous marriage became illegal. However, even today polygamy can still exist informally if the three (or more) parties involved in the relationship all agree with their marital arrangement, or if none of the parties has lodged a protest within six months of becoming aware of the third member in the marriage. Although most marriages in Taiwan are between one husband and one wife, there are some celebrated examples of upper-class polygyny. For example, the former richest man in Taiwan, Yung-Ching Wang, who passed away in 2010, had more than three wives and mistresses. His brother, Yung-Tsai Wang who is also among the top ten richest men in Taiwan has two wives. And Yung-Ching Wang’s son Wen-Yang Wang has followed in his father’s footsteps, having a mistress as well as a wife.

In my fieldwork, men voice their ideas about polygyny more directly. Mr. Han was introduced to me by Mr. Yang in Vietnam. They were both attending an informal study group in Ho Chi Minh City. Mr. Han, who held a traditional wedding ceremony with his mistress during my fieldwork, said “to some degree all men want to have more than one woman.” (Mr. Han’s story will be fully detailed in chapter 4). Another businessman Mr. Shen, whose mistress was a model, was even more direct when he said,

Men are born to be sensual, to always want to conquer more young and

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20 The crime of Offenses Against Marriage and Family is indictable only upon complaint. It would not be prosecuted unless a litigant files a lawsuit.
beautiful women. Look at those CEOs in Taiwan who are married other 
CEO's daughters and have TV stars as their mistresses. That's why I 
chose her [Mr. Shen's mistress]. (Mr. Shen)

Mr. Shen constantly emphasized that his mistress was a model, has a Bachelor 
dergree in Chinese languages from Ha Noi University, is beautiful, and can help 
him with his business. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital comes in three 
forms—embodied, objectified, and institutionalized (Bourdieu 1986, 47-51). 
One's language ability or taste in art is an example of embodied cultural capital, 
while an art collection or a personal library is an example of objectified cultural 
capital. And institutionalized cultural capital refers to educational qualifications, 
such as a diploma, or a certificate. One sharing similar forms of cultural capital 
with others thus makes a sense as one is part of a particular social class with 
others. Here in Mr. Shen's case, we see that his mistress was represented as 
his objectified cultural capital. In Vietnam it is Mr. Shen's economic capital that 
allows him to keep a mistress, and this is converted into cultural and symbolic 
capital when he engages in a practice mimicking the behavior of the richest 
CEOs in Taiwan.

Anthony Giddens has suggested that men always want to better other men in 
terms of status, and that they gain their status by comparing their economic 
capital, as well as other rituals that solidify their manhood (Giddens 1992, 60). 
Wen-Lung Hung, in his research, also points out that the male body is 
symbolized by genitals, which are directly linked to one's sexual ability, and that 
sexual ability represents power in a heterosexual relationship (Hung 2003).
Male social status in Chinese cultural worlds, then, is arguably largely composed of economic, cultural, social, and sexual capital. In this manner, a successful businessman living together with his four wives in a luxurious mansion would be a fitting example. The combination of economic power and the ability to have multiple happy wives becomes a certificate of the man’s status, affording him a kind of hypermasculinity.

Peter Corrigan, in a book concerning the sociology of consumption, has written about the imitative practices of the lower classes. He argues that fashion is created by the upper classes as a form of social prestige, and then emulated by the lower classes (Corrigan 1997, 3). This phenomenon is easily seen in Taiwanese society, especially in the lifestyle of the upper classes portrayed by the mass media, such as their style of dress, housing, or even the family life of the aristocracy. Some aristocrats have even become endorsement symbols for certain luxury goods. Yet, here we can also see the aspirations of the masses; although perhaps not able to afford multiple wives themselves, Taiwanese men might openly admire those who are able to maintain multiple relationships. This is suggested by the reporting on “celebrity” polygynous marriages and associated lifestyle accoutrements in the Taiwanese press, as in the case of Han-Yen Hu and Yung-Ching Wang’s families.

**Gender ideology and reality in Taiwan**

When viewed from a woman’s point of view, polygyny in contemporary Taiwan may well take on a different meaning. Women in Taiwan now have improved socio-economic status, higher education, and a “modern” sense of self identity
and autonomy that is distant from the traditional ideology of three submissions\(^{21}\) (San-tsung, 三從). According to census data compiled by the Taiwanese Ministry of the Interior, female enrollment in higher education is higher than that of men\(^{22}\). Being exposed to western culture in recent decades and with higher education and economic independence, women are increasingly becoming more autonomous and powerful than the women in their mothers’ generation. According to the report released in 2007, the status of Taiwanese women is the second highest in Asia, below only those in Singapore, and they are ranked 20\(^{th}\) in the world\(^{23}\). This index includes women’s participation in professional, economic and political decision-making. Women’s status can also be understood through their attitude towards marriage in a patriarchal society. According to the Taiwanese Ministry of the Interior, the crude marriage rate in 2000 was 8.3\(^{\%}\), while in 2010 it dropped to 5.78\(^{\%}\)\(^{24}\). And among that 5.78\(^{\%}\), some 15.5\(^{\%}\) were cross-border marriages. A popular internet article suggests that the reason Taiwanese men are seeking foreign brides is because Taiwanese women are not interested in “stay behind men” who think like men did thirty years ago. Taiwanese women are voluntarily withdrawing from the traditional marriage system. The article argues that rather than becoming the traditional good wife who serves her husband and parents-in-law and takes care of the children, the contemporary woman will be happier if she invests in herself — pursuing higher education, devoting time to a career, and keeping in good shape. The summit of these aspirations is to achieve the so-called “three

\(^{21}\) Means women must submit to the father before marriage, submit to the husband after marriage, and submit to the son if the husband has passed away.


\(^{24}\) http://sowf.moi.gov.tw/stat/year/y02-03.xls accessed on 27\(^{th}\) October, 2011.
highs" (Sankao, 三高): high income, high education, and high social status. If a
good marriage is not available, such aspirational women would rather stay
single.\(^{25}\)

Although women are empowered now more than ever, this does not mean
traditional Confucian ideology has been discarded, especially on the part of
men. The traditional gender roles are also promulgated by the mass media in
Taiwan. In a video entitled "Taiwanese Women"\(^{26}\) made by a well-regarded
Taiwanese director Nien-Chen Wu (呂念真), he praises Taiwanese women for
their dedication to their families and thanks them for supporting men in many
ways, especially by always putting themselves after their parents, husbands,
and children. The video is expressive in that it reveals women's most valued
contribution at every level of Taiwanese society. It also reinforces the notion of
what makes a "good woman" according to traditional reasoning. Women are
thus expected to play the part of both the modern, smart, and independent
woman with a career, and that of the traditional family-oriented woman, who
puts husband and family first.

In Tien's research into the reasons why Taiwanese men marry Vietnamese
brides, she indicates that many consider Taiwanese women to be "too
independent to marry" (Tien 2005). In my research I also found that my male
subjects' preferences were for traditional gender values. Mr. Shen proudly told
me that his former model mistress would make him fresh juice every morning


and give him a massage every night before he goes to bed, which he believed no young and pretty Taiwanese woman would do for him.

Taiwanese women are way too independent, always talking about gender equality and women's rights, while Vietnamese women are more submissive. They are used to their lower status in Vietnamese society. So when they meet us (Taiwanese businessmen), they think we are gentle and considerate. (Mr. Shen)

In Tien and Wang's research into married subjects, they show that even though men and women both agree that men should undertake more domestic work and child-care responsibilities than they currently do, in reality, the practice falls far behind their words. This point of view regarding gender relations is shaped by men's relationships with others in their social spheres. The gap between attitude and behavior implies that people (especially men) are still embedded in a traditional Confucian gender culture (Tien and Wang 2005, 10-12). Just as Giddens posits in his work on sexuality, "men are the laggards in the transitions" (Giddens 1992, 59).

Marriage in Confucian culture

Scholars have pointed out that family is the core unit in traditional Confucian society. According to Confucian logic, marriage is not for personal gratification, but undertaken in the interest of the family, to cultivate the next generation of male offspring (Li 2006; Tsai 2007, 226). An old proverb states: There are three forms of unfilial conduct, of which the worst is to not bear male heirs to continue
the family line (*Pu hsiao yu san, Wu hou wei da*, 不孝有三，無後為大).

Therefore, marriage in a Confucian society is seen as the combination of two families, forming a new family consisting of a husband and wife embedded in traditional society. Coontz suggests that marriage organizes people's places in economic and political hierarchies (Coontz 2004, 977). Wolf, in her research on women and family in Taiwan, also suggests that marriage is a significant social institution for women, offering them both a symbolic and real position in the kinship system (Wolf 1972). Institutionally, it is only through marriage that a woman is assigned a permanent position in the family, held throughout her life, and then symbolically in the afterlife. A woman's roles in her marital family are expected to be those of a daughter-in-law who takes care of her husband's parents, a wife who takes care of her husband, and a mother who takes care of their children. The role of mother could arguably be the most important, since the patriarchal clan is established through patrilineal descent.

My first wife informant, Mrs. Chien, was my landlady. When I came to her for permission to use her story in my research, she agreed readily. We used to sit down and chat extensively when I was a university student; probably because she had three boys and no daughter, she treated me like her own daughter. Mrs. Chien, in her late fifties, married her husband in her early twenties. She was an accountant and had a lot of admirers. Among those admirers she chose her husband who was a public servant. After marrying, her husband asked her to quit her job and stay at home to take care of her mother-in-law, who was bedridden. With the coming of their three boys, she was always busy with house work.
I treated my late mother-in-law like my own mother, better than my husband did. Once she had a fever, I couldn't wait for the ambulance to come but carried her on my back, jumped into a taxi and rushed to the hospital. At the moment my husband was at work and told me "you take care of her". [...] I think I was taught as a daughter-in-law, it is my responsibility to take care of the parents-in-law. And this also earned me some reputation among neighbors and my husband's relatives. (Mrs. Chien)

Marriage, as both the means to form an alliance between two families and the fundamental method of forming a new family, is used to negotiate numerous materialistic considerations, including economic position, social status, and power; all of which remain important today. It was not until the nineteenth century that the notion of romantic love became a mainstream value in regards to selecting a spouse; i.e. freely chosen marriage based on love (Perrot 1990; Giddens 1992, 26). In Taiwan, the two parties in a marriage are assumed to be equal, and faithfulness is seen as a fundamental tenet. Yet even in faithful marriages, power relations and gender disparities can vary between different families and between different periods in the life of one family.

The resource theory proposed by Blood and Wolfe around power relations between husband and wife indicates that the power dynamic mainly depends on which party can access more resources, including economic and educational, among others (Blood and Wolfe 1978). Szinovacz draws on the
social psychology, proposing that the process and outcome of resource exchange will affect power relations between husband and wife. Marital power could be understood as the result of a string of exchanges, negotiations, conflicts, and conversions. The party who can access more resources both tangible and intangible will have more power over the other party (Szinovacz 1987).

After my mother-in-law passed away, my husband started to complain about me not being able to help the family financially. At that time, my littlest one was just five years old. I was being stupid. I should have let him take care of his mother and our boys by himself and continued to be an accountant as I was. Asking him for money makes me feel like I owe him something. (Mrs. Chien)

While Mrs. Chien was taking care of her mother-in-law, even though she did not contribute directly in the form of monetary income, she earned herself power and respect in the family and among relatives. Yet after her mother-in-law passed away, her husband started to criticize her economic contribution which made her felt subordinate. Therefore, when her husband brought up his plan for running a business in Vietnam, she felt that she could not and should not stop him.

More than ten years ago, when he told me he is going to run some business in Vietnam, I didn’t stop him at all. I knew even if I did stop him, he would not listen anyway. He already took all of his money out without
saving some for us, yeah, because that is his money. (Mrs. Chien)

Mr. Chien was a public servant who was forbidden from investing in Communist countries. Therefore he applied for early retirement and transferred his entire pension\textsuperscript{27} to Vietnam. Mrs. Chien did not believe that she could change her husband's mind at all, though what her husband was going to do affected her in many ways. Edgell's research in Britain has indicated that in middle-class families, it is often the wife who makes day-to-day decisions, while significant long term ones will be left to the husband. Therefore, the husband usually has a higher status than the wife (Edgell 1980, 53-70). Chen, Yi and Lu investigated power relations between couples in Taiwan, and suggested that they were mainly affected by two factors: Confucian ideology and social resources (Chen, Yi, and Lu 2000). Although nowadays women also contribute direct money to their families, and status between the genders is much more equal than decades ago, everyday practice still reveals much inequality between men and women. People in Taiwan, being influenced by traditional Confucian ideology, assume the husband to have higher status within the family and expect him to make family decisions, which gives him more power. Conversely, being influenced also by pragmatic determinants of social power, Taiwanese couples with higher socio-economic status or access to more resources tend to balance power relations more equally, in accordance with the resource theory.

\textsuperscript{27} There were two public servant pension options in Taiwan. One allowed the public servant to withdraw the entire value of the pension at once on retirement. The other allowed the public servant to receive a specific amount each month, and when the retiree passed away, the retiree's spouse would continue to receive 50\% of the amount till the spouse also passed away.
New power from tradition

Family is usually considered a happy and peaceful shelter for everyone, but when looked at from the viewpoint of traditional gender arrangement, a happy family could imply a woman's dedication to it (Bih 1995). The proverb which states: Only marry a virtuous wife (Chu chi chu hsien, 娶妻娶賢) indicates the traditional Confucian expectations of a wife. One should only marry a woman who is virtuous, industrious and intelligent. In traditional Chinese society, educating the children, helping her husband, and taking care of the whole family are taken as the duties of a wife. These expectations also suggest that a woman's life can only be meaningful when attached to a man.

Lin analyzed gender relationships within Taiwanese soap operas, and concluded that the husband would feel uncomfortable if his wife was too powerful (Lin 1996). The female role in TV programs or movies always shows characteristics conforming to female social norms (e.g. being a good wife and mother); being smart and competent; and promoting family happiness within the proper roles of a mother or wife. All this happens without challenging existing social norms or gender relations. This is also apparent in television advertisements featuring women who are highly devoted to their careers, but who are also filial daughters, daughters-in-law, supportive wives, and attentive mothers as well.

In Lu's research on the status of women in family businesses in Taiwan, she indicates that women with higher degrees of agency have a greater ability to continue their careers after marriage, and vice versa. Women working in family
businesses after marriage could possibly suffer an increased work load, yet they can gain certain agency through the work, especially when acting as the "business owner's wife" (Lao Pan Niang, 老闆娘) (Lu 2001). The term Lao Pan Niang literally means the owner's wife, yet it actually has a unique meaning in Taiwanese society. Lao Pan Niang partake in productive activities in their families and companies simultaneously. They not only take care of their conjugal families in the role of a traditional wife, but they are also involved in the operation of their husbands' companies in different roles, such as serving as a bridge between the boss and his employees, managing personnel in a conciliatory way, taking charge of the finances, and sometimes even playing a part in manufacturing if necessary (Kao 1999). Although it is not a formal position in a company, being Lao Pan Niang does empower a woman in the realm of the family as well as the business. In Mrs. Li's case, a Taiwanese first wife whose story will be further discussed in Chapters 6 and 8, she and her husband work in a plastics company. The Lao Pan Niang of Mr. Li's company had certain rights over its finances, and was a friend of Mrs. Li. Thus the Lao Pan Niang helped Mrs. Li to limit the extent of her husband's infidelities by depositing her husband's salary into Mrs. Li's account.

Our Lao Pan Niang is very clever. She deposits my husband's salary into my account directly since a man won't be able to cheat without some money, especially in Vietnam. (Mrs. Li)

In another first wife informant Mrs. Chao's case, it was a senior employee in her husband's factory who followed her husband to work in Vietnam and who told
her, in her capacity as Lao Pan Niang, about her husband’s affair.

Our factory director has been working in our company since we founded it. He told me “Lao Pan Niang, you must go check, and stop him.” And other employees are also very supportive towards me. (Mrs. Chao)

I met Mrs. Chao at a Buddhism group’s charity event where many of the attendants were middle aged women whose husbands were not around—some were working overseas, and some had passed away. The group runs on a foundation basis and the local chapter is open to everyone who wishes to read the Buddhist Scriptures housed in the library, wishes to practice meditation, or wants to talk with the members there. Mrs. Chao was famous in the group as well as in the textile industry because she knows of her husband’s affair in Vietnam and “permits” him to do so. By strategically acting as the traditional good wife, Mrs. Chao earns herself power, respect, and support (Mrs. Chao’s story will be fully detailed in Chapter 6). Starting with the ostensible acceptance of the traditional Confucian ideology that a wife should support her husband as much as possible, Lao Pan Niang have become key figures in Taiwanese companies. As we see from the ethnographic examples, their acceptance of this traditional, “helpful” and subordinate role can lead to the negotiation of substantive forms of power and agency for the wives.

**New balance in the transnational family**

When the decision about going overseas to work or invest presents itself within businessmen’s families, Taiwanese wives usually choose to support their
husbands. First and foremost, this means that they stay in Taiwan so that their children can receive a better education, and at the same time they can look after their parents-in-law. Mrs. Wu was introduced to me by Mrs. Chen who I recruited from an online forum. Mrs. Wu and Mrs. Chen were good friends in a similar situation: both of their husbands were away working in Vietnam, and their children were attending the same Kumon School. Mrs. Wu was in her early forties, working as a saleswoman, and had two children. Her husband had been running a food processing company in Vietnam for about six years. When I asked her about how the decision to work overseas was made, she told me it was basically her husband’s idea. Wu told me:

How could I stop my husband from pursuing a better career and higher income, especially when my husband thinks it is all for our family? Actually I did not want him to go. Our sons were only about four and six years old, they needed their father. But my mind told me, as a good wife, I should support him. (Mrs. Wu)

Wu talked about the pressure she was under when her husband proposed going abroad for a better income. She could not say no to him since she was his wife, the one who was meant to stand behind her husband and help him to cope with family pressures. Nevertheless she did not want him to go. As a woman in a contemporary Confucian society, who willingly entered into her marriage, she now finds herself obliged to play more roles than initially expected: a virtuous wife, a fond mother, a conscientious worker, a filial daughter and daughter-in-law, and a modern woman. She is reminded to play
these roles by articles in the newspapers, dramas on television, slogans in advertisements, and also by the people talking around her. Mrs. Wu told me:

I am so tired of being a good woman, a good wife, a good mother, and good daughter and daughter-in-law. At first when my husband left I felt really helpless, always busy taking care of my two sons, and attending to my work. My parents-in-law never gave me a hand but instead blamed me for not looking after the children well when my sons were sick. Sometimes I feel I am in a worse place than divorced women who take care of their children by themselves, because I have to deal with the in-laws as well ... So when he is back, I ask him to take on my duties, so that I can have a break as well. (Mrs. Wu)

In Richman's research on the left behind families of Haitian migrant workers in America, her informant bemoaned the burden of having to take up her husband’s responsibilities when he was working in the United States. "For the sake of Miami money, a mother in Haiti dies", her informant said poignantly (Richman 2003, 122). In my own research, the Taiwanese wives are apparently in a much better situation, yet they also clearly feel pressured by having to tackle two people’s roles by themselves.

Six months later when my husband came back home for the first time for a vacation, I felt so strange, as if he were a cyber-friend who only exists on the internet but now suddenly stands in front of me. He was not my husband. When he touched me, I even felt immoral like I was having sex
with a stranger. Then I discovered that I had become used to a life without my husband. But I have to get used to life with him now. One week later he was gone, and I was left behind, again. (Mrs. Wu)

Later, as we will see in Chapter 6, Mrs. Wu even felt annoyed when her husband came home and preferred to spend time with me instead of feeling uncomfortable at home. This happens in other Taiwanese businessmen’s families as well. In 2007, a news report entitled: “Non-Stop Pestering, Taiwanese Wives Feel Crazy” reveals that, in the early stages after their businessmen husbands went abroad, wives were so at a loss that they were sometimes driven to seek advice from consultants. Later on, the wives become accustomed to life without their husbands around. They build their own social circles, found their own things to do, and enjoyed their lives of freedom. When their husbands returned, and sought to resume their role as the head of the family as before, the wives constantly felt “pestered” by their husbands’ presence and demands. In Long’s study on American couples, who often live separately due to work requirements, it was also argued that wives who stay behind usually need to deal with the pressures of being responsible for all family matters. When the husbands return, the wives have to re-adjust again to maintain family harmony, and to play the emotional intermediary between their husband and the children (Lang 1990).

Nevertheless, the left-behind wives are not the only ones who feel a sense of anxiety. My businessman informants also brought up the changes they had

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observed in their families, especially when they returned to Taiwan on vacation, expecting family life to be the same as before.

You know what, when I went back and wanted to take my family out for a trip, they told me they were too busy to go out with me. Here [in Vietnam] when I talk, people have to listen to me, but back in Taiwan, nobody gives a shit! Maybe this is what people call a midlife crisis. (Mr. Shen)

Contrary to his life style in Vietnam where his former model mistress serves him well, Mr. Shen felt lost back in Taiwan. His sons were about college age at the time of the interview. It is understandable that children at this age usually have their own social lives, but for Mr. Shen, who had been abroad for a long time and wanted to catch up with his wife and children, the rejection made him feel isolated. Another informant, Mr. Cho said:

At least she should ask my opinion. She used to listen to me, but now she decides everything. [...] She used my money to sponsor poor students, and donated money to some organizations without telling me. [...] I am not saying I wouldn't allow her to do this. These things are good, but she should discuss them with me. (Mr. Cho)

Mr. Cho was introduced to me by another interlocutor Mr. Wei, a grandpa who owns a chrome factory. We met up in Mr. Wei's office one afternoon and had
some traditional Taiwanese tea\textsuperscript{29}. Mr. Cho was in his fifties and was bald with a throaty voice. Relocating from China some fourteen years ago, Mr. Cho now owns a lighting company, and he and Mr. Wei co-own some other business including a furniture factory, a wood factory, and a trading company. All together Mr. Cho employs about five hundred people. Talking about his feeling when returning home to Taiwan, he expressed his dissatisfaction with the fact that he can manage five hundred people in Vietnam but cannot “manage” his wife at home. The statement “She decides everything” reveals the alteration in power that had come about in Cho’s family; something he did not expect.

Another time, when a group of Taiwanese managerial employees and I were having drinks in a bar in District 3, another informant, Mr. Tsue complained to me, while holding a Vietnamese hostess in his arms:

My son is picking up an accent from the Indonesian nanny. I can’t understand what he is talking about on the phone now. [...] When I was back last time, our domestic helper thought my wife was her boss, and only listened to her. Hey, I am the one who pays her salary. [...] my wife is reluctant to prepare fruit for me now. I have to ask the helper to do that. 

(Mr. Tsue)

Mr. Tsue was introduced to me by Mr. Chu, the molding company manager. All roughly same age in their thirties, Mr. Chu, Mr. Tsue, and Mr. Yu often hang out

\textsuperscript{29} Mr. Wei has prepared a whole set of tea tools for traditional Taiwanese tea ceremony, including a traditional tea table. So his friends can have traditional tea together at his place from time to time.
together. Mr. Tsue and Mr. Yu were both managerial employees of a masterbatch company in Binh Duong province. The three came to know each other through a business deal, and ever since had been good friends. In the beginning he did not talk very much. However, after I helped him with accessing Facebook and his favorite online game by using free VPN\textsuperscript{30}, he started opening up toward me. Talking about his son's accent and his position back home, he seemed quite upset. Tsue was not sure if it was worth the sacrificed of his family life for his career, but he did not have much choice if he wanted to earn a better salary with which to support them. In the Confucian tradition, Mr. Tsue chose to sacrifice intimacy with his family in the present to ensure their financial security of the future.

\textit{Love between family members}

Running a family might be considered another skill to be mastered by my Taiwanese female informants. Many times they mentioned to me that love and family were totally distinct. For most of them, when they and their husbands were boyfriend and girlfriend, what they had to bind them was love. But after marriage, there must be something more than that. Mrs. Wang contacted me after she saw my online recruiting advertisement. She was in her late fifties, and her husband had relocated their shoe factory in Vietnam about ten years previously. Their two children were in their early thirties, had each gotten married about two years ago, and were living in separate locations. Mrs. Wang had been teaching cooking in a community college for the past few years.

\textsuperscript{30} Facebook and some online games were block in Vietnam. Users needed to reroute their IP address through another country before accessing.
When I met her after her class at the teaching kitchen, she was holding a tray of bread in one hand and a flower pot in the other hand. The flower had been given to her by one of her students. The first thing Mrs. Wang told me was “it is never easy to be a housewife”:

When a couple stays together for years it is love between partners (Ai ching, 愛情); When a couple stays together for decades it is love between family members (Chin ching, 親情). (Mrs. Wang)

For her, it was not romantic love that maintained the relationship between husband and wife, but the love between family members. Because of family ties, she shouldered all the chores in the family, and even when the children were holding their wedding ceremonies, she handled both the traditional ceremonies and the modern wedding parties, while her husband only had to be there for a few days. Mrs. Wang knew of her husband’s relationship in Vietnam, but she did not let her husband know she knew.

He is not faithful to me, but he is a good father to our children, and a good son to his parents, even my parents. I don’t want to ruin our happy family.

He is about to retire, and then he will find that his affair is totally wrong. (Mrs. Wang)

After discovering her husband’s affair, Mrs. Wang began to develop her hobbies and social life. Teaching cooking classes made her feel cheerful and fulfilled, and helped her to sustain the marriage. She believed that, as long as she did
her part as a housewife well, her husband would eventually reflect on their situation and understand one day. In this patriarchal society, a woman is educated and re-educated to be the supporter of her husband; thus the husband’s success will also be her achievement. In light of this logic, women devote themselves to their husbands’ success in order to maintain a complete family. Mrs. Chao, the informant who “permitted” her husband’s affair in Vietnam, had a similar perspective.

I haven’t seen a man in Vietnam who is without infidelity. Not one! I think the wife should change, should love herself more and learn to let go. [...] He is there, out of the family, in the industrial zone. After work it is normal for men to go to the karaoke bar for a little fun; this is just for fun. If you persist in putting it in mind, that will only make things difficult for yourself. They [Taiwanese businessmen] are smart. They know family is the most important thing. They will come back one day. (Mrs. Chao)

“Just for fun” is the most common excuse the wives will use for their husbands’ affairs. This indicates that these cross-border extra-marital relations are often understood, or “rationalized”, by the first wife as neither for the long term, nor as anything significant. A stranger to whom one’s husband went for “fun” could never become part of the family. Taiwanese wives try to believe their husbands still love their families and will come back to reunite with them one day. In doing so, they can rationalize their devotion to their families. On the other hand, these conservative ideas could serve to support Taiwanese businessmen’s existing notion that their wives are good at compromising. This logic also makes the
men more open to having overseas affairs. Mr. Shen told me he would just not let his wife know about his affair with his former model mistress in Vietnam. He put it,

I just don't let her (his wife in Taiwan) know. She is not here; she doesn't understand my life here. Letting her know what I am doing is just putting pressure on her; all she can do is fight with me, and then what? She will forgive me eventually. So why bother? Just don't let her know. (Mr. Shen)

Another businessman informant, Mr. Shih, also command on Taiwanese wives’ devotion.

Our Taiwanese women are really good at looking after our families; they are able to put up with this [extramarital affairs] for the sake of children and the whole families. They know it is not easy to pull all your investments out at this stage, and they understand men’ physical needs. They will be there for you. (Mr. Shih)

The grandpa Mr. Wei owns a chrome factory and co-owns other side businesses with another informant Mr. Cho. At his sixties Mr. Wei has two sons, a daughter, and several grandchildren in Taiwan. He has been living in Vietnam for more than twenty years and has had a mistress who had lived with him for more than ten years. He once expressed:

She [his wife] is quite helpful. I don't have to worry about my parents and
family. She takes care of everything. I never question her about anything, because I know she will always run the family very well. (Mr. Wei)

An old proverb states “Behind every successful man is a devoted women” (Chengkung Te Nanjen Peihou Tsungyu Yiwei Momo Fuchu Te Nujen, 成功的男人背後總有一位默默付出的女人). Such social expectations are utilized to rationalize the compromises of the wives, thus keeping their families intact. However, to compromise does not necessarily mean that the wives are in a completely subordinate and powerless position. Women are able to gain agency by taking up their husbands' responsibilities. Acting as Lao Pan Niang, and by other means, they can negotiate “modern” choices and courses of action that are often camouflaged under the foliage of Confucian tradition.

**Gender and marriage in Vietnam**

_A hat without a strap is unstable,_

_like a boat without a helm,_

_like a woman without a husband._ (Vietnamese folk song)

Confucianism has been widespread in Vietnam since the 10th century, and continues to be influential there, especially in terms of family and gender norms (Freneir and Mancini 1996, 30-34). Under the influences of China, men and women were born to be different in terms of social status and their roles within the family. While men were the cadre of the family who cultivate the next generation of male offspring, women were the subordinates who were
supposed to be wifely, motherly and devoted to the whole family. Up to the 15th century, the Lê Dynasty ruler promulgated the so called Hồng Đức legal code (Lockhart and Duiker 2010, 169). The code was roughly based on Chinese law, but was unique in that it granted women a higher position than that available to women in China, i.e. Vietnamese women could possess property, a daughter had equal succession rights as a son, and a wife could repudiate her husband if he had abandoned her for a certain period of time. The Hồng Đức legal code was in force until the early 19th century when it was replaced by the Gia Long legal code which was very much similar to the then existing Qing Dynasty law of China (Taylor 2013, 402). In the Gia Long legal code, Confucian orthodoxy was re-emphasized, and those women’s rights protected by the Hồng Đức legal code were canceled. For that reason, the Gia long legal code was deemed to be a re-establishment of the male-oriented Confucian system.

Besides Confucianism, Vietnam has also been influenced by Western culture in its colonial era since the 18th century. During the French colonial period, ideas about feminism, individualism, personal freedom, and freely chosen marriage became popular among a tiny Western-educated urban elite (Marr 2000). But the impact was limited as most of the population continued to live under the imperial bureaucracy. Later, from the closed door to the reform era, the state intervened in the institution of marriage, and required official approval to be sought for weddings. In this period, not only the traditional requirements of socio-economic matching were considered, the political compatibilities between partners were weighed up as well (Nguyen 2007).
The gender gap became closer during war time and women began playing significant roles. They had to assume greater independence as their men folk were on the battlefield, and in the later stages of the war were pulled from their farms into battle (Werner 1981). Women were thus freed from the traditional gender role. Many female revolutionists and freedom fighters were highly honored. Later during the reform era, the revolutionary movement meant to eliminate Confucian traces and it sought to equalize women and men in terms of rights and obligations, yet it brought ideologies of gender equality to the nation level rather than in the family. Women were thus expected to be independent and to contribute to the Communist Party and to the country; nevertheless they were also required to carry out their traditional duties within the family. With the end of the war and the onset of economic development, women who were once pulled from farms into battle are now pushed into factories. Following later market reform, occupational gender segregation again increased and women once more returned to their more traditional female roles. Researchers have suggested that the paradigm for a good Vietnamese woman has significantly shifted since the advent of the Đối mới policy. The contemporary woman should be a modern woman who contributes to the country, yet conforms with the traditional female virtues (tự đức) of taking care of the family, not being too ambitious, being modest in comportment and mind, and always seeing family as the highest priority (Ngo 2004).

After the 1990s, more frequent and widespread contact with western culture has brought in fresh influences, including ideas about personal fulfillment and freedom (Pham 2002, 41). Currently, the values of romantic love and freely
chosen marriage are highly regarded, especially among young people, the middle class, and other social elites. As Nguyen has proposed, people in Vietnam now experience the continuation of traditional gender roles on one hand and the proliferation of ideas around modern sexuality and gender equality on the other (Nguyen 2007). Although men and women are equal before the law, socially, men are still considered superior to women.

In such a complex context, people in Vietnam still deem that a marriage, whether freely chosen or arranged, is an important social institution, and essential for everyone (Banister 1993, 20). Similar to other societies where Confucianism is still in effect, in Vietnam the institution of marriage has an obligation to give birth to a male heir who will continue the family line as well as to perform ancestral worship. A woman who remains single and childless will, it is popularly believed, end up in the dire situation of being without family (Tran 1995, 192-193). As the Vietnamese folk song indicates, a woman with a husband is like a boat without a helm. Thus the idea of a woman remaining single while of marriageable age is considered highly inappropriate, and such a woman will be universally urged into marriage (Goodkind 1997).

On the other hand, men are expected to marry too, but are also assumed to have other "lovers" from time to time. In Vietnamese history, the existence of polygyny can be traced back to the 3rd century, when the female warrior Triệu Áu failed to fight off the Chinese colonizers and allegedly said she would never bend her back to be some one’s concubine. Historically, Vietnamese women’s status declined under the influences of Chinese Confucianism and polygyny
prevailed among rich and aristocratic men. The difference between a lawful wife and a concubine was that the wife held a formal position in the family, yet the concubine could be freely transacted by the patriarch. Many rich landlords might buy poor peasants’ daughters to be their concubines to work in their fields and to share the house chores (Pham 2002, 34). Therefore, men’s having multiple wives indicated their high status and economic ability. Even nowadays in Vietnam extramarital relationships are still seen as a form of male privilege (Nguyen and Harris 2009). Regarding women, Pham criticizes that there is a double standard regarding men and women’s sexuality in the history and nowadays that women’s sexuality exists only to serve men (Pham 2002, 158). Vietnamese women are constructed as low sex desire and in need of protection—opposite to men who are believed to inherently sexual.

Together with the factor that marriages in Vietnam are often arranged by parents. As clearly stated in the Gia Long legal code, a marriage must be arranged by the newlyweds’ parents, since parental and family consent was a most important condition for a marriage (Pham 2002, 105). Many Vietnamese men thus married someone they do not love and had concubines. In the 1960s, a major family reform was initiated under the new Marriage and Family Law which stated that polygyny was prohibited (chapter 2 article 10) and parents were not allowed to force a marriage (chapter 2 article 9). Despite of the new legal code, to this day parents arranged marriages are still often seen, especially in villages (Thai 2013, 237). And polygyny, or extra-marital affairs, are still considered an important signifier of masculinity (Nguyen and Harris 2009). People say: “Sáng ăn cơm, Tối ăn phở” which literally means have boiled rice
in the morning and have rice noodle in the evening. Yet actually corń here refers to the wife and phở refers to the mistress. This saying discloses the widespread polygyny in Vietnam as both corń and phở are important food in people’s everyday lives.

*Sacrificing and egoistic*

In the famous Vietnamese narrative poem Kim Văn Kiều, the heroine Kiều’s father was unjustly thrown into prison. In order to save her parents, Kiều gave up her lover and married a man she did not love and who turned out to be a pimp.Kiều was sold to a brothel and thus began her desperate life. She once had a chance to gain revenge on those who had done harm to her, but instead she magnanimously forgave them. After suffering for fifteen years and even trying to commit suicide, she was finally reunited with her family and lover and lived a peaceful life. Although not everyone in Vietnam has read the poem, the story has frequently been retold in dramas and operas, re-inscribing the idea that it is noble to sacrifice oneself for one’s family.

This kind of self-sacrificial thinking can be observed today in the phenomenon of Vietnamese women marrying foreign men from wealthier countries. Mei-Hsien Lee points out in her research on the cultural meaning of Vietnamese women’s “marrying out” that the prospect of economic reward for their natal families cannot alone explain why Vietnamese women choose to marry Taiwanese men and live far away from their home towns. In addition to the remittances, the traditional gendered culture of sacrifice and altruism for one’s family is an important motivation (Lee 2006). Yet this very sacrifice might benefit
marital subjects at the same time. Compared to “mail order brides” from poor provinces in the Mekong Delta, the women in my study manage the balance between sacrifice and achieving a desirable lifestyle for themselves and their families remarkably well. Ms. Vo, one of my mistress informants, for instance, is able to remain in Ho Chi Minh city and live together with her family under excellent conditions. By being the mistress of a foreign businessman, Vo is able to stay in the place she is familiar with and is able to take care of her natal family both physically and economically. Her luxurious lifestyle also raises her own social status (Ms. Vo’s story will be further introduced in Chapter 4 and 5).

Interracial marriage was not new in Vietnamese history. During the France colonial period, and later during the Vietnam War, numbers of Vietnamese women married France or American (mostly in South Vietnam) soldiers. However, marrying a foreigner usually comes with a stigma that “such unions were mostly marriages of convenience” (Hong 2001). Woman who married a Frenchman would be called me Tây, meaning “those who were obsessed with Westerners,” while those who married Americans would be called me Mỹ, “those who were obsessed with American” (Vu 2007, 18). It was because taking a foreign husband was considered losing one’s origin which decent parents would never allow their children to do so no matter how distinguished the foreigner. After the introduction of Đổi mới policy which opened its markets, the people of Vietnam have gained greater opportunity to interact with foreigners such as tourists and investors, and this has slowly loosened their views toward interracial marriages.
In Chuan-Chuan Chan’s research on the changing-status in natal families of Vietnamese brides in Taiwan, she reveals that when a Vietnamese woman went to a match-maker in order to marry a Taiwanese man, her natal family was severely criticized by other members of the community for “selling” their daughter for money. Later, however, when the same neighbors saw how the money and other remittances received from the daughter and son-in-law improved the economic and social status of her stay-behind family, they changed their attitudes (Chan 2005). In the hope of bettering their families’ economic condition, the Vietnamese mistresses, as well as brides, sacrifice their romantic love and “bet” on marrying foreign men as a way out. This course of action might at first glance seem to be purely an altruistic self-sacrifice on the part of the young women. As we shall see, however, the possibility of personal gain and satisfaction from such marriages is also there.

**Tasting the global flavor in a local setting**

Modernity has always been an important issue in Asian countries, especially in those that have been colonized. Enrique Dussel has pointed out, modernity is a cultural phenomenon that started from Europe, and its nature is closely linked to the expansion of European imperialism (Dussel 1993). Modernity largely overlapped with colonization and rule by Western powers led Asian subject peoples to perceive themselves as "backwards". In recent decades, this feeling of “falling behind” is sustained by increased contact with developed countries, especially Western societies, in the context of globalization. Karen Kelsky in her research argues that Japanese women’s longings for Western modernity are visible in their aspirations around romantic relationships with Western men,
insofar as the men are cast as objects of desire and agents of liberation (Kelsky 2001). In Lan’s research on high-skilled western migrants in Taiwan she also indicates that white, English-speaking westerners are privileged in Taiwan due to the conversion of their western/linguistic capital into economic and social capital (Lan 2011). Such longings for modernity are also present in Vietnam, for instance in the popular figure of the feminized, traditional-yet-modern post Đổi Mới woman.

Taiwan has had frequent contact with Vietnam since the 1980’s. Taiwan’s status as a rich East Asian neighbor gives people from this country a certain cachet in Vietnam. My Vietnamese informants’ eagerness to frequent in cafes with me and chat in Mandarin was, I am sure, often at least partly motivated by their desire to be seen in public with a Taiwanese friend. I believe they felt they were distinguishing themselves socially by speaking Mandarin in public with a Taiwanese person while eating western food. These things all contributed to a feeling of modernity.

Taiwanese expatriates in Ho Chi Minh City can be seen, after a fashion, as economic colonizers, each bearing a halo of prosperity, modernity and cosmopolitanism. For a Vietnamese woman, dating such a foreign man brings with it an aura of travel, sophistication, and access to a world that the vast majority of Saigonites cannot hope to inhabit. At the same time, as will be discussed later, these rich, cosmopolitan men are also perceived to be good, family oriented Confucians. Through Taiwanese expatriate men, Vietnamese mistresses and second wives can experience the benefits of global living while
comfortably staying at home in Vietnam. Ms. Le was introduced to me by Ms. Vo, a mistress of a Taiwanese businessman and a successful real estate businesswoman. We met at Vo’s place; Le showed up in badminton top and skorts, which one seldom sees in Vietnam, and with her short straight hair dyed blond. In her late thirties, Le has been together with her husband for ten years, and has had a son and a daughter with him. She worked in her husband’s company and has been a housewife after being together with her husband. Talking about her impression of Taiwan, she said:

I can enjoy the Taiwanese food without going to Taiwan. My husband\(^{31}\) always brings me lots of delicious food from Taiwan. Last time when I attended a badminton match, he even prepared sports drinks from Taiwan for me. (Ms. Le)

Consuming Taiwanese food is one way of tasting a global experience. Ms. Le had not yet been to Taiwan, but when talking about Taiwan, she thought immediately of food. She told me that Taiwanese food was yummy, although the food she was referring to was almost entirely in the form of packaged fare. Nevertheless, when she shared some of this food with her neighbors, they both appreciated and envied her. Ideas about the desirability of even package food from Taiwan are no doubt linked to the recent popularity of Taiwanese dramas in Vietnam, with their images of beautiful people living modern, urban lifestyles. Besides food, other goods from developed countries also carry the scent of globalization in Vietnam. In Ms. Vo’s case, she regularly consumed all kinds of

\(^{31}\) The mistresses in my study were used to calling their co-habitant, the Taiwanese men, their husbands, especially if the two had held a wedding ceremony.
goods from overseas, and tireless chased new global fashions. Although the mistresses I studied did not themselves become internationally mobile, they were certainly able to taste the global flavor in a local setting through the mobility of their husbands.

**Masculized men and feminized women**

As mentioned before, Taiwanese businessmen in Vietnam are masculinized through their wealth and privileged nationality. Because of the economic discrepancy between the two countries, the Vietnamese mistresses were traditionalized, feminized and sexualized in the eyes of the Taiwanese businessmen. Mr. Lin, the elder son of a bicycle parts company owner and its future owner to be, had been living in Vietnam since graduating from university. He put his observation this way:

Vietnamese women and Taiwanese women are different. [Vietnamese women] are still traditional and submissive, but also tough enough to shoulder the economic burden for her whole family. (Mr. Lin)

The men tended to see the “submission” of Vietnamese women as a result of traditional culture (or of Vietnam’s lesser modernity in terms of the influence of feminism). Yet, I would rather interpret the “submission” perceived by my businessman informants as an interweaving of the women’s internalization of her traditional gender culture and the representation of the economic discrepancy on their gender relationship. This feminizing of Vietnam point of view could also be found in the way my Taiwanese man informants perceive
local Vietnamese men:

They [the mistresses] don’t think Vietnamese men are good for marriage. Why? Because Vietnamese men are not hard-working. [...] Have you seen those men on the roadside during the day? Under trees gambling, smoking, drinking beer, and sometimes sleeping while their wives are working hard in our factories. [...] They beat their wives, and also have affairs. Like my driver, he has two wives, too. (Mr. Ho)

Mr. Ho, like other businessmen in my research, criticized Vietnamese men’s failure to be breadwinners. Imposing their Confucian ideology on Vietnam, the businessmen consider local men to be irresponsible and unable to take care of their families—different from themselves who are able to sufficiently support their families (both in Taiwan and Vietnam). Taiwanese men thus consider themselves more masculine in economic power terms and possessing a stronger sense of responsibility. As foreign investors in Vietnam, their comparatively higher economic capital is transformed into their symbolic capital which further confirms their superior status and, at the same time, feminizes Vietnam and double feminize Vietnamese women.

**Vietnamese women’s perspectives**

The phenomenon of Vietnamese women becoming the mistresses of foreign men could be interpreted along the lines that, because they are “traditional” women, they are willing to enter into a polygynous marriage, and thus to better their families’ lots:
I know he has a wife in Taiwan. But I don’t care. [...] I respect her since she is the big wife (Bà lòn), she takes care of my husband’s family. She stands a lot. [...] I have never seen my parents-in-law, and I think that is good because I don’t have to serve them; I can stay here to take care of my parents. (Ms. Vo)

On the other hand, this phenomenon could also be read in terms of a very “modern” readiness to enter into an open, unorthodox relationship, and to accumulate capital from so doing.

I don’t mind that he [her boyfriend as she declared] has a wife in Taiwan. I am happy with our relationship now; we both have some freedom. I like him because he is a mature and responsible man, not like my father. If he left his family and stayed with me, he wouldn’t be the man I liked anymore. (Ms. Doan)

Ms. Doan was introduced to me by a Vietnamese friend. Doan, a sweet college student in her early 20s, was the mistress of a Taiwanese manager. Doan’s father had an extra-marital affair and abandoned their family a long time ago. To help her family, Ms. Doan initially worked in a karaoke bar, and through that employment gained the chance to become the mistress of a Taiwanese manager. In the course of my fieldwork, a number of Vietnamese women mentioned to me that Taiwanese men are much more tender and gentle than Vietnamese men, as they are open to western ideas about gender equality. Ms.
Doan told me:

I think Taiwanese men are more gentle and responsible. Lots of Vietnamese men also have affairs, and some even mistreat their wives. Not long ago, there was a wife who was burned by hot water by her husband. [...] At least I never hear of Taiwanese men abusing their wives or mistresses. Even when they break up, they don't say anything rude. (Ms. Doan)

In light of Doan's statement, I would suggest that Ms. Doan entered into the relationship with her Taiwanese boyfriend for economic accumulation as well as for escaping from the traditional gender role in the family realm that her mother and some other Vietnamese wives played. Doan imagined this relationship to be temporary, yet also found the prospect of its breaking up hard to deal with:

I know it won't be easy, but this is for now only, it could never last forever ... and no matter whether I want to stay in the relationship or not, he will leave anyway. (Ms. Doan)

Although knowing their Taiwanese partners will leave one day, most of the mistresses in my fieldwork considered they were husband and wife, no different to other couples. Yet owing to the social stigma, the mistresses rarely let other people know they are not the legal wives of their businessmen partners. While the mistresses will never have the opportunity to meet their in-laws, most of the men have met their mistresses' own natal family members. Some men told me
that they treated their “Vietnamese” in-laws as their own:

Since I married her\(^{32}\), her parents have been my in-laws, too. Of course I give them money or help them repair their house. (Mr. Shen)

In fact, direct gifts of money to in-laws are rarely made in Taiwanese society. In Vietnam, giving to in-laws implies an economic hierarchy between the men and their local families. Nevertheless, gifts and frequent visits from these elite foreign businessmen all contribute to raising the local family’s social status. The women who bring these benefits to their families thus become good filial daughters.

The mistresses on the one hand are traditional women who are relatively submissive to their men and able to economically contribute to their natal families by “marrying” foreign businessmen. At the same time, they are modern enough to enter into an unconventional relationship from which they can extract resources and through which they can escape the traditional role of “daughter-in-law”, and in some cases “the mistreated wife.” In this manner, they strategically perform a flexible version of “woman”, allowing them to play the roles assigned to them by local and global economic structures and cultural models.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed the gendered logic of marriage held by the three

\(^{32}\) By holding a traditional wedding ceremony.
parties in my research. Through the cases of aristocratic polygyny, it is clear that in Taiwanese society male social status is significantly composed of economic, social, cultural, and sexual capital. In this manner, a man’s having multiple wives grounded on economic power is linked to his hypermasculinity. Yet this polygyny fantasy of men might be well punctured by the reality. In Taiwanese transnational families, the role of head of family has shifted from the husband, who used to act as the principle decision maker, to the wife since she has to assume the husband’s responsibilities after he leaves for Vietnam. The wife could thus gain more power by acting as the head of the family and could enjoy greater freedom without her husband being present. As shown in my ethnographic data, some men found it difficult to regain their primacy after rejoining their families.

Traditional Taiwanese thinking espouses the Confucian ideology that a good wife should support her husband, yet the Taiwanese wives gained new power in their families, and sometimes even in their husbands’ companies, by acting as heads of the family or Lao Pan Niang. The traditional social expectation imposed on the wives was utilized to rationalize their compromises and to keep their families intact. To compromise does not necessarily mean that the wives were in an inferior or subordinated position. When their husbands returned to Taiwan, the wives showed several ways to resist their husbands’ power, i.e. declining to travel with him, serve him (prepare fruit), or to pass the care-taking role onto the husband. This bargaining for leadership in the family could also erode the tradition patriarchal gender arrangements.
With respect to Vietnam, where people’s gender norm is constantly affected by both Confucian and Western ideologies, the businessmen and their mistresses understood each other in a gendered way combining traditional cultural logic and the discrepancy in economic power. As foreign investors in Vietnam, Taiwanese businessmen’s comparatively higher economic capital allows them to keep mistresses, which is transformed into symbolic capital that makes them feel superior and masculine. On the other hand, the economic discrepancy also feminizes Vietnam and doubly feminizes Vietnamese women.

Sacrificing for the family is always a highly praised female virtue in Vietnam. This kind of thinking could also be seen in the phenomenon of Vietnamese women marrying foreign men in order to better their natal family’s economic condition. This applies to the subjects in my research. These mistresses, by entering the traditional social constitution of polygyny with richer foreign men are able to help and take care of their families. Yet this sacrifice could also benefit the mistresses themselves in terms of economic capital, social capital, and global tastes. In this manner, the phenomenon of Vietnamese women becoming the mistresses of foreign men could arguably be understood in terms that she is a traditional woman who is willing to enter into polygyny and eager to better her family’s future. Moreover, she is a modern woman who is ready to participate in an open relationship and to gain capital from it. These flexible roles consciously played by these mistresses affirm and give sense to their roles as determined by economic/global structures. These enable them to both conform to social expectations and to profit from their relationship.
Chapter 4: What does economic factor play in the mistress keeping?

Relatively early in my fieldwork in Ho Chi Minh City, I was invited to attend an informal meeting at a Chinese-Vietnamese café in District 5, where a Taiwanese man was to “interview” a potential mistress. A number of young women attended the meeting, but “Mr. Hu” was principally interested in talking to “Ms. Nguyen”, a young woman he had met at a pub a few days ago. Mr. Hu was a recently arrived investor, and was in the process of applying for the requisite licenses before starting his Insulated wire business. Mr. Hu, his friend, his Chinese-Vietnamese interpreter and I sat on a big curviform sofa with Ms. Nguyen and several of the other girls who worked alongside her in the pub, who were apparently there to offer moral support, or perhaps to enjoy the free lunch.

As shown in figure 3, the protagonist, Mr. Hu, sat in the middle of the big sofa with all the girls next to him. The interpreter and I sat at one end of the sofa, and Mr. Hu’s friend, Mr. Ting and his Vietnamese girlfriend sat on the other end. Ms. Nguyen chose the seat by the side of Mr. Hu. At twenty years old she had a beautiful face with subtle make-up, dyed brown shoulder length hair, and a delicate and exquisite figure. She wore an apple green halter top whose light

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33 Young and pretty girls talk, drink, and / or dance with male customers for tips in pubs, cafés, or teahouses.
color complemented her fare skin, covered by a translucent white gossamer top with bubble sleeves, which revealed her dainty body.

Figure 3: Seating arrangement

After a few exchanges through the interpreter, she started to touch Hu playfully, putting her hands on his plump belly, giggling at its round shape, and saying that Hu's paunch was very cute. Hu tickled her waist in retaliation, making her twist her body into his arms screaming with laughter. From their interaction, if I did not know they had just met, I would assume that they were lovebirds, although they could not converse with each other without the help of the interpreter.

Through both her dress and her behavior, Ms. Nguyen was zealous in showing her readiness to get this "job" as Hu's mistress. Her presentation singled her out
as sexier and more attractive than her female friends who showed up on that
day, and her openhanded performance toward Mr. Hu eliminated the abashed
feeling that might otherwise have been present. When I got a chance, I asked
her if she liked Mr. Hu. "If he likes me, it would be great. But if doesn't, it is still
fine," she returned, then continued:

I don't like my present job. I am attending a manicure class, and want to
open a nail salon one day. So I have to earn enough money before that....
(Ms. Nguyen)

This answer suggests unambiguously that dating a foreign man is seen to be a
way of earning money for her, just like getting a job in a pub or a company. The
stated intention of Ms. Nguyen and other women like her when entering into
such liaisons is often that they wish to directly help their natal families, or at
least with to help them indirectly by making their own dreams (to open a salon
or something else) come true. Being a mistress, for these young girls, is
considered a good way for them to amass economic capital. While in the
coming chapters I will argue that this economic logic alone does not explain all
aspects of such "compensated" relationships, it is clearly important, and I wish
in this chapter to spend some time pursuing the question of how the economic
disparity between the parties structures their interactions in certain ways. I will
do this principally by means of ethnographic description, offering interview
material and observations that flesh out many of the arguments made in the
introduction. In that context, I critiqued arguments that sought to explain
relationships between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women in terms of
economic, cultural or social (mobility) factors alone. I will illustrate below that these relationships demonstrate a complex intertwining of these logics and others, while introducing the reader to the immediate context and milieu in which my fieldwork was carried out.

**Economic gulfs**

According to official statistics from the World Bank, and calculations by the Taiwanese and Vietnamese government, the GDP of Taiwan in the year in which I started this study (2007) was 393.134 billion USD, compared to 71.111 billion for Vietnam (see Table 4). The basic monthly wage in Taiwan was 17,280 TWD (about 576 USD); while in Vietnam it was 620,000 VND\(^{34}\) (about 37 USD). Such a large gap in wage levels is, clearly, one of the key reasons why Taiwanese businessmen invest in Vietnam, and at the same time becomes one of the key factors in explaining why Taiwanese men keep mistresses there.

**Table 4: Economic Circumstance in Taiwan & Vietnam**

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<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP (Billions USD)</td>
<td>393.134</td>
<td>430.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNI (Billions USD)</td>
<td>348.166</td>
<td>379.776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNI per capita, Atlas method (USD)</td>
<td>15192</td>
<td>16413</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: author collected and analyzed from websites shown below:

Key Development Data & Statistics of World Bank

http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD

accessed on 16\(^{th}\) October, 2011.

\(^{34}\) From 1\(^{st}\) January, 2008, the minimum wage of public servants and employees of state owned or private companies in Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City (zone one) was 620,000VND (about 37USD) and the minimum wage for foreign investment company was 1,000,000VND (about 60USD). Source: http://www.fibre2fashion.com/news/textiles-fashion-hr-news/newsdetails.aspx?news_id=44647 accessed on 4\(^{th}\) September, 2011.
In the course of doing my fieldwork, I found that the monthly salary of Taiwanese managerial level employees (*Tai kan, 台幹*) was about 2000 to 5000 USD\(^{35}\), about twice as much as they were paid domestically. The earnings of business owners (*Tai shang, 台商*) were considerably higher. According to my observations in 2008 in Ho Chi Minh City and nearby regions, the pay of a Vietnamese white collar worker working in a foreign company was about 100 to 200 USD monthly, and that of a blue collar worker was 80 to 100 USD. A white collar worker employed by the state would typically earn 50 to 100 USD, and a blue collar worker in a state owned or Vietnamese company, 37 to 40 USD.

While the salary level in a foreign company is much better than in other workplaces, the price index is getting higher and higher in Ho Chi Minh City. Even someone working in a foreign company may not necessarily be able to afford to support themselves in that city. At the beginning of 2008, a bowl of Vietnamese rice noodle soup (*Phở*) at a roadside vendor cost 16,000 VND (about 1 USD), and a plate of rice with a few pieces of cucumber, tomato and a fried egg cost 18,000 VND. A factory worker with a 1 million VND (about 60 USD) monthly income could then easily spend all of his/her salary on food, not to mention rent, transportation, and other expenses. This arithmetic also

\(^{35}\) The exchange rates in this research are fixed at 1 USD=30TWD, and 1 USD=16750VND.
explains why companies in Vietnam are often short of labor, or why workers often do not turn up at factories.

Vietnamese people, especially men, are often portrayed as sluggards by Taiwanese businessmen in Vietnam. As one of my informants said:

They don't work at all. They chat under the trees all day long, or sit by the roadside drinking coffee or beer. (Mr. Shen)

As we have seen, however, working hard in a foreign company may well still not be enough to earn a living wage. In this situation, many Vietnamese workers do not find it worthwhile to work diligently. At the same time, Taiwanese businessmen in Vietnam are fond of observing that Vietnamese workers are eager to work overtime, an activity that brings extra benefits due to the penalty pay. Thus Vietnamese workers are thought, contradictorily, to "not like working" and at the same time to "like to work overtime." (Taiwanese perceptions of the Vietnamese work ethic will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 7).

On another occasion, I accompanied several Taiwanese managerial level employees to have a massage in District 5. They were regulars there and started chatting with an attendant upon arrival. I was surprised right away by the fluent English of the attendant. As I knew that some Taiwanese companies were recruiting office members with English ability, I asked if she would like to have a job in a company. She laughed and replied:
If I worked in a company, the pay would be no higher than 200 USD [a month], but usually I can get more than 200 USD just in tips working here. I like working here. The most important thing is I get the chance to meet foreign friends. If I can find a boyfriend, the pocket money could be higher. Why should I get a job in a company?

For the young attendant, her fluent English offers her alternative means to economic revenue – dating a foreign man – an activity that is seen principally as an economic one, i.e. as a job to pleasure the man for money. Ms. Vo, a mistress who has been with her "husband" for fifteen years and has given birth to three children with him, told me frankly that she does not love her husband and has never fallen in love with anyone in her life (This and other statements about the absence of affect in these relationships will be returned to more critically later). In the course of my fieldwork, I also found that mistresses may even have their own boyfriends while simultaneously dating Taiwanese businessmen.

Hypergamy

Contemporary studies of relationships with foreign men in Southeast Asia have suggested that lower or working class girls seek to marry men with higher social standing out of the desire to achieve upward mobility through marriage (Elder 1969, 158; Constable 2003b; Thai 2005). This desire for hypergamy was certainly confirmed in my research. For instance, Ms. Nguyen, the girl at the mistress interview, was from a subsistence farming background in the Mekong Delta, and at the time of the interview was a hostess in a pub and living in a
rented room with her younger sister and four other girls. Through her liaison with Mr. Hu, the new arrival, she sought to improve her status by becoming an independent business owner, thus transforming her social identity from that of poor peasant cum lowly service industry worker, to that of modern urban businesswoman.

For women such as Ms. Nguyen, to be the mistress or second wife of a foreigner represents the fastest, most cost effective and highest “return on investment” currently available in Vietnam. As Amyra S. Grossbard suggests, as wealth inequality among men increases, polygyny also increases, since women are more likely to choose to marry a married man with wealth than to marry an unmarried poor man (Grossbard 1976, 1980). The economic disparity between Taiwan and Vietnam means that among this cohort of working class women, some at least are looking to establish irregular kinship relations with wealthy foreigners rather than to marry working class Vietnamese men.

“Only too glad to do it”: Men’s Perspectives

Mr. Chu, a thirty-six-year-old manager of a molding company, tall and humorous, with a MBA degree from the U.S.A, sums up his analysis about why there are so many Taiwanese men having affairs in Vietnam: “There is no reason to refuse a girl offering herself voluntarily. Moreover, it is not expensive at all.” Mr. Chu went on:

Men's having fun in a club or a karaoke lounge is not only out of physical desire. Here in Vietnam, one can get a young pretty woman, who is never
available in one's life under normal circumstances, and enjoy the delight of her services with little money. One could only be too glad to do it. (Mr. Chu)

Another day, Mr. Chu introduced me to one of his friends, Mr. Shen. We met up in a café in District 7 which his mistress highly recommended. After everyone had sat down and ordered, Shen's mistress went to the counter, paid for us and then headed to her salon appointment. Mr. Shen has been running his construction company in Vietnam for about ten years. In his fifties, he has a round face with old-fashioned wire-rimmed glasses that slide down constantly. He is very proud to have a mistress who is decent, has a Bachelor degree, and used to be a magazine model. When I asked him the same question I had put to Mr. Chu, he returned:

Vietnamese women are so ready and willing; a man can easily have a girlfriend here. For example, the waitress in this café works eight hours a day, seven days a week, and earns one million VND a month. If you tell her you are going to keep her as your mistress, and give her two million VND (pocket money) per month, she will happily take your offer and feel grateful. [...] You can imagine that, if you go out [to find a prostitute] every time when you feel the need, you still have to spend a similar amount of money anyway. And sometimes the girl might not match up and thus disappoint you. But if you keep a mistress, she will be willing to serve you, take care of you, be a local tour guide for you, and help you in some other ways... You
spend the same money to keep a mistress and you don’t need to worry if you will get venereal disease\(^{36}\) or not. Isn’t it a good idea? (Mr. Shen)

The other businessman Mr. Wei, the grandpa who owns a chrome factory and other businesses on the side, expressed his opinion on Taiwanese men’s affairs in Vietnam:

It is not a big deal for a man here to have a mistress, girlfriend, or female intimate (Hungfen Chihchi, 紅粉知己)\(^{37}\). Life here is nothing but work: tiring and boring. So some men will go to karaoke or clubs together, to have some comfort, or the feeling of being accompanied. Besides, Vietnamese women are good in this way. They are young and pretty, will serve you as if you are a king, do everything for you, and only cost you about 120 USD per month. However, even if you give a Taiwanese woman 1200 USD, that is not enough for daily expenses. (Mr. Wei)

A “female intimate” (Hungfen Chihchi, 紅粉知己) usually means a good female friend who knows one very well. Normally it would not connote someone with whom one has sexual intercourse. As used in this context, however, the term refers to mistresses. This creates a strange situation – that is, in Vietnam men

\(^{36}\) During my field work in Vietnam, there was a message sent out by Taiwanese Business Association of Bình Dương noticing that a hostess working in a Karaoke bar that many Taiwanese were frequenters had been confirmed infecting two Taiwanese men and several Korean men with HIV. This caused serious panic among businessmen in Vietnam.

\(^{37}\) Some men deny that they have a mistress, and call the woman who has sexual intercourse with him either a girlfriend, or a female intimate.
have female intimates who sleep with them, but with whom they cannot communicate well due to the language barrier. This usage suggests however that the men are attributing a certain intimacy (or at least an imagined one) to their relationships with Vietnamese women; an intimacy that is above and beyond the purely sexual or commercial aspects of these relationships.

**Commercialized relations**

Besides the economic disparity, money plays an important and specific role in these extra-marital relations. The fact that Taiwanese men use money to date local women or keep mistresses suggests that, in their view, they buy them as though buying a commodity or employing someone without establishing emotional relations. This economic power not only shows that they can buy something/someone they want, but also that the women are taken as entertainment providers or temporary employees. The explicitly commercial aspect of this relationship means that whenever the buyer/boss feels unhappy to have them, the buyer/boss can always abandon them and get new ones. Mr. Ku has worked at an international consulting company in Vietnam for seven years. Tall and fit and always well dressed, each time we were walking on the street I could feel people looking at him. I image it would be relatively easy for him to get a local girlfriend. Yet he told me he would rather pay for a relationship, as:

> It is just for fun here. You can tell her (your mistress) not to come any more, just like dismissing a guy in your company, whenever you have had your
fill, are unsatisfied, or she is getting too greedy, or you just want to have a younger and prettier mistress. (Mr. Ku)

Georg Simmel has argued,

*Money best serves, both objectively and symbolically, that purchasable satisfaction which rejects any relationship that continues beyond the momentary sexual impulse, because it is absolutely detached from the person and completely cuts off from the outset any further consequences* (Simmel 1978, 378-379).

According to Simmel, money is not only a currency, but also represents a transaction, and the exchange-based nature relationship of the two in the transaction. This turns the relationship of the two parties into an indirect and replaceable one. Taiwanese men give money in exchange for the mistress’ sensuous services: her body, company, affection, and so on; on the other hand, the mistresses trade their time, body, and emotions for money. The monetary nature of the transaction shapes these extra-marital affairs into a commercial deal.

In Taiwanese men’s groups, information is circulated and discussed rapidly, including the price of keeping a mistress. Although it is not big money to them, the men do not want to be too generous to their mistresses, or to be considered sentimental fools by their friends because they overpaid their mistresses. Indeed, so stable and consensual are these prices that it is possible to tabulate
the "keeping fees" that mistresses from a variety of backgrounds should fetch in a table such as Table 5 below.

Table 5: The average price list

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background of the Mistress</th>
<th>Price in VND</th>
<th>Price in USD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singer, Actress</td>
<td>Depends</td>
<td>Depends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model, Airhostess, Professional</td>
<td>5,000,000-7,000,000</td>
<td>300-500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostess of Clubs</td>
<td>3,000,000-6,000,000</td>
<td>200-400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostess of Karaoke/Beer house</td>
<td>2,500,000-5,000,000</td>
<td>150-300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory Worker, café waitress</td>
<td>1,000,000-2,500,000</td>
<td>70-150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The price list here is for "pocket money", not including daily expenses, rent, and gifts which varies. Rent of an apartment takes about 150-500 USD depending on location, and in a four story building costs about 500-1000 USD.

Source: author collected and analyzed

My Taiwanese interlocutors agreed that the price paid depends on the previous occupation or social status of the mistress, and then can be adjusted according to her performance. They stressed that this is common knowledge, as Mr. Shen, whose mistress was a model, told me:

There is a general price scale for keeping a mistress. For example, if she was a hostess from Caesar (a famous club in District 5, Ho Chi Minh City) it usually costs 5 million VND (per month). From a Bia Ôm (a beer house where one can order waitresses for hugs and sensual entertainment) it costs two and half million VND; and if she was a factory worker, two million would be good enough. If she is beautiful or willing to cooperate, of course you can give her a little bit more. This "pocket money" is ample as normally men pay for all other expenses like eating, everyday purchases, or going
on a trip. Some Taiwanese men here prefer to keep a hostess from a high class club who has been selected and "well trained" to meet the needs of men such as them. Some prefer to take their secretaries as their mistresses, so that they can use them as assistants during office hours and as lovers after work. Some even use the names of their mistresses as fronts to run a business. (Mr. Shen)

Mr. Lin, the future owner of his father's bicycle parts company, sums up what he has seen in Vietnam:

The way to become a mistress varies. Now, if one gets acquainted with a woman in a karaoke, club, or pub, the woman would take the initiative in suggesting keeping her as a mistress. Usually the price would be between two and five million VND, depending on her appearance and accomplishments like dancing or singing. Another way is for the woman to be already working in a Taiwanese company or factory. If the Taiwanese man likes her, a special relationship will form. It is definitely easy for a Taiwanese man to pursue a woman here. It is only a matter of time. Sooner or later, the woman will agree to be together with the man. (Mr. Lin)

The mistress-keeping phenomenon is also common among men from other countries. The basic components are very much the same, but the method might be different. I was told in the field that Korean businessmen in Vietnam use a more commercialized and contractual way to keep mistresses. The man and his mistress have an agreement before building up their relations. Usually
they will cohabit and/or date each other for a contracted time, and the man will
give her money as a remuneration at the end of their contract, e.g. 5000 USD
for one year. Some Taiwanese men told me that it is a good way to keep
mistresses because the mistresses would not dare to get you angry, since by
doing so they would risk losing their financial reward due to the contract being
terminated early.

I was informed that the mistresses will use all kinds of ruses to claim more
money or material goods from the men. Mr. Chu, the young molding company
manager, said of his own mistress:

She always comes up with hundreds of excuses to squeeze money out of
me. For example, she would tell me: my motorbike is out of order, my
motorbike has been detained by the police, my cell phone has been stolen,
or I need a digital camera and a laptop for school. I don't believe in the
stories she comes up with. So I don't give her any extra money beyond the
agreed amount after sex, because I don't want to marry her anyways, and
she doesn't want to marry me either. (Mr. Chu)

By deploying their wealth to keep mistresses, classifying the mistresses into
different categories, and forming a price list as if the mistresses were
commercial properties that can be bought and sold, the men construct a picture
that mistresses are wanting and needing nothing but money. They constantly try
to remind themselves not to get mystified and fooled by mistresses, and above
all not to fall in love with them. More than one of my informants made
statements to the effect that this sort of commercialized relationship is easy to deal with as it does not demand too much attention from them. Mr. Ku, the tall and fit consultant, put it directly:

It is easier to understand what they (the Vietnamese mistresses) want compared to the Taiwanese women, even if that means I have to throw away some money. Money is a simple matter. I don’t think I could afford having their company if what they want is not money. (Mr. Ku)

While Mr. Wei, the grandpa who owns a chrome factory, explained to me quite significantly:

You know what? Some mistresses say they don’t want your money. In fact, the ones that really don’t want money are the costliest, because what they want is not only a few bucks each month. (Mr. Wei)

As we can see, my Taiwanese businessman interlocutors tried to distance themselves from their local mistresses by commoditizing their relationships. According to, Karl Polanyi, a commodity is something that has been produced for sale on a market. However, there are objects on a market that are sometimes produced not for the purpose of trading—labor, land, and money; Polanyi refers to them as fictitious commodities (Polanyi 2001, 71-75).

"Labor is only another name for a human activity that goes with life itself, which in its turn is not produced for sale but for entirely different reasons,
nor can that activity be detached from the rest of life, be stored or mobilized; land is only another name for nature, which is not produced by man; actual money, finally, is merely a token of purchasing power which, as a rule, is not produced at all, but comes into being through the mechanism of banking and state finance. None of them are produced for sale. The commodity description of labor, land and money is entirely fictitious" (Polanyi 2005, 51).

The fictitious commodities are not produced for profit making, and have existed before forming the exchange value. With regards to labor, Polanyi states, it "cannot be shoved about, used indiscriminately, or even left unused, without affecting the human individual who happens to be the bearer of this peculiar commodity" (Polanyi 2001, 76). Polanyi indicates that the commodification of labor power affects the bearer of labor. When labor is disposed on a market, the market at the same time is disposing physical, psychological, and moral entity of the one who is bearing the labor power. While the fact that the relationships between the Taiwanese men and their mistresses are deeply involved with money and sex makes their relationships look commoditized. The labor power of the mistresses was not produced for sale and inseparable from the mistresses themselves. Even though the relationships of businessmen and their mistresses often start in the form of commercial deals, but unlike the transaction of a normal commodity that the relationship of the two parties ended after the exchange is completed, it affects physical, psychological, and moral entity of the mistresses (and very often the men as well). (More discussions on the
emotional and affects parts between the men and their mistresses will be covered in subsequent chapters.

**Women’s perspectives**

For their part, the mistresses are clearly quite capable of strategically using the metaphor of a commercialized relationship to obtain their own ends. Ms. Doan, the sweet college student who is dating a Taiwanese manager, stated unambiguously that for her, this relationship was an opportunity to earn some easy money. She told me:

I can do anything he wants: stay quiet, dress up for him, accompany him anywhere, and even disappear when his wife is here. I’m not a fool who expects the Taiwanese guy will treasure her forever. This is all about business, and this business only works when I am young ... So I would not waste my time on unworthy men, and live an ordinary life. Look at me, I am twenty years old now, and have already accumulated quite a bit of money. A few years from now, I will be able to pursue what I want in life with the money I earned. (Ms. Doan)

Ms. Doan’s family knew exactly what she was doing, and did not try to stop her at all. In Doan’s memory, her father always had affairs and never cared about the family. Her mother had been ill since Doan was a senior high school student. To support her family, Doan left school early, and became an attendant in a karaoke bar. At that time, she was only seventeen years old. While working at the bar, she met her Taiwanese “boyfriend”, who even supports her to
continue her study. She is quite proud of herself as she is able to help her family. In the near future she plans to buy her family a house so they will no longer have to live with her uncle’s family. She offers emotional and sexual services, and is even willing to cover up their affair for her Taiwanese boyfriend. From a middle class perspective she might be perceived as a money-oriented bad girl, while at the same time, she is able to support her family at a young age, obeying the moral principle of filial piety. As argued by Mei-Hsien Lee, in doing so, a girl from a poor background pays back her “debt of soul” (Lee 2006).

Women in this kind of relationship are often criticized as money oriented as well as been exploited by rich men. Nevertheless, the women themselves also engage in reflexively performing the stereotype that “mistresses love money”. As we saw in the discussion of Philip Taylor’s research (Taylor 2007) in the previous chapter, my interlocutors stressed to me in our interviews that their relationships were a means to economic ends: opening a nail salon, supporting their families from rural areas, or simply bettering their lives. By means of explicit money deals, the mistress can refuse or defer recognition of the emotional content in her relationship with a foreign man, and represent what she is doing as a kind of special work that stands outside middle class moral judgment.

Ms. Doan explained to me how she obtained extra money from her boyfriend. She told her Taiwanese boyfriend that she would like to learn Mandarin for his sake, but that she did not have the money for a language class. The outcome
was that her boyfriend gave her 500 USD in total to learn Chinese. She took the money and used it on something else, i.e. buying her young brother a computer.

Mr. Kao, in his early forties, owns a leather factory. His round face and big dimples make him look affable. Even when he was complaining about his mistress’ family, he had a big smile on his face. He explained this kind of phenomenon to me. A man keeping a mistress here has an idea that if the mistress went out for work, she could only earn a little money, probably two million VND per month. So he asks the mistress to quit and stay at home instead, since he can offer her much more than two million VND. But later, very often, he will discover that he is not only providing for his mistress’ needs, but also his mistress’ parents, siblings, relatives. He said:

Take me as an example. My girlfriend (mistress) asked me to move into her family’s house. She told me that she loves me, wants to see me every day, but she doesn’t want to leave her parents since they need her care. I was touched by her sweet and filial character and moved into their house. Now, I am the one who pays the rent, the electricity, and the daily expenses for the whole family. I don’t care too much about the money, but this makes me feel like…….Vietnam is really a communist country. (Mr. Kao)

Mr. Kao laughed and shook his head helplessly. Actually his girlfriend’s family, including her parents, a sister and a brother, were living in a small old house. They moved into this big four story house just before Kao moved in with them, saying otherwise there would not be any room for him. And now Kao is the one
who pays rent and all the expenses. In Tiantian Zheng's study of hostess in Dalian, China, she argues that the job of hostess is at once recognized as a form of sexual agency, and at the same time as a position of victimhood. Utilizing the images imposed on them, the hostesses in her study were able to manipulate their male customers to achieve their material and other goals (Zheng 2007). Mr. Kao's mistress was acting as a sweet partner and a filial daughter to get Kao to pay all the bills. In the same way, Ms. Doan, by depicting herself as a poor victim from a broken family, could always obtain economic benefits, like cash and a cell phone, and sympathy, from her customers in the Karaoke bar, and later from her boyfriend. Perhaps affected by her family history, Doan did not plan to get married early. Money was always the principal thing she cared about in a relationship. Doan did not mind her boyfriend thinking that she was money-grubbing as she considered that was the nature of such relationships. By showing their thirst for economic capital, the mistresses are able to simplify their special relationships with these men, and keep them money-based.

Yet Mr. Kao thinks that his case is reasonable, since the fact that he is living with his girlfriend's family means he can be sure his girlfriend is loyal to him. He knew of some cases in which the mistress already had a local husband or boyfriend, but went to the "hugging bar" (Bia Ôm) or to karaoke to work as a hostess in order to earn extra money. Not only this, but her husband or boyfriend was the one who drove her to work and back home every day, Mr. Kao claimed. He strongly resented such behavior, because he found it difficult to accept the idea of the mistress using his money to keep her real husband. He
described this kind of man as “selling his wife in order to be the brother-in-law” (mai chi tso ta chiu, 賣妻做大舅)\(^\text{38}\).

From another perspective, however, one could argue that for these women, working in a hostess bar and serving other men is a way to achieve a stable family life and future. While it is possible that women find themselves in this situation as a consequence of the urging or duress of their Vietnamese partners, we should also be open to the possibility that they may choose such a course of action as a means to achieve familial goals such as a better education for children, a house to live in, or social mobility in some other form. As the molding company manager Mr. Chu indicated:

When a young girl has to support her family, what do you expect her to do?
To be a mistress is the easiest way. (Mr. Chu)

Many male informants said that those who need to be the mistress of a foreigner usually come from an unfortunate family, for example one where the father and brothers are unable/unwilling to work, so the daughter has to “go out to make a living” (in Taiwanese: Tsu Lai Tan, 出來賺, which means being a hostess or prostitute). Here “go out” means a woman leaves the family sphere in which she is supposed to stay, and “make a living” indicates that prostitution is a way to secure financial income. “Going out to make a living” also implies that women are supposed to stay at home to take good care of her family, and that the one who goes out to make a living is not considered a good woman. In

\(^{38}\) Describing that in order to have connection to somebody, one would like to marry his wife to that somebody.
Mei-Hua Chen’s research about prostitution she points out that rather than saying that women in sex work are victims, we should instead regard them as skilled, sophisticated, and agentive sex workers (Chen 2008, 119). While no doubt under the duress of social, economic and gendered structures of power; *Tsu Lai Tan* does indeed give lower class women the possibility of another way out.

**A better life**

In the previous chapter, we considered the literature on “marrying up” in Southeast Asia in general and Vietnam in particular (Constable 2003a; Thai 2005; Lee 2006), and argued that while marriage with foreigners might lead to a woman and her family being criticized by their peers for “selling out”, it is also a means for a woman acting in a situation of limited choice to be seen to play the culturally valued role of good Confucian daughter, sacrificing her desires for the good of the family. In the course of my research, Taiwanese men’s second wives and their families almost invariably explained their relationships with already-married men in terms of their desire for the betterment of the family’s lot. Informants rarely if ever referred to their individual desires and dreams as motivations for entering into these liaisons; indeed, such “selfish” sentiments are practically the subject of a strong social taboo. Nevertheless, drawing on the existing literature, I argued that explaining these relationships purely in terms of the social mobility of the local woman’s family were overly simplistic. In addition to appreciating this desire for familial stability and advancement as motivations acting on the women, we need to be open to the opportunities for consumption, leisure, travel and self-cosmopolitanization that informal
marriages with foreigners can bring. Since these individual achievements—which are not necessarily incompatible with the achievement of social mobility for the entire family—are not culturally approved values, rich material about them is unlikely to come out in interviews. By using the anthropological methodology of participant observation, however, I was able to gain some excellent ethnographic insights into the women as cosmopolitan consumers. Below, I wish to present the case study of "Ms. Vo", a woman who has achieved social distinction as a consumer of Saigon's leisure spaces and imported goods. This study is presented as further evidence that we need to be aware of a complex of intertwining logics when attempting to explain why Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women enter into the kinds of relationships they do.

Ms. Vo was introduced to me by her Mandarin teacher. According to her teacher, Vo was learning very quickly; however, it was not because her husband did not speak Vietnamese. Vo's husband speaks fluent Vietnamese, thus she had to learn Mandarin from the teacher. Ms. Vo met her husband while she was helping her mother selling fruit in the small stand in front of their house. After her husband came to buy fruit there on several occasions, one day he invited her to have dinner with him, and subsequently started dating her. Soon after that, he proposed to Vo.

He never tried to conceal his marriage status. He told me that his wife could not give birth to a baby, so he wanted to marry me. (Ms. Vo)

Ms. Vo, recalling the beginning of their marriage, told me:
I don't know why I accepted his proposal. Perhaps it was for my mother, because she fancied him as a son-in-law. (Ms. Vo)

After marrying her husband, she never sold fruit again, nor did her mother. Her husband had a factory in a suburban location which became extremely desirable on the real estate market a few years later. As a result, the land price increased several-fold. She asked her husband to relocate his factory to a more remote district and divide the block into twenty pieces. She then "borrowed" money and land from her husband, built two rows of western style four story houses, and sold them all. Then, she used the money earned from selling the houses to buy more land and build more houses. Eventually, she became deeply involved in real estate, and made a small fortune. In order to have more free time for herself and to help her two brothers, she asked them to quit their jobs and join her in the real estate business. Now Ms. Vo, her husband, their three children and her mother live together in a new, western style four story, three hundred square meter townhouse with modern facilities and beautiful interior decoration. She told me that she designed the house herself, and that she was very proud of this achievement.

When I visited her home for the first time, I was surprised by two things: its modern, non-local style, replete with a mezzanine level, modern appliances, and fully western furnishing; and the fact that the house was overcrowded with kids. There were about ten children in Ms. Vo's house, some of whom were
playing with computers, and while others were yelling and running around a big table. Vo told me:

These are my siblings' kids, these three are mine, and those are my neighbor’s kids. They love to come here to play together, and sometimes have lunch here, too. As you can see, I have four computers here, a lot of room for them to run about, a big blackboard for them to draw on, and a housekeeper to make them snacks. Their parents are all too happy to let them stay in my place. (Ms. Vo)

She continued:

My mom lives with us, so that she can keep an eye on the kids. My brothers and sisters, they all live near this area, and often come to visit me when they have time. [...] We [Ms. Vo, her parents, and her siblings] had good relationships before my marriage, so after I got married we kept in touch, and have dinner together every weekend. The only difference is that we used to meet in my mom’s house, but now we meet in mine because it’s bigger and more comfortable.

The reason they changed the location of the family reunion dinner was not only because her mother’s house was too small, but also because her mother’s house was built in an old Vietnamese style which Ms. Vo said she was no longer used to. While we were talking about the difference in lifestyles between
Taiwan and Vietnam, she suggested that the old Vietnamese house was built in the way it was because people did not have money:

My mom’s house, just like any other old Vietnamese house, was built several decades ago. When you enter the house, it only has one room, which serves as living room and bedroom. It has no partitions—we just hang up pieces of cloth to separate the sleeping areas from each other at night. Instead of a sofa, coffee table, dining table, and chairs, we have two wooden benches and a big wooden table. That is not comfortable at all. The bench always hurts my bottom. Some people live in that kind of home because they don’t have money. If they get the chance to live in a modern house, they would find they’d lost the taste for the old style ones, just like me. (Ms. Vo)

She went further to give examples:

I only wear imported clothes, from countries like Taiwan or America; the quality is better than the Vietnamese ones. Like this one (pointing to the exercise outfit she wears), this is 100% cotton, not like that one (a Vietnamese-made housework ensemble her housekeeper wears), which is made from nylon. Those stick to your body if you get hot. (Ms. Vo)

In addition to clothing, the powdered milk, packaged foods and drinks in Vo’s house, and all of her cosmetics, were imported. They came from countries like Singapore, Taiwan, Japan and America, where her husband went often for
business. She uses these things to show that her family is different from those of ordinary Vietnamese people, and emphasizes the international nature of her lifestyle. As Catherine Earl argues, in Vietnam souvenirs or other trophies from distant or exclusive locations become a means to demonstrate the status of the owner and distinguish her from neighbors and friends (2004, 368-370). In Ms. Vo's case, she not only separates herself from common people who do not have access to foreign goods, but also from those people who can only get access to foreign goods infrequently, because she always consumes foreign products regularly.

Inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's critique of the social judgment of taste, Earl argues that Vietnamese migrant women who migrated from rural areas are eager to become city folk, exhibit their urbane lifestyles, and establish a distinction between themselves and poor rural migrants. For this purpose, the motorbike has become the ultimate commodity, symbolizing wealth and status. To own a new, fashionable motorbike means the owner has the economic and aesthetic means to consume with distinction. Going to the cinema or sitting down in a café carries a similar meaning (Earl 2004). Similarly, Ms. Vo seeks recognition of her taste and status by consuming romantic and sophisticated spaces of leisure such as high end shopping malls and restaurants.

One day, Ms. Vo announced she was going to take me to meet a friend of hers for afternoon tea in a famous café in the civic center in Ho Chi Minh City. She came to pick me up in a chauffeured silver Mercedes-Benz wearing a one piece red shirtdress and high heel boots, a popular autumn style in Taiwan. Later, we
sat in the café, had dessert and drinks, and spoke in Mandarin. She brought her laptop with her and put it on the table though she had no need to use it, and was too busy talking to do so anyway. Her laptop was a Dell, a brand rarely found in Vietnam. Unlike the small, colorful computers Taiwanese people seem to be fascinated with, it was big and black in appearance. "My husband bought it in America," she said. "He told me it was the most popular one there." For the entire afternoon, we just sat in the café and chatted about food, dresses, and travel. Besides material goods, the conspicuous "wasting" of spare time is also evidence of a person's wealth.

Afterwards, she insisted on treating her friend and I, and invited us to go to her house to pick out some of her clothes for ourselves. She strongly suggested I should wear something better than a t-shirt, jeans, and sneakers.

A girl from Taiwan should wear something other than a t-shirt and jeans.
You dress like a man ... I have a lot of clothes, so you can pick any you like.
I also give my clothes to my sisters and friends. (Ms. Vo)

Ms. Vo also makes a habit of giving away her old cell phones, furniture, and her electronic goods. Since she always gets the newest ones and needs to constantly retire the older models, she frequently gives them to her family and friends. Her husband did not say much about her behavior, but told her that she should donate her things to the cathedral or to people who really needed them. However, she said to me disapprovingly "why should I give my things to people I don't know and who are not friends with me? Those things are worth money!"
Who she gives her things to clearly has an important meaning for Ms. Vo. Instead of giving her possessions away anonymously, she consciously gives them to people she knows and cares about as a way of taking care of them.

In addition to having helped her family Ms. Vo, as a mistress, is endeavoring to live a “better” life, and proudly exhibits her cosmopolitan achievements to distinguish herself from common people. Hanging out with foreign friends in famous cafés, chatting in a foreign language, and other means of displaying her cultural refinement, linguistic abilities, and urbane competence, are benefits above and beyond social mobility for her family that Ms. Vo has taken from her relationship with her Taiwanese husband.

**Marrying a married man**

Mr. Yang was introduced to me by a friend of mine. In his fifties, Yang was thin and talkative. He has running a leather factory and two shoe factories in Vietnam for about twenty years. I got to know him while he was attending a study group focusing on business management in Ho Chi Minh City. With a MBA degree I was able to discuss the management theories and practices with Yang. We spent a lot of hours talking and sharing our ideas about using different management styles in Vietnam, the strikes in his shoe factories, and some anecdotes about Taiwanese businessmen there. Even after my fieldwork was over, we still kept in touch through email and Skype.

Once Yang told me that one of his friends was planning to marry his mistress and I should not miss this opportunity to explore more in the process.
Therefore, Yang arranged a dinner together with his friend Mr. Han and Han's mistress Ms. Lam. Mr. Han is a gentle and cultivated man in his late forties, tall and thin in stature. He runs a textile company in Vietnam, and has been with his mistress Ms. Lam for ten years. Ms. Lam is twenty eight years old, slim and petite with long straight black hair. They got acquainted the summer Lam began working on the shop floor in Han's factory when she was eighteen years old. After building up a stable relationship, Mr. Han sponsored Lam to complete higher education, and helped her to get a job in a bank after her graduation. He used to give her two million VND each month as petty cash, and rented a 120 USD/month small suite for her near her working place. He usually visited her on weekends because his company was in a remote district about an hour away from downtown by car. Mr. Han was very pleased with Lam for being an industrious, thrifty, and considerate person.

She never asks me for a brand name, nor does she ever bring up quitting her job. When we go out, she always tells me not to spend too much money on eating or shopping. As you know, 100 USD can buy a lot here. Usually I spend about 300 USD on her each month, and that is not a big amount. (Mr. Han)

In 2008, they decided to hold a wedding ceremony, which fortuitously took place during my fieldwork in Vietnam. The reason for the ceremony was that Mr. Han planned to set up a construction company, and required someone with Vietnamese citizenship to be his front. Han also wished to provide Lam with a "marriage", since she was twenty eight years old. When we (Mr. Han, Mr. Yang,
his interpreter, and I) visited Ms. Lam’s mother in a rural province two hours
distant from Ho Chi Minh City, and brought up Mr. Han’s proposal, Lam’s
mother initially rejected it. Despite having known that Lam had been in a
relationship with Han for ten years, she stated that she was rejecting the
proposal because:

My house is too small; there is no spare room if you and Lam come to visit
us on holiday.

In response, Mr. Han gave Lam’s mother a big red envelope\textsuperscript{39}, and told her that
he would build a three-story house (costing approximately 12,000 USD) next to
her old one. Afterwards, Lam’s mother happily agreed to his marriage proposal
with the condition that they should hold a traditional Vietnamese wedding
ceremony and Mr. Han’s senior family members should attend their wedding.
However, few days later, Lam told Mr. Han that her brother did not agree to her
marrying an already-wedded man, so Mr. Han had to make arrangements to
visit Lam’s brother the following day in an outlying suburb.

The house of Ms. Lam’s brother, “Nam”, was a four by ten meter square town
house located in a small alley that was only wide enough for one motorbike to
pass at a time. The first floor comprised the living area, kitchen, and a small
courtyard occupied by three motorbikes. The second floor was an attic. Mr. Han
gave Nam a red envelope too, and came straight to the point that he was going
to marry his sister, and hoped that Nam could help him and Lam to arrange the

\textsuperscript{39} A red envelop with money in side, is a cash gift which commonly exists in Asian societies.
ceremony. He also agreed to pay for all the wedding expenses. Lam’s brother kept a straight face, and asked Mr. Han where they were going to live after getting married. Mr. Han replied that he would be renting a beautiful apartment near Lam’s workplace. But apparently the answer did not satisfy Nam. He said that his neighbors wanted 450 million VND (about 27000 USD) for their house, and suggested Mr. Han to buy it, registered under Lam’s name, so they could all live there. Disagreeing with this (as Han did not want to live with Lam’s brother), Mr. Han promised to buy a house in Ho Chi Minh City next year, and to build a three-story house for Lam’s mother. Only then did Nam have a smile on his face. Afterwards, they quickly decided the following conditions:

1. All expenses relating to the wedding should be paid by Mr. Han.
2. All red envelopes received from guests would belong to Lam’s family.
3. Mr. Han should prepare the traditional six wedding gifts\(^\text{40}\) for the ceremony.
4. The wedding invitation must be exquisite, and paid for by Mr. Han.
5. The wedding banquet should consist of 20 tables, each costing one million VND, 20 million VND (1260 USD) in total.
6. Mr. Han should prepare all jewelry needed for the ceremony\(^\text{41}\).

During the whole meeting, Lam did not say anything but sat next to her sister-in-law looking nervous and listening while other people discussed her wedding.

\(^{40}\) Six wedding gifts includes betel nuts, traditional wedding cakes, fruits, chicken, roasted pig, and wine/tea. Gifts are packed in red round baskets covered by red cloth with auspicious embroidery on it.

\(^{41}\) Usually the groom’s family should prepare a set of wedding jewellery for the bride, and the bride’s family will also prepare one set for the groom as an exchanging gift.
Notwithstanding the fact that everything looked like a normal wedding preparation, no one asked Mr. Han how long he would stay in Vietnam, or would he divorce his wife in Taiwan, and no one seemed to really be concerned about the concrete details of the future of the newlyweds. At the time, everyone’s principal concern was money: money for the mistress’ family, and for the wedding. The bargaining process that ensued from the proposal turned the wedding into a business-like negotiation. To get money and to hold a grand ceremony were considered of primary importance. All things concerning money were discussed clearly on the table, without any reticence or embarrassment.

Above, I have already commented on the way both parties in these relationships tend to attempt to compartmentalize and discount the role of affection, and to represent their relations as a rational and self-interested commercial transaction. In my ethnographic description of the process of marriage negotiations, we see how the second wife’s kin are also oriented towards the relationship as a commercialized one, and one in which they have a right to compensation. While bargaining is a traditional part of marriage negotiations in Vietnamese culture (Maloney 2002, 158), the fact that this is a symbolic marriage with a wealthy foreigner exacerbates and emphasizes the tendency for the family to regard their daughter as a commodity for whom they should receive compensation in cash or kind.

We have also seen how Taiwanese men are inclined to encourage the “compensation” aspect of their relationships with Vietnamese women. In their own explanations, they represent themselves as strategically keeping their
relationships within the realm of exchange rather than that of a less quantifiable and more generalized reciprocity. According to this logic, ready cash paid to mistresses exacts far less a price than the boundless emotional and financial entanglement they see themselves as being caught in when it comes to their Taiwanese wives. In a more candid moment, however, one of the Taiwanese businessmen gave the lie to this economistic bravado when he said: "if one says he has no emotional involvement with his mistress that is to deceive oneself as well as others. (Mr. Chu)" Such accounts of purely commercial relationships fall apart quite quickly when one delves into the details of long-lasting relationships between Vietnamese women and Taiwanese men, as we shall see in the next chapter.

The mistress as a “front”

As discussed above, there are many instances in which Taiwanese businessmen keep mistresses in order to set up businesses in Vietnam. Some industries are protected from foreign investors, and foreign companies are only permitted to sell limited quantities of their products on the domestic market. Most of the goods produced must be exported; otherwise a higher tax rate will apply. Therefore, in order for Taiwanese businessmen to capitalize on the domestic market and avoid the lengthy and complicated procedures that make it difficult for foreigners to legally establish businesses in Vietnam, many of them cut corners, skipping the foreign investment approval process by using Vietnamese citizens as fronts to register their companies. In return, the fronts either receive monetary compensation from the businessmen, or are given special positions within the companies.
A front company means that you use a Vietnamese person’s name (to set up a company), put your own property under his/her name, let he/she realize how rich you are, and give he/she some money each month. Then you think he/she would stand by your agreement? The cases are often like this: when you wake up some day, you discover that you have lost everything and become your front’s subordinate. (Mr. Kao)

Mr. Kao, who has experiences of “communist Vietnam”, is correct about the dangers of using someone else’s name to set up a company and register one’s property under them. As a means of minimizing this risk, Taiwanese businessmen prefer to use their mistresses’ names, and put in place other measures to ensure that their investments cannot be stolen. For example, some decide to marry their mistresses in Vietnam to formalize their relationships:

That is why I use my mistress to be my front. We had a wedding ceremony here. Although I have a wife and kids in Taiwan, my mistress and I are a couple here in Vietnam. We live together, eat together, sleep together, and do everything like husband and wife. When time goes by, even if she (the mistress) doesn’t love me, at the end of the day we are still family. Since we are a couple, we are family; she sees our money as ours, not hers or her family’s. Even if we get divorced, according to Vietnamese law, I can still get 50% of my assets back. (Mr. Lu)
Mr. Lu lost a small trade company to his Chinese-Vietnamese front at his first attempt investing in Vietnam. Back in 1992, it was difficult to get everything needed to set up a company. Mr. Lu relied heavily on his Chinese-Vietnamese interpreter and used him as his front. For that the interpreter promised Mr Lu he would tackle all the red tape for a fee of 1000USD per month. Six months later, however, the interpreter took over Mr. Lu's company and became the real owner. Mr. Lu was totally frustrated and resentful. It took Mr. Lu a few years to pull himself together and restart his business. Then in his fifties when we met, Mr. Lu considered himself unable to stand losing his company again. He now has registered his hardware company in the name of his mistress who he met while recovering from the disaster of his first business venture.

Actually, Vietnamese law is not exactly what Mr. Lu and many other Taiwanese businessmen believe it to be. It is true that the property accrued after marriage belongs to the couple jointly, and that if they divorce, each one can take 50% of their assets. However, according to the Vietnamese Marriage and Family Law, a marriage is not considered lawful unless the couple registers it (chapter 1 article 11). Vietnamese law also includes a prohibition against bigamy (chapter 1 article 4 paragraph 2).

 Taiwanese men who are married in Taiwan are not able to obtain the certificate of unmarried status necessary for them to register their marriages in Vietnam. So while they may have held traditional wedding ceremonies with their Vietnamese second wives, these marriages in fact have no legally binding status. Some of my businessman informants acknowledged to me that their
marriages were not legal, but pointed out that Vietnamese people themselves
do not know the law very well, and rarely have recourse to solving problems
through the courts. Besides, to keep their properties intact, there are additional
tricks that can be employed.

For instance, Mr. Kao, who lives with his mistress and her family, used his
mistress as his front to run a firm. But before registering the business Kao had
her sign a notarized IOU for the same value as the capital used to start up the
company. Another informant, Mr. Shen, had his former model mistress sign a
pre-"marital" protocol that all of his assets existing before their wedding
ceremony belong to Shen’s wife and son in Taiwan. Only those assets accrued
during his marriage in Vietnam, by contrast, would belong to him and his
mistress together. The other Businessman, Mr. Tsao, used a kind of triangular
loan to ensure his properties. He imported some old machines from Taiwan,
inflated their price to sell them to his mistress, and let her take the machines to
mortgage for cash. Mr. Tsao took the money, his mistress owned the machines
and owed the bank money. Through this process, Mr. Tsao earned money from
the old machines, and also did not need to worry about his company being
taken away by his mistress.

My informants stressed to me that one should never extend the trust one has in
one's mistress to her family and friends, lest one find that one is "feeding a
really big family":

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The more important thing is don't let your mistress' family or friends take a position in your business. Your mistress may not betray you if she loves you, but her family and friends cannot be trusted. They will see you as a money tree which they can shake whenever they feel they need a little extra spending money, and think your company belongs partly to them. At the beginning it might be only her brother who asks to get a job in your company, but later you will find that she has twenty brothers and thirty sisters who all want to enter your company and not only that, they all want to get an important position. How could you manage your firm with these people? (Mr. Shih)

I must be careful about my mistress' relatives. My mistress is young, has no idea about business, and has no ambitions either. But her relatives are different. They are eager to enter my firm, saying that they want to be helpful to me. Actually what they think is: "your money is my daughter's/sister's, and her money is mine, too." (Mr. Cho)

Although some businessmen ask their mistresses to sign an IOU, they are still not 100% protected as the amount is often not equal to the real value of their firms, especially after a few years' operation. In addition, an IOU provides only limited protection to the businessmen as the mistress may find other means for avoiding paying back the money (e.g. by fleeing or assuming false identities). Ultimately, those men who use their mistresses as fronts are not guaranteed ownership of their companies by law. What they rely on is their emotional bond
with their mistresses, that is, if the mistress has affection for the businessmen, she will not abscond with the man’s money.

During my fieldwork in Vietnam, many businessmen stated that they not only mistrusted their mistresses’ families, but did not totally trust their mistresses either, and made efforts to keep them away from the company, except when they needed to be present to sign documents. When I asked why, their first explanation was that their mistresses did not understand how to run their businesses. Take Mr. Kao for example, even though he lived with his mistress and her family for a couple years, he did not let his mistress have access to his company at all:

She does not know what management or business is about. All I am expecting from her is to stay home and make sure everything goes well at home. (Mr. Kao)

When talking at greater length about the risk of using local women as fronts, a more convincing explanation came out: the men did not want their mistresses to know too much about how their companies ran for fear that they or their relatives might come up with schemes to get at their money.

She has no idea about management. She is a mistress, not a manager. Moreover, even though she is honest, it is still possible that she is being used by someone else to gain control of the business. (Mr. Lu)
Mr. Lu has been together with his mistress for about ten years. Yet maybe due to his experience with his first company being taken away, Lu is extremely careful about his mistress. The front’s position, however, is not without risks of its own. Because the company is registered under the front’s name, she has to take legal responsibility for its actions and debts, for instance if it breaks labor laws, evades taxes, or engages in other illegal activities.

Kung’s research, as discussed in the Introduction, suggests, that businessmen’s mistress-keeping is an economic-based instrument (Kung 2004). In a 2010 publication she goes further to indicate that the practice of using a local woman’s citizenship to gain economic capital would turn into a power reversal: in order to protect their assets, the businessmen must please their Vietnamese wives or mistresses, thus lose their power over them. This is not what the men expected. (Kung 2010). Yet my research shows that, from the point of view of the investor, while using one’s mistress rather than some other Vietnamese citizen as a front reduces the risk of being “cheated”, it does not eliminate this risk altogether. Furthermore, the complexity of the relationship between the investor and the “mistress-front” rules out any simple explanation for these alliances in terms of the investor’s need for a dummy name behind which to invest. Rather, it was my observation that the businessmen would focus on establishing a stable relationship in the first instance, and then make decisions about the wisdom of using their mistresses or second wives as fronts. The need for a local person to act as a front becomes, then, difficult to separate out from the businessmen’s other desires and objectives in forming lasting relationships with Vietnamese women.
The limits of commercial logics

In this chapter, I have explored both my male and female informants' interpretations of their own relationships as instrumental and self-interested commercial transactions in which both sides have something the other values. The women, for their part, recognize openly that their principal interest is commercial, and consider entering into a relationship with a Taiwanese businessman a form of remunerated labor comparable to other kinds of work. Ms. Nguyen spoke of her desire to amass capital to invest in a business venture (the nail salon), while Ms. Lam was party to hardheaded financial negotiations as part of her marriage to Mr. Han. We saw how such individual "profits" are coupled from the beginning with the obligation to help one's family, and how women who break one social rule that prohibits marrying foreigners can nevertheless conform to another rule about being a good daughter and providing for one's family. The men, for their part, professed their preference for their relationships with local women to be overtly commercial in nature, since they felt they could deal with the potential for the proliferation of uncontrollable social and affective obligations much better by keeping within the metaphor of market exchange (hence the logic of "if one has to pay, it will be cheaper in the end").

The increased economic capital of Taiwanese men in Vietnam makes them more "popular" so that they are able to interview potential mistress, like the new arrival Mr. Hu. At the same time, the mistresses use the logic that they are in need of money to obtain an economic benefit from their men. Clearly, these
commercial logics, forged against the background of massive economic disparity between Taiwanese investors and lower class Vietnamese women, importantly structure their relationships. As we have seen, the actors themselves make sense of their relationships in these terms, and often exclusively so. Yet we need to be wary of accepting these explanations, whether offered by scholars or the subjects themselves, as explaining the totality of the relationships under study. In critique of the "bravado" of the men's statements about the instrumental nature of their affairs, we can argue that such self-representations themselves are claims to masculine power; power to master the self, the emotions, and the female partner. Take Mr. Han for example, If we look into the reason why he would spend more than 15,000 USD on marrying his mistress Lam, we will find that using Lam as a front does not make much sense. Since their marriage has no legal ground, Mr. Han can of course use Lam's name without the ceremony. What really happened is that Mr. Han wanted to give his mistress a wedding ceremony that pronounces Lam as his wife (in Vietnam) and saves face of Lam's family. As Mr. Chu reveals, these narratives involve self-deception, and from an ethnographic point of view we are required to offer a more critical interpretation of the motivations actors might have when delivering them.

Likewise, we need to take a more critical perspective on the women's claims to view their affairs merely as a kind of sensuous service; and their profession that they are only acting for the good of their families. Ms. Vo's cosmopolitan lifestyle serves here as an example of the kind of self-transformation that can be achieved through marrying a foreigner, and is certainly not a mere example
of immediate material gain or crude social mobility through wealth alone. Indeed, her identity as a woman and consumer is intricately tied up with her "symbolic" marriage to a Taiwanese man.
Chapter 5: True Affections of Taiwanese Businessmen and Their Vietnamese Mistresses

In this chapter, I will argue that affections are core aspects even of relationships that might otherwise be substantively commercial. I propose that the motivations for Taiwanese businessmen and their mistresses to keep long term and stable relationships cannot simply be explained in terms of the logic of commercial exchange. However, it is not my aim in this dissertation to show definitively that such commercial relationships either contain "love" or do not. Rather, as Linda-Anne Rebhun argues in her work on affection and globalization in a northeast Brazilian town, I wish to be attentive to the ways in which subjects negotiate intimacy within a context of global economic transformation and duress (Rebhun 1999). In pursuing this analysis I also wish to critique the notion, revealed in the metaphor of "seasickness" (see chapter 2), that affection simply mystifies the exchange based nature of the transnational extra-marital affair phenomenon under study. I will argue, conversely, that my subjects are at once reflexively aware of the economic aspects of their relationships, and yet also capable of experiencing "authentic" affections within the bounds of these commercial ties. I will explore how the affective aspects of their relationships are experienced and made sense of from the perspectives of both Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women.
The opposite of immersion

Mr. Hsu, introduced to me by a friend, was a director of a footwear company. One day Mr. Hsu and I were chatting in a café at a shopping mall near Tân Sơn Nhất International Airport. It was an American style café filled with the aroma of coffee, and where the supervisor and all of the waitresses spoke a little English. Mr. Hsu preferred the hamburgers and American coffee served in the café to the Vietnamese coffee and food available on the street, so we spent an afternoon there while Hsu enjoyed a rare escape from the pressures of work. When it drew near to 5 pm, six or seven pretty young women wearing close-fitting Áo dài (traditional Vietnamese tunics) walked into the café. They did not order anything to eat, but sat down at a table in the middle of the café. I was curious about those young women because they seemed not to be there for the food, but just sat down and waited. Mr. Hsu was familiar with such things, and explained to me that these women were "chatting girls" who keep male customers company in expensive cafés, in order to earn money from the customers' tips.

They hang around in cafés, especially ones like this where most of the customers are foreigners. Foreign customers will give them more tips than they can get by chatting to Vietnamese men in tea shops. Some of them are fine with sex deals, which depend on your approach and the price you are offering. Normally you can do anything you want if your quote is attractive. (Mr. Hsu)
Mr. Hsu had been working in Vietnam for ten years, since he was twenty-six years old. He and his Taiwanese wife have been married for twelve years, and have a son who was studying in grade two at the time we met. Two years after marriage, Hsu was posted to Vietnam as a factory manager. Now he is the director of a global company and earning a high wage, while his wife works in sales in Taiwan on an unstable commission basis. Therefore the family economy mainly depends on Hsu, who has committed to working in Vietnam for a long period in order to earn the higher salary paid to expatriate employees. Even though he had been in Vietnam for ten years, Hsu could only speak a little Vietnamese, and still preferred western, Japanese or Korean food to Vietnamese. For him, the café was a place where he could escape from his Vietnamese life temporarily. When I asked Hsu about this life, he portrayed it as being nothing but stressful:

Language is a big barrier; there is no way a foreigner here can have a normal social life. All of my friends here are Taiwanese, investors or managers; that is it ... [Taiwanese businessmen’s] lives here are basically dull, working more than ten hours a day, six days a week. After work, you are exhausted and have nothing to do. That is really boring. With the stress of work and the boring life after work, I have to say it’s a case of two times the pressure. (Mr. Hsu)

Most Taiwanese enterprises in Vietnam are engaged in traditional industries which rely heavily on a local workforce to run a relay shift system. Typically the day of a manager starts at 8 am or earlier, and may not finish until 8pm. After
work, the men usually stay in their dormitories in the factory. A handful of hours later, it is beginning of another day. They only have a break on Sundays, or when they go back to Taiwan for one week to ten days once every two to three months or longer. Hsu referred ironically to himself as a “prisoner” in that he works in the factory, lives in the factory, and sometimes doesn’t even see the view outside the factory for a whole week.

As Anne-Meike Fechter argues in her study on Western expatriates in Indonesia, “traditional” family expatriates usually limit their social circle to within their national community abroad, and their contacts with local people are often confined to their domestic servants. Younger “GenXpats”, by contrast, identify more with a global experience and less with a nationally defined expatriate community, but still tend to remain remote from local culture (Fechter 2007, 128-129). According to my field observations, Taiwanese businessmen were much like Fechter’s traditional or family expatriates in terms of the way they inhabit a narrow social and cultural world, although as we have seen, they rarely bring their Taiwanese families with them. Most Taiwanese men in Vietnam interact only with other businessmen from Taiwan, or sometimes from Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, or Korea. Although some of my informants speak Vietnamese, they usually use an interpreter for work, and rarely if ever engage in social intercourse with locals. All of my informants hire (or their companies offer) a housemaid to do chores like cooking and grocery shopping, and a driver to chauffeur them around. This, coupled with the fact they live in factory compounds, tends strongly to insulate the men from spontaneous contact with locals. This kind of life style, the lack of language ability, and
disinclination to interact with locals, means that most Taiwanese businessmen live in an expatriate “bubble”, forming a special sub-culture. Their contact with local mistresses is for all intents and purposes their only deep connection to the local context.

**Cosmopolitanism?**

Fechter and others have discussed the way Western expatriate elites can accrue cultural capital as global cosmopolitans from their experiences of living and working overseas (Fechter 2007; Leonard 2010; Hannerz 1996). GenXpats in particular seek out overseas work opportunities as a means to cultivate an elite identification with a sense of global (rather than national) culture and identity. Aihwa Ong is also interested in expatriate cultural capital, but her concern is with the difficulties that Hong Kong elites have in converting their wealth and extant social distinction into prestige in Western nations. She argues that a mismatch between an Asian body historically stereotyped as working class in the US and the kinds of elite cultural capital Hong Kong transmigrants might embody means that they have difficulty in having their claims to social status recognized (Ong 1992).

It is interesting to consider Mr. Hsu and my other businessman interlocutors from the point of view of such arguments about expatriate cosmopolitanism. In some senses these men are indeed professional cosmopolitans, willing and able to live transnational lives and operate in different legal, cultural and institutional frameworks in the course of pursuing their everyday work and social lives between Vietnam and Taiwan. Yet on the other hand, their
subjective experience of this “forced” cosmopolitanism is not one of triumphant cultural mastery (Hannerz 1994, 240), but rather of emptiness and alienation.

Unlike the cosmopolitans in Ong’s research, who seek entry into the local upper classes in California, my subjects, living in a country with comparatively much less economic power than their homeland, consider themselves superior to local people and are reluctant to have any contact with them at all. While they might attempt to amass social capital in Vietnam as a means of furthering their business affairs (especially through second marriages to Vietnamese citizens, and sometimes through crony relationships with high-level officials), they are certainly not interested in accumulating locally valued forms of cultural capital, for instance in terms of knowledge of Vietnamese language, food, religion, history etc. Quite the contrary, Taiwanese businessmen confine themselves to a social network mainly if not exclusively composed of other Taiwanese. They have no desire to associate with local Vietnamese elites, and no interest in associating with Vietnamese other than their office colleagues. They have no interest in achieving recognition within local social worlds, and do not attempt to create or find a forum for so doing. Apart from the wages earned, they typically represent their experience of living in Vietnam as almost entirely worthless—except, of course, when it comes to their relationships with their mistresses (More discussion about the men’s local lives will be presented in Chapter 7).

Field

Mr. Hsu recalled that he was just a naïve young man, knowing nothing about mistresses or hostess, when he first arrived. The constrained life he led in
Vietnam made him frustrated, until some of his elder compatriots took him out into “another world.”

It’s so funny! I had never entered a hostess bar before coming to Vietnam. But here, it is normal. [...] My older friends, they are familiar with those places, and we have fun together with hostesses in the bars and karaoke. [...] I mean, it is good to relax a bit after work. We meet friends there, or take our clients from Korea, Japan or Europe there to entertain them. [...] It’s totally normal, because all the men do the same thing; the only difference is some men never talk about it publicly. (Mr. Hsu)

The border between Taiwan and Vietnam not only separates two different countries, but here also separates two different lifestyles and ideologies. Mr. Hsu pointed out that people act differently in different places or circumstances; Taiwanese businessmen apply different moral codes to their behavior in Taiwan and Vietnam. This was clear to me when one of my informants invited me to join a sex party. I was quite surprised at his invitation, but he told me:

[Sex parties] are a normal part of our lives. It’s just that no one will talk about them publicly, so people think they are abnormal and immoral. If you became part of our circle, you’d see it is not a big deal but just people having fun together. (Mr. Yu)

The custom of men having fun with hostesses has a long history in Chinese society. It can be traced back to thousands years to the Hsia Dynasty (B.C.2003
~ B.C. 1562). In the Sung Dynasty (960-1279 AD), brothels had become an important social location for men (Shan 1995, 52). Even nowadays, having fun in a hostess bar in Taiwan may not be considered a “proper” form of recreation, but by certain people are still disposed to regard men’s occasional pursuit of sexual “entertainment” as a normal part of being a man. As Shu Ling Hwang’s research on the custom of “flower-drinking” points out, men are regarded as needing female bodies to meet their normal physical desires, and through such practices, gendered ideologies are reproduced and reinforced (Hwang 2003).

Erving Goffman defines “stigma” as a negative attribute that doesn’t come from the nature of the attribute itself, but rather comes from the special connection between attribute and stereotype (Goffman 1990, 12-13). This means stigma could refer to anything not accepted by mainstream culture: any inferior characteristic, action, or identity that makes people see one who would be otherwise “normal” as “deviant”. Goffman points out that stigma does not necessarily have to do with the “negative” characteristic itself, but rather is determined by other people’s reaction it. Mr. Hsu knows clearly that a female Taiwanese interlocutor like me normally would not consider frequenting hostess bars a “normal” form of recreation, so he emphasizes that it is a custom in Vietnam to go karaoke bars and discuss business. The distance between Taiwan and Vietnam makes it possible to live two different life styles according to two different ethical codes. The moral discipline Taiwanese society imposes on its men is left behind when they are in the field of businessmen in Vietnam, its abandonment often being put down to the hardship and alienation of life in Vietnam.
**Seeking comfort**

According to my fieldwork, Taiwanese businessmen's extra-marital activities conform to two types: one is buying sex; another is taking a mistress. Buying sex is about fulfilling a desire that most informants define as having nothing to do with love, and is just like having a massage. Scholarship on western men's sex-buying behavior has in some instances focused on the desire among clients for an authentic "girlfriend experience" (GFE) when buying sex. Basically this means the sex worker exhibits enthusiasm and pleasure, or makes the man feel special in some other way, as though they were in a "consensual non-commercial relationship" (Sharp and Earle 2003, 50; Holt and Blevins 2007, 336).

One of my informants, Mr. Chu, seemed also to value such experiences, and mentioned that he used to frequent a hand-job parlor where there was a good-looking girl who could always give him the feeling of being in a love relationship during the "performance." After picking her a couple times, he tried asking her out, and she agreed. But on the first date she asked him to buy her a cell phone worth around 400 USD, which really destroyed Mr. Chu's fantasy around her. Afterwards, he never picked this girl again.

Mr. Chu's experience demonstrates the reflexive nature of both the commercial and affective aspects of the relationships between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women. Having experienced a bounded authenticity with this particular woman in the massage parlor, he sought to extend their relationship
beyond the confines of this institution. He no doubt expected a certain degree of
commmercial content in any relationship he formed with this woman given the
context in which they met, but was disappointed that she sought material return
so quickly and openly. Rather than being a naïve, lovestruck customer, Mr. Chu
is rather someone seeking the right balance between (performed and bounded)
intimacy and frank and open commercialism in his relationships with local
women.

Real emotions
In the course of my fieldwork, some of my male informants mentioned to me
that they visit Karaoke or bars because they get upset with their Vietnamese
staff at work, so need to “take it out” on Vietnamese women after work. This
kind of thinking constructs Vietnamese women as reified, commodified sexual
“targets” for nationalist and masculist ideologies. Despite this symbolic violence,
however, the men’s interactions with their mistresses are not always so
overdetermined. Daniel Wight, in his research on men’s discourse in Scotland,
indicates that traditional masculinity is more salient in the context of non-
affective sex. In order to maintain solidarity with the other men in the social
group, men who have affection towards women will tend to dissimulate it (Wight
1994). I also found that when my male interlocutors gathered together they
tended to present themselves as playboys. Privately, some of them revealed
their true feelings, such as in the case of Mr. Hsu.

While the men in my study often visited prostitutes or massage parlors offering
sexual services as a means of dealing with immediate desires, such brief and
wholly commercial transactions were not sufficient to allay their sense of alienation and loneliness in Vietnam. For this, a more convincing (performance of) authentic affect was necessary. Hsu recalled to me how he had started his affair with his current mistress:

Of course you feel empty after such stressful work. You know, women here, no matter whether you meet them at work or in the hostess bars, they are eager to accost you. And men naturally have a stronger sexual desire. Together with the feeling of loneliness and emptiness, you want some one to accompany you. I don’t know why and since when, but I wanted to talk to her, especially after drinking. Maybe alcohol makes you softer...or weaker ... That’s how we started ... At that time, she made me feel like...like I am a little boy falling in love for the first time, though we each could barely understand what the other was talking about. (Mr. Hsu)

Dating a young innocent girl gives a man a kind of feeling like he is young again. He can be simple and childish like a teenager in front of his eighteen-year-old girlfriend. People may question how we communicate, since I am 36 and she is only eighteen. But actually, it is easier for me to deal with a young uncomplicated girl. I can make her happy with just a few bucks; [it] makes me feel I am a real man... Yep, sex is important, yet not necessary. It is totally different to lie down in her room watching TV than to lie down in my dorm alone. (Mr. Hsu)
Another perspective on why Taiwanese men establish long term relationships with Vietnamese women has to do with the pressures of transnational family life. They experience alienation due to separation for long periods, and this combines with conflict as to one’s proper role while living apart from one’s family, producing significant levels of stress (Gerstel and Gross 1982, 81). Traditional Confucian gender norms imply that “a man should be strong and tough, and should never shed his tears” (Nan erh yu lei pu ching tan, 男兒有淚不輕彈). According to this masculist ethic, a man must not to show his weakness to his wife, since she is considered to be in need of his protection, and knowing of his suffering will increase her natural worry. To be the center of the home, men are supposed to protect and support their families. As Mr. Hsu stated above, Taiwanese men in Vietnam are clearly under pressure; and yet a man, as a breadwinner in Confucian society, is not allowed to complain too much or show his weakness. It is men’s duty to be strong and to be the mainstay of the family. Hsu explained why he did not look for comfort from his wife in these terms:

She doesn’t understand my pressure here, and she can do nothing but worry about me. […] People think that the wife who is left behind in Taiwan will feel worse since she has to take care of the family on her own, and we husbands are living overseas happily. But we are not. We are not enjoying a vacation here. We are here working hard for them to have better lives. We feel lonelier than the ones left behind in Taiwan. You know, when I arrived in Vietnam, there were no friends or relatives waiting for me but only work, a strange environment, culture shock, and company
responsibilities. But in order to send more money home, we stay on, and we don't complain. That's men's responsibility. [...] I think about going back to Taiwan. But it is not possible to find a job in Taiwan with such good pay. I think about it all the time, but I am still here. (Mr. Hsu)

This very situation traps most of the Taiwanese businessmen in Vietnam. They did not initially plan to migrate to Vietnam, but end up having to stay there for a long time, and usually do not return home to Taiwan until they reach retirement.

**Separate lives**

A large percentage of the men in my interviews certainly felt guilty about having affairs, but this didn’t stop them from getting involved in extra-marital relations, nor did it encourage them to get divorced. They considered “family”, i.e. a normative middle class family grounded in Taiwan, to be the basis of their lives. It was their duty to maintain this family, or they might be thought incapable men who cannot even take care of their own close kin, their primary responsibility in life. Therefore, they try their best to keep their wives uninformed, and to make money to give their Taiwanese families a better life. They believe both they and their wives can live happy lives as long as their wives do not know about their affairs. Mr. Hsu went further to explain:

Most of the men here would not like to divorce their wives in Taiwan. [...] Yes, I also agree that to some degree all men want to have more than one woman, but to divorce the conjugal wife is different. We just want to have company here. If she [the Taiwanese wife] could come here, that would be
the best. It wouldn't matter if she took care of me, helped me in my work, or did nothing. No man wants to bear the blame of having affairs. But in most cases, the wives have to stay in Taiwan. (Mr. Hsu)

Physical separation makes the men and their wives more and more unfamiliar with each other, and at the same time gives the men the opportunity to cheat on their wives without them knowing. Sometimes, cheating is not merely a kind of emotional first-aid, but a viable long-term solution to their alienation for those men I interviewed. Most of their wives in fact suspected them of being involved with Vietnamese women, since knowledge of the commonness of such affairs is well diffused in Taiwanese society, but they actively did not want to know about their husbands' liaisons, or if they did, they pretended not to (the Taiwanese wives' point of view will be detailed in the following chapter). Mr. Hsu continued:

I feel this [the reason why men almost universally have affairs in Vietnam] is about the distance. But it has less impact on marriage. Because couples live separately, husbands find it easier to cover their affairs. Moreover, it is not hard for people to understand. Most wives may know the situation at heart but keep pretending they don't. Like me, I'm here for ten years. Each year I stay in Taiwan for less than thirty days. I don't think my wife is that naïve that she would believe I take care of my lust by myself. If you just don't let her see what you are doing, everything will be fine. When I am back in Taiwan, I do what I should do; I am a good husband and a good father in Taiwan. That's it. (Mr. Hsu)
In these discourses, the men depict themselves as victims of the alienating family and living arrangements created by the flow of Taiwanese venture capital into Southeast Asia. Their relationships with Vietnamese women are something into which they have been "forced" by the harsh conditions of global capitalism. The long hours and high tempo of work originated from the need to meet deadlines for clients in different time zones create a punishing labor regime not only for the poor migrant workers in the Industrial Zones, but also for the expatriate middle management. In effect, many of these men are "marooned" in their factory compounds in Vietnam until the end of their working lives. If they were to return prematurely to Taiwan, they would struggle to find employment at anything like the wages they enjoy in Vietnam; For the investors, their profits in Vietnam far exceed anything achievable in Taiwan. And thus, for the sake of their Taiwanese families, they remain in Vietnam.

As a subject whose conditions in life have in many ways been overdetermined by global economic restructuring, Hsu laments over his predicament, and states succinctly why a Vietnamese mistress is "necessary" to ameliorate it:

You know what, no matter whether a man is married or not, he needs an outlet both physically and emotionally. You are basically locked into the factory; that's really depressing. Of course you want to let off steam. If someone is there waiting for you after work, that is a kind of ... relaxation, you know, like...you got someone to back you up ... The more time and energy I devote to my work, the lonelier I feel back in my dormitory. Like ... without work, you are nothing, you know? Nothing... (Mr. Hsu)
Not only Mr. Hsu but also other informants in my fieldwork possess the same idea about their duty to their families. Most of them are of the opinion that, while staying in Vietnam and remitting enough money home, they may not be "good" husbands, but at least they are responsible ones. They reason that their principal duty as a husband is to look after their Taiwanese families' economic needs, and that emotional needs come second. In Shiu-Hua Shen's research on Taiwanese businessmen in China, she finds the sentiment that financial support is the only thing they have to do for the family (Shen 2005, 428). In my fieldwork I found my male interlocutors' thoughts are somewhat different from Shen's research. When I asked them what they usually do on their vacation in Taiwan, Many of them answered spending time with their families—traveling with their families, visiting relatives, playing with children, or just staying at home.

My wife complained to me that I missed my son's growth stages. So when I am home, I try my best to fathering him. I drive him to and back from school, I teach him his home works, and last time, I taught him how to fish. (Mr. Hsu)

Through Facebook observation, I noticed that when my male informants are back in Taiwan, they act differently from what they do in Vietnam—cook for their families, teach children to swim, take their families to travel...etc. But when they are in Vietnam, what they do is just a good breadwinner. The gendered division originates from the traditional Confucian gender norm whereby "men are
breadwinners, and women are housekeepers." The economic world is usually considered as a male battlefield where men compete with other men, fight to make a living, and win for their families a stable and prosperous life. Anne Allison's research on Japanese businessmen also indicates a similar division of labor whereby men fully devote to their careers in order to support their families, and therefore are considered to be free from other family obligations (Allison 1994). When men migrate overseas for work, this gendered division between breadwinning and care giving roles becomes even starker, and the men appear to be absolved of these emotional duties.

In this Taiwanese businessmen's group, men held that as successful breadwinners, it should be acceptable for them to keep mistresses so long as this fact was kept from their wives. Those who managed their wife/family in Taiwan successfully and also kept a mistress in Vietnam are usually considered "real men". Conversely, a man who fails to support his family in Taiwan would be considered a "real loser". We should note here also that these men experience both the liberating and debilitating effects of this transnational division of familial labor. On the one hand, they are free to relive the experience of teenage romantic love with their young mistresses; but on the other, they are not free to share their own emotional burdens with their families in Taiwan.

Commoditized women

Girls who become the mistresses of foreign men are not educated, but have great material desires, and are eager to live a luxurious life. They are
selling their bodies for money, positions in companies, brand-name goods, or overseas travel. (Miss Bach, Vietnamese Teacher, Ho Chi Minh City)

So I was told by Miss Bach, a Saigonite with a Master's degree in Chinese Literature who teaches Mandarin to Vietnamese university students. In such discourse we can find Miss Bach, representing social elite, sees the Vietnamese mistresses as inferior Others who sell their bodies for money. Lee in her research on cross-border marriage between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women, points out that from a Vietnamese middle-class perspective, marriage should be based on "love" and not material aspirations, and as a consequence, women who marry foreigners for economic purposes are considered "bad" (Lee 2006). Lee's informants considered cross-border marriages a "national shame" that should be "prohibited by law". I would add that the Vietnamese media frequently expresses similar sentiments, invariably adopting a middle class and nationalist platform when addressing the issue of transnational marriage (Theo Tuổi Trẻ 2004/Aug/23; Cổng An Nhân Dân 2006/Jun/05). One could go so far as to say that at times the media has whipped up a moral panic around this issue.

Such critiques clearly play upon the metaphor of the woman's body as a commodity. They also place the burden of national social reproduction on women, and represent those who marry foreigners as traitors who have shirked this nationalist duty (Lee 2006). There are many critiques one could make of this urban middle class perspective on woman-as-commodity—a representation that emerges at times in scholarship also. Not least of these is the fact that,
while the relationships under study may begin as something like commodity exchanges, once the woman-as-commodity is “purchased”, she exits the market and enters the social realm, thus undergoing at least a partial de-commodification. Hong-Zen Wang in his research on commercialized cross-border marriages between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women agrees that the process of match-making is totally industrialized, and that it tends strongly to construct Vietnamese brides as goods on the marriage market. Nevertheless he argue that when the brides enter their host families and take up social roles such as a “wife” and a “daughter-in-law”, they are no longer “commoditized” people, but become subjects (Wang 2007). After the phase of commercial exchange associated with financially compensated matchmaking is over, we might argue that the relationship is either partially or totally de-commercialized. Vietnamese women who enter into relationships with Taiwanese elites already based in Vietnam are in a somewhat different situation. We can say that initially, they undergo a process of commodification that is less harsh and over which they have more control than do their mail order bride counterparts, who typically marry working class Taiwanese men. We have seen in the previous chapter how this process operates in terms of the women's expectations of remuneration when entering into a relationship with a Taiwanese man, or in the explicitly financial negotiations that accompany a second marriage in Vietnam. Mistresses also appear to have more agency to extend in time and strategically manipulate the commercial aspects of their relationships than do mail order brides, as we saw for instance in the case of Mr. Chu's unsuccessful date.
Being a mistress

In her discussion of how globalization affects migrant workers, Arlie Russell Hochschild says that unlike in the 19th century, when imperial nations exploited gold, ivory, and rubber from peripheral countries, now core nations extract care and love from the periphery as new forms of gold (Hochschild 2003, 26). In order to earn money, migrant workers from the third world leave their homes and children, and enter first world families to take care of their new masters’ children. The employers are not only hiring a nanny or maid, but also hiring their love and care. Taiwanese businessmen also use their relative economic advantage to get access to cheap social reproductive labor in peripheral Vietnam in the form of emotional and sexual intimacy with local women. The sexualization of Vietnamese women’s bodies, partly produced through the flow of global capital into the nation, creates in turn a gendered opportunity for these women to take a small share of this influx of investment dollars for themselves. These economic relations create certain reciprocity between the two parties, although clearly on unequal grounds.

As the discussion of Mr. Hsu and his peers above demonstrates, Taiwanese men in Vietnam do not simply desire commercial sexual services from local women, but also identify in their transnational work and family situation a structural imperative to access the social reproductive labor of Vietnamese women. The local mistress fills the emptiness of expatriate life, and in the absence of the Taiwanese wife, turns a sympathetic ear to the businessman’s account of his work and family troubles. The pair is in a relationship in which
affection is a constitutive part of their inter-subjectivity. As one of my mistress informants told me:

I know he loves his wife. He mentions her a lot. I guess he does like me, but doesn’t love me … Once I wanted to break up with him and wanted to go out with a classmate. He got drunk, cried in my arms, and asked me not to leave him just like a little boy. I think he is more childish in front of me.

(Ms. Doan)

Ms. Doan, the sweet college student who at the age of eighteen dropped her study and worked in a karaoke bar to help her family, became the mistress of a thirty-year-old Taiwanese manager. He took her traveling everywhere, bought her lots of brand-name gifts, and sponsored her to continue her study. Ms. Doan could not tell if their love was that between a man and a woman or between an elder and a junior. Every time she had sex with him, he gave her 100 USD as a reward. She felt doted on by him:

I don’t think he is using me, nor do I feel myself a mistress, because he really treats me very well. If he didn’t, I could always find another boyfriend.

[...] We met each other at a friend’s birthday party. I think we are like normal boyfriend and girlfriend. (Ms. Doan)

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42 This friend was working at the same karaoke bar with Doan, and was dating a Taiwanese man. The friend invited girls working in the karaoke and some male friends of her partner to her birthday party as a way to introduce them to each other.
Some analyses would situate women such as Ms. Doan as the exploited victims of wealthy transnational capitalists (Hwang 2003; Barry 1995). We should consider, however, that it might not be disadvantageous in all circumstances for women’s sexuality to be constructed through commodity relations. Ying-Pin Ning argues in his study that commoditizing the female body is something in which sex workers can take an agentive role, and a process which they can control and draw profits from (Ning 2009, 138-142). Ms. Doan’s story demonstrates that women in this kind of commodity relationship nevertheless have agency and options. As mistresses, they are self-employed and avoid being taxed on their earnings. Unlike more vulnerable sex workers, they do not have to share her earnings with the bar, the broker, pimp or mafia.

Ms. Doan’s description of her relationship concurs with how my male informants see their own relations with their young mistresses. Although their affairs always involve money, money is not the totality of these relationships. Mr. Ku, the tall and strong consultant, once said that money-sex exchange is an easier relationship for him to maintain. Yet later he explained to me how affects in relationships are not something easily controlled:

[My relationship] was of course for fun initially, but as time went by, it would be a lie if I told you there was no emotion or love involved. At the beginning, dating her was like going back to my time in college. I didn’t need to think about my work or responsibilities, but only play with her. Even a stolen kiss from her could make my day. With her, I could get the
happiness and fun of being in love with only a little money ... but now, she is more like my Vietnamese wife here. (Mr. Ku)

Mr. Hsu, the global footwear factory director who never dabbled in places like hostess bar before came to Vietnam, also revealed that there is an important affective dimension to his relationship:

This kind of thing [having a mistress] is contingent...you will never know. It just happens. When there is not only money and sex between the two, but emotion, feeling, or love, it's never easy to separate her and me. Like my girlfriend, she doesn't care that I have a wife, but she is so jealous when I talk to other women here. If money is all she wants, she has no need to fight with me about such things. She asked me to make a promise that since she would never go out with another man, that I shouldn't go out with other women either. I know she cares. (Mr. Hsu)

Mr. Chu, the molding company manager, has a similar experience:

Once I went to Hanoi for a business trip. She [his mistress] was so worried that I might go to a karaoke bar and have sex with another woman. She kept calling me all night and told me those women are dirty and that I should not approach them. (Mr. Chu)

The ironic aspect to this story is that Mr. Chu's mistress once worked in a karaoke bar herself. However, she identifies with her current position as a
girlfriend/mistress, and distances herself from women who perform her former job, who become "dirty" others. As Tiantian Zheng in her research on hostesses in China points out, sex workers are constructed as both sex subjects and sex objects, entities who are seducing as well as infecting (Zheng 2007, 105). Shannon Bell suggests that "the prostitute identity was produced as the negative identity of the bourgeois subject: the "not I"." (Bell 1994, 43). Perhaps in a similar manner, this successful mistress is constructing herself as a bourgeois subject by "Othering" this figure of her former self, the karaoke hostess. This act of separation strongly suggests that while mistresses might once have put themselves on the market, they subsequently distinguish themselves from those who transact sex for money. Recognizing the existence and centrality of authentic affect in their relationships—despite their ongoing commercial aspects (such as the 100USD paid to Ms. Doan after sex)—is an important means by which these women define their positions as being different from and superior to those women who simply take money for sex.

There are various "sensuous services" available in Vietnam, ranging from waitress, hairdresser, and masseuse to prostitute. My Taiwanese male informants advised me that they are willing to pay for these sensuous services; they will pay for chatting, flirting, and sometimes for sex as well, as long as the service is perceived as being good enough. The mistresses in this research at times act as participants in the sensuous services market, commodifying themselves in certain ways, and offering their emotional labor for money. At other times, it is harder for us to situate them as participants in that market, especially when the mistress and her husband enter a stable relationship. Mr.
Chu's mistress initially put herself in the sensuous services industry as a karaoke bar hostess, which gave her the chance to meet Mr. Chu. However, she now distances herself from other karaoke hostess, and identifies with the role of girlfriend/mistress.

**Something like love**

Among all of my mistress informants, Ms. Vo, the real estate businesswoman, was perhaps the most successful one. She and her husband have been together for fifteen years, have three children, and she is living a luxurious lifestyle with her husband. When I asked her about love, she said:

I don’t love him, I think I never loved anyone. I was too young to understand love when I married him. He has always been very nice to me, to my family, so I like him ... I know he loves me, and our children. But he is not a considerate man, not like other Taiwanese men here. He can barely remember my birthday, and never gives me any pleasant surprises (Ms. Vo)

I was surprised, and went on to ask 'If you don’t love him, wasn’t it objectionable to marry him?' She answered:

I guess I have become used to our relationship after such a long time ... I am not saying I hate him, but I’ve never fallen in love with someone, you know... I don’t know what it would be like. (Ms. Vo)
Vo went on to explain her feeling in more depth:

I know lots people envy me living in such a beautiful house, having money, but they don’t understand my misery. [...] I can’t let other people know I am a mistress. They will gossip about me. I am a Catholic; a sacred formal wedding ceremony should be held in the Cathedral. But since he is married in Taiwan, instead of having it in our church, we could only have a traditional Vietnamese wedding ceremony. (Ms. Vo)

The traditional wedding ceremony was Vo’s husband’s idea. It was held splendidly in order to convince Vo’s friends and relatives that she was “marrying” a Taiwanese businessman. Although Vo complained to me that her husband is not considerate, I would suggest that he is indeed care about Vo’s feeling. The ceremony protected Vo’s dignity and save her family’s face.

James C. Scott suggests that the interaction between the dominant and subordinate could be classified into public transcript and hidden transcript. The public transcript is similar to a performance on the stage, while the hidden transcript comprises the statements and activities happening backstage, which the dominant cannot see. For Scott, it is not possible to illustrate the whole picture of power relations if we only observe the public transcript (Scott 1990, 45-69). Dominants and subordinates speak and act differently in front of different audiences to exclude certain Others. Scott also indicates that if one would like to know the complete picture of the power relation, one should observe the infra-politics within the realm of the subordinate. Although the
relationship between Ms. Vo and I is not one of dominant and subordinate, she may well have seen me as an Other, and thus a person to whom one presents a public transcript representing one’s actions as rational. If she admits she has some emotional involvement with her husband, for instance, she risks representing herself as someone who does not have control over her relationship.

I did in fact meet Ms. Vo’s husband on some of those occasions when I visited her. Once he came home early from his company, since he was going on a business trip the next day. Vo murmured to her husband that he should have told her he was coming back so she could have prepared some food for him—despite the fact that there were already lots of dishes prepared by their housemaid on the table. Her husband told her it was fine and that he could eat the dishes that had been laid out. Nevertheless, Vo insisted on making two Taiwanese courses for him by herself. She explained to me that her husband did not enjoy the Vietnamese food made by their housemaid, and that if she did not cook some other dishes for him, he would only eat a little bit. Another time, when we talked about lives in Taiwan, Ms. Vo told me her husband once took her and their three children there for a visit. She did not find the environment compatible, and felt she would not like to live there. Though it is unlikely, I asked her if her husband had to move back to Taiwan, did she think he would like her to migrate with him. She answered:

I am happy and comfortable now, living with my husband and my children here in my country, and having my natal family members around. But if he...
asks me to [move to Taiwan], I will do it for him. Though I might not be so happy, I will go. (Ms. Vo)

Despite her statements about not being in love with her husband, Ms. Vo showed herself willing to bear hardships—including an unfamiliar environment and the stigma that might attach to her—for his sake. In my observation, their relationship was certainly not a commercialized one, and their actions towards each other were very like those of husband and wife.

**Breaking up**

Ms. Pham is another key informant in this research, and was introduced to me by my friend who is her cousin. Before I met Ms. Pham, I heard from her cousin that Pham’s Taiwanese ex-husband had passed away. She was forty years old, living with another Taiwanese businessman, and working for him as an interpreter. Her fluent and idiomatic Mandarin made me wonder if she had lived in Taiwan. The answer was “no”. Pham told me that she had learned those expressions from her ex-husband. Talking about him made her feel sorrowful.

I don’t know if he is dead. He only told me he had to go back home. I still remember that night clearly. He sat on the bed, smoking without a word. And I said nothing either, just sat by and kept him company. […] He never told me, but I guessed he was married in Taiwan, and that’s why he had to go back … I never asked, I couldn’t ask. (Ms. Pham)
Having lived with her former husband for seven or eight years, Ms. Pham knew very little about his life in Taiwan. She believed he was the same as other Taiwanese businessmen in Vietnam who had conjugal families in Taiwan and who kept a mistress locally. Here in Vietnam, he was the man Pham knew, and was her husband. To her, it was as though he had no family in Taiwan – at least until he went back. As another mistress informant said, “Here, I am the most important one to him.” This kind of logic also appears in other interviews. My mistress interlocutors frequently commented that that the man can have his Bà lón (first wife) in Taiwan, but should not have other women apart from his Vợ nhỏ (little wife) in Vietnam. Not only the businessmen but also the mistresses considered the border between Taiwan and Vietnam an important demarcation between social worlds.

Pham had been to China to study Mandarin. Her language ability won her the opportunity to be an interpreter for foreign companies, which is also how she met her ex-husband. In the early period of Taiwanese investment in Vietnam, most Taiwanese businessmen used interpreters to run trading business—buying cheap goods in Vietnam and selling them in other countries. This kind of business does not need large amounts of capital or factory facilities. If the profits are not good, it is very easy to withdraw. This too was how Pham’s ex-husband ran his business. It also explains how he was able to easily go back home leaving almost nothing for Pham. Recalling their relationship, Pham told me:
We [Pham and her ex-husband] did hold a wedding ceremony, but didn’t register our marriage ... At the time, my [ex-] husband’s family didn’t attend, but they sent us wedding gifts, from his parents, his brother, and his uncle. (Ms. Pham)

The presence of both the bride and groom’s families is very important in a wedding ceremony, no matter whether in Taiwan or Vietnam. As the purpose of the ceremony is to introduce the bride as a new member of the husband’s family (Wolf 1972, 106; Malarney 2002, 169), their presence indicates their approval and blessing. Through the ceremony, Pham and her ex-husband announced their relationship as husband and wife (though maybe not legally) to her friends and relatives, and the gifts from the husband’s family could be interpreted as saying: they are far away in Taiwan, so could not attend the ceremony. But the gifts conveyed their acceptance and good wishes to her.

We got along with each other very well in all aspects, even in bed\(^{43}\), but he went home like this. [...] Without any news from him, I sold all his things and moved on. Two years later, one of his friends came, and told me that he was dead after an illness ... I don’t even know is that true or not. (Ms. Pham)

Several years later, when talking about her ex-husband, Pham still feels sad. In her mind, though she doesn’t know if he is alive or dead, he will always be her (ex-) husband. She is now the interpreter and mistress of another Taiwanese

\(^{43}\) Pham explained to me that, in Vietnam people also consider getting along well sexually an important thing.
businessman. But with reference to love, she said: "I am not young any more. Love? Love hurts. It is all about life now."

When my [current] husband talks to me, I usually answer something perfunctorily. [...] I am not young any more. I like him, but don't have strength to love him. I just want company. It is not easy for a woman to live alone. (Ms. Pham)

"I seduced him"

Another mistress, Ms. Tao, knew her husband was married in Taiwan from the beginning of their relationship. She explained that their relationship began when "I seduced him."

I worked in his company as a secretary. He was almost sixty and I was in my early twenties. I thought he was a good man, a good partner, so I often came to him to talk to him and helped him with some chores. He started asking me out as I expected. (Ms. Tao)

Ms. Tao was at her thirties, and was also introduced to me by the Mandarin teacher. Tao considered herself very smart and independent and told me that only a matured man knows how to treat woman well. She astutely approached her partner, and manipulated their relationship for her own ends. Once, when her husband returned to Taiwan to seek medical attention, she said to me lightheartedly: "Ching-Ying, my husband was writing up his will last night...I wonder how much money he is going to leave for me." After a week without
news, however, she started to feel anxious about him and asked me what if her husband had died in Taiwan.

I guess I am used to having him with me, I don't know what I will do if he dies. (Ms. Tao)

Ms. Tao still works at her husband’s company as a secretary, and people in the company all know that she is the boss’ “wife” in Vietnam. This special position gives her opportunity to accesses the company’s resources. She and her husband’s relationship is very similar to that of other Taiwanese businessmen and their mistresses in that they have come to need each other physically and mentally, yet they never really trust each other. Sometimes they even suspect each other’s motives. Never thinking that one day she might lose her partner, Ms. Tao began to understand she could not separate her affections and her interests as a mistress.

Pei-Chia Lan, in her study of professional caregivers points out that migrant domestic laborers leave their own families and children, and enter the families of their employers to take care of the masters’ children. Care-giving is a domestic workers’ duty, but it also affects the workers’ sentiments, and sometimes they mistakenly call their own children by the names of their employers’ children (Lan 2006, 116). Domestic workers take care of other people’s families for income, but they devote not only their labor, but also their affections and emotions. Thus, when their job terminates, they have to withdraw not only their labor, but also their emotional involvement. Similarly, a mistress
may intentionally enter into a relationship with her partner for economic purposes, but it becomes difficult to separate her labor from her affections as well.

**Discussion**

Mistresses and sex workers do share certain similarities. They accompany men for money, and maneuver for material rewards; only the rewards for mistresses could be much greater than those available to a prostitute. Interestingly, as George Simmel indicates, in spite of the similar characteristics of the two, people often accept a mistress as more than a sex worker (Frisby 1994, 138). Besides, if a mistress can maintain a sustained relationship with a man, it becomes difficult to say that the mistress is selling her body in exchange for money. Moreover, mistresses differ from prostitutes in that they have to spend lengthy periods with their man. As a result, it is hard for them to stay emotionally detached. As Mei-Hua Chen indicates, sex workers are able to separate “sex as sex” and “sex as work,” and thus the social meaning of each is different (Chen 2006). As to mistresses, it is quite possible for them to enjoy having sexual intercourse with their “husbands.” In Chen’s research, she classifies mistress as one category of sex worker that participates in the sex industry in a way that is disorganized and independent. However, I prefer to separate mistresses from the sex industry, as they are not simply selling sex with emotion attached; rather, they are selling emotional labor including sex. As Pham said, she and her former husband “got along with each other very well in all respects, even in bed.” Such statements demonstrate that mistresses, unlike prostitutes, do not dissociate emotion and self-identity from sex in the course of
pursuing their "profession". For instance, although saying her current relationship is "just for company", and stressing that it is a kind of insurance against ageing, Ms. Pham is still careful not to spoil her relationship with her Taiwanese partner by neglecting its affective side.

**Conclusion**

The above demonstrates convincingly that affects, albeit of varying levels of perceived authenticity, do indeed play an important role in the relationships between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women. The men clearly distinguish their long-term relationships with mistresses from transacted sex and sensuality, and even from non-transacted relationships that have too overtly and aggressively commercial an edge. Conversely, it appears that they are willing to accommodate quite high degrees of commercialism in their ongoing relationships with their mistresses. Continuing and fluctuating monetary demands from their mistresses and their mistresses' families are, it seems, seen as normative aspects of relationships with Vietnamese women, and do not necessarily spoil the perceived authenticity of the emotions that are also exchanged in these arrangements. We have seen how the men feel themselves to be victims of the harsh conditions created by Taiwanese and global capitalism, and how they understand their mistresses as the people who can fill the emptiness of their transplanted lives and who can relieve the pressures created by the unending demands of work and the difficulty of remotely managing the family at "home".
Besides, the businessmen in my research are clearly aware of the different values and ethic codes in the different fields. When back in Taiwan, they act responding to the field of a middle class man in a capitalist Confucian society in which a real man is supposed to take good care of his family economically and emotionally—be the breadwinner, share house chores, participate in children’s education, and sometimes take the family on a trip (though this might be rejected by the family members as in Mr. Shen’s case in chapter 3). When they are in the field of Taiwanese businessmen in Vietnam, they sense the differences and adjust their practices to the demands of the field—a process which Bourdieu indicates as a “feel for the game” (Bourdieu 1990a, 66); The real man becomes one who can manage to support his family in Taiwan very well and who can keep a mistress locally.

With respect to the women, as Polanyi indicates, the commodification of labor power affects the bearer of labor (Polanyi 2001, 76). We have seen how relationships that were initially understood as explicitly commercial can transform into something else over time. Despite statements about “not being in love”, many of the women I worked with appeared not to exercise the mastery over their own emotions that they might like to have claimed for themselves. These women perceive themselves to have exited from the “relationship market”, and to have taken on non-commodified roles as second wives, mothers etc. Their relationships with their Taiwanese husbands often remain pragmatic and problematic, but they are also characterized by “something like love". 
Chapter 6: The Stay-behind Wives and Their Strategies

It is never easy to run a business, but it is even harder to maintain a family—Mrs. Chao.

Many businessmen from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore work in China or Vietnam and keep local mistresses, thus forming cross-border triangular relationships. While several researchers have previously investigated this intriguing phenomenon (Shen 2008b; Tam 2005; Lang and Smart 2002), none to date has included in-depth analysis on the first wives of the businessmen in their home country. For this reason, previous findings have been mostly focused on the relationship between the expatriate and his mistress or second wife to the exclusion of the "home" family. In the present study, I argue the importance of including first wives in this body of research.

Since the relationships between Taiwanese businessmen and Vietnamese mistresses are usually stable and long-term and that these relationships often exist in parallel with the men keeping a ‘normal’ family life in Taiwan, I argue that what we have seen here is the formation of a very special kind of family—a transnational family that consists of one husband and two wives whom are separated by national boundaries. This is unlike the transnational family of Chinese diaspora, in which men were forced to leave their families by chaotic and turbulent social events without any chance of returning to their native
country; they finally settled down in their new countries and formed new local families. My businessman informants in this research actively chose to sojourn in Vietnam for a better (economic) future. Among them, none planned to stay in Vietnam for good. Instead, some drew up withdrawal plans that would enable them to support their second families in Vietnam after their retirement (this part will be detailed in next chapter). Recognizing this requires us to employ a methodology of multi-sited research that connects the expatriate ethnographic context with that of "home". In so doing, the ethnographer traces out the transnational social field that constitutes the research site by following the existing transnational circuits that link these locations, such as trajectories of travel, communications, remittances and circuits of caring and affection. In my Taiwanese research I have attempted to do just this.

In the introduction, I have already discussed my fieldwork in Taiwan in detail, and made reference to the way I contacted my interlocutors there, as well as the difficulties that approach entailed. Ultimately, in my research in Taiwan I worked with nine key informants who were "first wives". Five of these women were not employed, while the other four were. According to Taiwan's Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan\(^{44}\), in Taiwan the labor market participation rate for females aged between fifteen and sixty-four years is 83.8% before marriage, and 54.5% after marriage. Among unemployed married women, about 90% had no intention of working. Among those, 45.67% considered that their family income was sufficient, and therefore they did not need to work. In addition, 24.4% stated that they did not work

\(^{44}\) Executive Yuan is an executive department functioning as Taiwan's Department of State.
because of the need to take care of their children, while other factors accounted for the remaining 29.93%. These reasons include health concerns, loss of contact with the job market, having the need to take care of elderly family members, intention to give birth to child/another child, and intention to study.\(^{45}\)

As for the occupations of these women's husbands, five ran their own companies in Vietnam, two were managerial-level employees, one was doing international trade, and one ran a karaoke business.

The four women among my interviewees who held jobs did so in order to have a backup income in case their husbands lost their jobs or simply to kill time. All of the wives had children ranging in the age between nine to grownup. Two of the wives had lived in Vietnam with their husbands for one and two years respectively, but they had returned to Taiwan when their children started going to school. Two of them had children studying abroad in western countries, and three of them had children attending private boarding schools\(^{46}\) in Taiwan.

\textit{When husband is away}

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, previous research on transnational families formed by business and professional migration from and within Asian countries have typically focused on the so-called "astronaut" family. These are families in which husbands stay behind for career reasons or for purposes of generating an income for the family, while wives and children migrate to western countries like the United States, Canada, and Australia for education.

\(^{45}\) http://www.dgbas.gov.tw/public/Attachment/13159281771.pdf (accessed on 13\textsuperscript{th} April, 2011)

\(^{46}\) Private boarding school is comparatively very expensive in relation to public schooling in Taiwan.
and/or better living environments. The focus in such studies is typically on how wives and children adapt to the new environments and their struggles towards social integration and class mobility in these western societies (Ho, Ip, and Bedford 2001; Man 1995; Waters 2002). In the case of my research, however, the husbands move to another country, and the wives and children stay behind in Taiwan. Although the wives in my research typically do not move to the new setting of Vietnam, and thus do not have to deal with issues of cultural difference, children’s schooling, home-making et cetera in an unfamiliar context, they encounter something arguably more difficult—an unfamiliar problem around their social status and familial roles that presents itself in a familiar environment. Furthermore, while the wives do not become particularly mobile themselves, their sense of family and in particular their relationships with their husbands are most definitely “ungrounded” by the introduction of a transnational dimension into their lives.

For most of my Taiwanese wife interlocutors, their husbands’ relocation to Vietnam marked the first time they had been separated for a long period and with a great distance. In my fieldwork, most wives brought up the struggles they had experienced in getting through life without having their husbands around. I met Mrs. Chao through a Buddhist charity group in Southern Taiwan in which most members were well-off, middle-aged housewives. The majority of them did not have to worry about their own financial situation and joined the charity group just to do something meaningful to enrich their lives. Mrs. Chao was in her late forties when we met; she has a son who was of adult age, and a daughter who
was attending a private boarding high school. Once she told me "it takes lots of money to do charity."

She explained to me how she felt when her husband relocated to Vietnam,

> Every first wife goes through a really hard time. We have to get used to our lives without our husbands, being both mother and father, and dealing with everything by ourselves. It all takes time. [...] At the beginning, after driving the children to school, I had nothing to do but worry about my husband. I kept asking myself would he have a mistress? Would he be safe and well? Why should I suffer this kind of life? (Mrs. Chao)

Before her husband went overseas, Mrs. Chao worked alongside her husband in their company, but now had nothing to do since their company relocated to Vietnam. Another wife informant, Mrs. Li, was also in her forties when we met. Her husband, who is a factory director in a plastics company, usually returns to Taiwan every two to three months. Mrs. Li too worked in the same company as her husband before he was posted to Vietnam. She kept her job to provide an auxiliary income, which also helped her stay busy and prevent herself from woolgathering. Speaking of life without her husband, Mrs. Li noted:

> I have to say, I feel scared when he is not home. After he went to Vietnam, I put on safety locks on every door and window. It's frightening when there is no man at home. (Mrs. Li)
The other informant, Mrs. Chen, was recruited from an online forum. In her early forties, she was a housewife living with her two boys who were of elementary school age. Her husband has been running a furniture trading company in Vietnam for almost five years. She also felt insecure without her husband around. She said,

I am afraid to let people know my husband is in Vietnam and rarely comes back. Especially when I have workmen come to my house, I pretend my husband is working in his office, and will come home soon. (Mrs. Chen)

Johanna L. Waters’ research about immigrant wives shows that security is also an issue for women living in Canada with their young children while their husbands stay behind in Hong Kong or Taiwan for economic reason (Waters 2002, 122-123). Traditionally, women are considered to be in need of and dependent on men. The traditional Confucian female gender norm of the “three submissions” (San tsung, 三從) states that women must: “Submit to the father before marriage, submit to the husband after marriage, and submit to the son if the husband has passed away”. Although nowadays in Taiwan the traditional “three submissions” would no longer be considered a reasonable set of expectations, these interviews nevertheless show that contemporary Taiwanese women still show strong emotional dependence on their husbands. From my observation, Mrs. Li and Mrs. Chen’s living conditions were entirely safe. Mrs. Li and her fourteen year old son lived in a condominium with 24 hour security, and Mrs. Chen lived in a gated apartment. Furthermore, public safety is rarely an issue in the city where they live. As a consequence, we can read the women’s
security concerns as a transfer of the anxiety they felt about the absence of their husbands onto another object.

In addition to feeling insecure, the wives also mentioned their struggle to constantly adapt and re-adapt to life with and without their husbands. Rhacel Parreñas' research on female migration workers indicates that when the wife is working overseas and becoming the main supporter of the family, the left-behind husband tends to pass gendered housework duties onto other female relatives as a way of resisting the loss of his infra-family status due to his househusband position (Parreñas 2005b, 331-332). However, the husbands and wives in my research represent differently. When the husbands have been absent from Taiwan for a substantial period of time, and even though the husbands remain the role of breadwinner, the wives become accustomed to living without their husbands and often used to coping with everything by themselves. Consequently, they gain more power within the left-behind nuclear family. This shift in status creates awkwardness for both husbands and wives when the husbands return home for a vacation.

Mrs. Wu, who once said she was tired of being a good woman, sometimes felt her husband to be irksome. One time when her husband was back from Vietnam on vacation, she arranged to meet me. I was surprised that she wanted to spend a whole afternoon with me in a café instead of staying home with her husband, since they had not been together for months. She told me that she did not want to be around him since she had become used to dealing with everything at her own pace and on her own. When her husband was back
on his two-monthly vacation, she complained that he wanted to reassume his role as head of family. This for her is difficult to get adjusted to. She said,

It's annoying when he is back. He asks me to do this, to do that. [...] I guess I have become used to talking to him on the phone. Every time he comes back I feel so uncomfortable and unfamiliar with him. And only a few days after I finally get used to having him at home, he is leaving again.

(Mrs. Wu)

My presence became a good reason for Mrs. Wu to escape on this occasion; she told her husband she was helping a scholar to do research on "Taiwanese wives' burden when their husbands are overseas". This was a none too subtle hint to Mr. Wu who has been running a food-processing company in Vietnam for over six years. Over this period, Mrs. Wu has not only taken care of their two children and her parents-in-law, but also continues her sales job for the sake of having financial security. The mere act of going out with a friend while her husband stayed at home with the family made Mrs. Wu feel liberated.

Children's education is identified as another important issue for the stay-behind wives. Most of them complained that they were unable to play both mother and father's role simultaneously, especially those who are not full time housewives.

My son is a teenager now. What he needs is his father to be his role model which is not something I can fulfill. I am also working for the family; I cannot afford to be a working mom and a dad at the same time. (Mrs. Wu)
Among these transnational families, one of the most important reasons for the wives to stay in Taiwan is identified as their desire for their children to have a better education. With the fathers being absent, the wives have to play a dual parental role, which is even harder for those wives who themselves keeps working. Since the fathers are working for their families overseas, people tend to consider children's education as the mothers' responsibility, regardless of whether these women are also working or not. And if the children do not behave well, the mothers are held accountable and to be blamed. This becomes a significant burden for the first wives who have to educate their children by themselves.

**Thoughtfulness as a pressure**

Since mistress-keeping has become widespread among overseas Taiwanese businessmen, friends and acquaintances often ask stay-behind wives whether they worry about their husbands having affairs and/or starting second families in Vietnam. This kind of curiosity, however well-meaning, puts a special pressure on the stay-behind wives. Most interviewees mentioned that it was stressful to be asked about the likelihood of their husbands having extra-marital affairs. They said that of course this was something they worried about, but also something that they have little control of. According to Mrs. Wu,

I feel so sick when my friends and relatives tell me I should keep an eye on my husband as it is very possible he has a mistress in Vietnam. This is not helpful but annoying. Yup, I know he might have a mistress there, but what
can I do? [If I ask him to come back] what can he do back in Taiwan? Life has to go on and I have to trust him. (Mrs. Wu)

Another informant, Mrs. Chou, was about forty years old and was recruited for my research from an online forum. We met up at her house. It was a three story townhouse with a beautiful front garden that has been well taken care of. The interior is tasteful and spacious. When she and I sat on her beautiful six seater sofa set chatting, somehow I felt the lounge to be very empty. Her husband has been working in Vietnam as a regional manager for an American based company for about six years. In the first year or two, when their son was little (about three years old), she tried staying in Vietnam with her husband and son. She found life there boring, however, as she had no need to work, cook or even to do the laundry, since the company had employed a Vietnamese housekeeper for them. The only thing she could do during office hours was taking care of her little boy, shopping or gossiping with the other wives in the dormitory. This dull lifestyle made her very unhappy. Later, when her son was going to attend kindergarten, she decided to move back to Taiwan. Her son was about to start attending elementary school at the time we met. Mrs. Chou explained that for the sake of the family, she and her husband had to live separately. She also felt disturbed by her friends’ and relatives’ suspicions about her husband keeping a mistress in Vietnam. They have advised her to stay in Vietnam to keep an eye on her husband, rather than staying back in Taiwan. Mrs. Chou told me,

I know they are concerned about me, but it is tiresome to face these questions. I do worry about it but there is nothing I can do. My husband told
me he has no mistress, and that is it. I won't ask him again, neither will I go check. Even if he does have one, so what...I can do nothing unless I want to divorce him. (Mrs. Chou)

Although knowing their husbands might have mistresses in Vietnam, for the sake of the family’s economic income, these interviewees were unable to ask their husbands to move back. To re-relocate back to Taiwan would mean they would have to surrender their investments or high-paying jobs. Due to the unfavorable investment environment in Taiwan, these men were unlikely to obtain the same incomes they are used to earning in Vietnam. Mrs. Wu's observation that "life has to go on and I have to trust him" brings out this hidden logic. Economic concerns are the main reason the men in my research relocated to Vietnam. If the wives do not trust their husbands and ask them to come back, the loss of income will affect the quality of life enjoyed by the whole families. For these and other reasons, stay-behind wives tend to studiously avoid enquiring about their husbands' affairs. As Mrs. Chou pointed out "I can do nothing unless I want to divorce him." Since divorce was not an outcome she wanted, she decided not to question her husband about "the mistress thing."

A friend of Mrs. Chou also faced a similar situation while her husband was working in China. Mrs. Chou's friend told Chou that she pretended to know nothing about her husband's affair and secretly transferred most of their property into her own account. If her husband does not behave himself, she will abandon him and leave him with nothing. Mrs. Chou was preparing to do the same thing, also without telling her husband. As she said, "I don't want a
divorce, but if I have to, at least I will have money." This is also a strategy promoted by first wives' online forums. While the wives cannot manage their husbands' emotional affairs from a distance, at least they can manage their economic affairs for them at home. Despite this, Mrs. Chou did not want conclusive proof about her husband's affairs in Vietnam because she did not want to have to make the choice of either accepting her husband's affair or filing for divorce. She just wanted to be prepared in case things turned out for the worst.

Mrs. Li, the wife who works in the same company with her husband before he was dispatched to Vietnam, by contrast, tackled the situation in a different way. Li told me that once she found some intimate messages on her husband's cell phone. She did not argue with her husband about these messages, nor did she let her husband even know that she knew about them. Rather, Li sent return messages saying things like "This man is married and owes lots money in Taiwan, that's why he has to work overseas". At the same time, she told her husband stories about men in her Buddhist group whose affairs had led to the breakup of their marriages. This was meant as a hint about the possible consequences of his behavior. The Lao Pan Niang of Li's company also helped to limit the extent of her husband's infidelities by depositing her husband's salary directly into Mrs. Li's account. Mrs. Li never saw this kind of message again, and she believed her strategy had worked.

48 The messages were typed in English, so Mrs. Li guessed the woman was young and highly educated and who might be being deceived by her husband.
49 Meaning the owner's wife, see chapter 3.
Traditionally in Taiwan, men rarely received praise for their fidelity. Instead, they are considered—not only by themselves, but also by other people—to require a lively sex life. Although a man who is discovered to be having an affair is popularly considered to be in the wrong, however, his sins are easier to be understood and forgiven than that of a woman. This is another reason why stay-behind wives deliberately choose not to know whether their husbands are having affairs or not. Furthermore, my informants suggested that a wife’s ignorance of her husband’s affairs can act positively as a constraint on him, in that he will limit his adventures so as not to expose them to his wife. In addition, they suggested that if the wife knows about the husband’s affairs and decides to stay in the marriage nevertheless, her position will be weakened, since this will be taken as a tacit acceptance of her husband’s extra-marital relationship.

“Not to know” about the possibility of their husbands’ betrayals becomes a way out of this dilemma, and a means to deal with the associated anxiety and pressure. So while some of my wife informants suspected their husbands had mistresses in Vietnam, as long as the husbands continued to send money home and appear as decent husbands and fathers at a distance, the women chose to turn a blind eye.

Knowing husband’s affairs

In Tang dynasty China (618~907 AD), the youngest daughter of the Prime Minister Wang Yun (王允), named Pao-Chuan (寶銓), fell in love with and married a poor man called Hsueh Ping-Kuei (薛平貴) without her parents’
approval. Because of Ping-Kuei's impoverishment, Pao-Chuan and Ping-Kuei lived in a cave after marriage. Soon afterward, Ping-Kuei was drafted into the military to go to war on the western boundary against a foreign country. During the war, though he was brave and wise, he was captured by the enemy, forced to marry a foreign princess (because her father the king admired Ping-Kuei's ability and talent), and became the consort prince of this alien country. Meanwhile, Pao-Chuan lived in poverty in the cave alone, and waited for her husband to come back without knowing if he was alive or not. After eighteen years, Ping-Kuei turned the hostilities between two countries into friendship, became a favorite of the Tang rulers, and came back to look for Pao-Chuan. Finally the two were reunited, and lived happily together with the foreign princess, who respected Pao-Chuan as an elder sister. In this story, the people praised Pao-Chuan for her uncompromising chastity and magnanimity towards her husband and considered their story admirable.

This old story from a traditional Chinese opera was recounted to me during fieldwork by Mrs. Chao to describe her life experience as a faithful first wife waiting for her husband to come back. Mrs. Chao, the famous first wife I met on a Buddhism charity event, was in her late forties, with a college degree. She married Mr. Chao in her twenties after the pair fell in love, and now has two children, one was of adult age and another was attending boarding high school when we met. Together with her husband they founded a textile factory after their marriage, and later decided to relocate it to Vietnam in the 1990s because of the opportunities there and the unfavorable conditions in Taiwan. Mrs. Chao remained in Taiwan to take care of their children and her husband's parents.
Since marrying each other, Mrs. Chao had helped her husband run their factory. When her husband left home for the first time, and when she no longer had to help in the factory, Mrs. Chao suddenly felt she had lost her focus and did not know how to get along by herself.

Mrs. Chao was moderately famous for her magnanimity in the expatriate Taiwanese textile businessmen’s group because she knew of her husband’s relationship with a woman in Vietnam, and pronounced it to be “under her permission.” This accommodation did not come quickly or easily to Mrs. Chao, however. Soon after her husband relocated their factory to Vietnam (some fifteen years ago), she discovered that her husband was having an affair with a twenty-four-year-old Chinese-Vietnamese secretary in the company. Mrs. Chao was so hurt and desperate that she spent the next eight years coming to terms with what had happened. She said,

At that time, I didn’t want people to know about this affair, since it was so embarrassing. When people asked about my husband and warned me that he might be keeping a mistress, I could not help but cry. In order to avoid this situation I hid myself home every day. (Mrs. Chao)

During this period, she only went out when necessary. Recalling her feelings at the time, she told me:

I was feeling I had been treated unfairly, and I felt very emotional. When he came back, of course, I was so happy to be just with him. But when he
went to Vietnam again, it was like... I lost my mind, I could not feel anything but anger and hurt. And of course I vented that on him, called and yelled at him all the time. I even tried getting help from marriage consultants. Most of them told me to divorce my husband, but this was not what I wanted. I turned to them because I was losing my husband, and they told me directly to give him up ... How could I give him up? And how could I let my children grow up in a single parent family with no father? (Mrs. Chao)

After long and painful deliberation, she decided to accept her husband’s behavior and stayed in her marriage. She was helped in this decision by coming to a deeper and more sympathetic understanding of her husband’s life in Vietnam.

He is alone in Vietnam, with no company and no comfortable environment. I was there the first year, so I understand that life is tough there. [...] I never saw a faithful man there. The only difference is that some wives know and some don’t. (Mrs. Chao)

She explained that such a situation was inevitable since she and her husband were living apart. Quoting the old story of Wang Pao-Chuan, Mrs. Chao said that: *I am a traditional woman, and all I wanted to do was play the role of a traditional good wife and mother well.* As discussed in chapter 3, traditionally in Taiwan, a woman’s roles in her marital family are expected to be those of a daughter-in-law who takes care of her husband’s parents, a wife who takes care of her husband, and a mother who takes care of their children. This means, for
a traditional good woman, family—especially husband and children—always comes first. For the good of the family, her interests can be sacrificed. When I asked her if she maintained an intimate relationship with her husband, she told me:

Yes, we have a sexual life as usual ... As the elder generation said, "When he [the husband] is playing around, we consider him lost, and when he is back, we consider him found again" (Chuchu hsiang tiutiao, huilai hsiang chientao, 出去像丟掉，回來像撿到)\(^{50}\). When he is back, he is mine and I treasure him very much. I am not sure if he loves me more than he loves that woman, but I am sure here is the place he calls home. (Mrs. Chao)

Mrs. Chao knew everyone was looking at her and wondering what she would do, so after deciding on the course of acceptance, she went to Vietnam to meet the mistress and showed her magnanimity by accepting the mistress as her "younger sister". Mrs. Chao told her husband and the Vietnamese mistress that she would accept their triangular relationship if the mistress could agree: 1-to take care of her husband when he was in Vietnam, 2-not come to Taiwan, and 3-not to give birth to any children with her husband. Her husband was surprised and grateful that Mrs. Chao was so forgiving and sympathetic, and promised he would never break their agreement. As she said,

\(^{50}\) This is an old Taiwanese slang usually used to portray a man who is not family-oriented. The interview was conducted in Taiwanese, but due to the wording difficulty, here I use Chinese words close to the original meaning instead.
When I went there to get together with my husband, and meet some business friends and also their wives, we ate out in a high-class restaurant. Of course that woman\textsuperscript{51} [her husband's mistress] would not dare to say she wanted to go out with us. But I took her with us like a younger sister. Because I knew people were watching and waiting to see if I would slap her across the face. (Mrs. Chao)

Mrs. Chao emphasized that she was acting as a magnanimous first wife because "people were watching". In a Confucian society, people think that "domestic shame should not be made public" (\textit{Chiachou Puke Waiyang}, 家醜不可外揚). In her research on Taiwanese families, Margery Wolf also indicates that the family would lose face when other people gossip about their family (Wolf 1972, 40). The pressure of being gossiped about and judged led her to play the role of a traditional cultured wife who never loses her temper and always protects her husband from losing face and having his interests harmed. This performance has won Mrs. Chao a good reputation in the expatriate community. Actually, she made the decision to act this way through some very rational thinking. Given how much investment her husband had put in, it would not have been possible to ask her husband to close down the factory. For the sake of her children's education and the wellbeing of her parents-in-law, Mrs. Chao reasoned, she could not move to Vietnam to live with her husband either. Rather than terminating their marriage and breaking up the family, Mrs. Chao thought it was better to let her husband take a mistress who she knew. Analogously, in ancient Chinese society some first wives made sure to choose

\textsuperscript{51} Though Mrs. Chao said she takes the mistress as a younger sister, but she never mentions her name, only calls her 'that woman.'
their husbands' concubines themselves to be certain that these women would respect the unity and interest of the family at large. So doing was also a way to ensure the first wives' status as "big sisters" who are in charge of domestic affairs. Mrs. Chao strategized around these traditional understandings of polygyny as a means of saving her marriage from dissolution and protecting her status as the first wife/big sister of the family. The agreement Mrs. Chao, her husband and the mistress have made implies that the mistress should respect the unity and interest of the greater family by being helpful to her husband in Vietnam, and not-threatening Mrs. Chao and her husband's family life in Taiwan.

Mrs. Chao tried to put herself in her husband's shoes, and having done so, accepted his affair. She told me that although her husband does have a mistress, he treats her and their children very well. Besides, her husband's life in Vietnam is not easy, but he worked hard and stayed there for the family. It was for the good of the whole family that her husband relocated their factory to Vietnam, therefore she should also contribute to the family by being a good "traditional" wife and mother. However, when we talked about whether her husband and the mistress would obey their promises, she told me:

A few years ago, my husband did come back to ask me if I could let the woman give birth to a child, and of course I did not agree. But since they have been together for more than ten years, and though they never mentioned it again, I am not certain [that they have kept their promise]. This is not up to me to determine but up to her. There is very little I can do if she means to have a child, right? If it happens, I can only accept it, and be
hurt all over again since this is a fact I can’t change. I don’t know if they have a child or not because I don’t want to know. I don’t want to get hurt again. I was too young [when I first discovered my husband’s infidelity], in my thirties. If it had happened now, I wouldn’t go over there [to check on him]. I would just take care of my family and my children, and wait for my husband to come back safely, that’s all. (Mrs. Chao)

For the sake of a happy family and good relationships between father and children, Mrs. Chao told her son and daughter that the “aunt” (her husband’s mistress) is “employed” by her to look after their father in Vietnam, since she can’t do it herself because she is busy taking care of them and their grandparents. She also taught her children to respect their father because he is working so hard overseas and has to bear much toil and trouble to bring them a better life. She said,

I never say anything bad about their father to them. My children were very young. They were like sheets of white paper. It is up to me to teach them everything. They do not really understand what enmity is. If they hate their father, that means I did not educate them well. (Mrs. Chao)

She explained that in a happy family, children should never feud with their father. Since their father is not home, it is her responsibility to help the father and children to keep an emotional bond.
Tine Gammeltoft emphasizes that women can choose indirect forms of resistance like complaining to their friends, showing their anguish by way of incivility, or refusing to do housework or eat, as a means of drawing their family members' attention (Gammeltoft 1999, 231). Wolf also points out that women can find support and a certain amount of protection from their "uterine family" and community (1972, 39-41). Huashan Zhou stresses that traditional mothers are resisting patriarchy in their own way. They sacrifice for the whole family, take care of children and parents-in-law, and win respect and glorification among their relations and social networks (Zhou 2000, 154). This is certainly the case for Mrs. Chao who, as we saw already, is admired for her magnanimity and understanding in the expatriate milieu. She told me that these expatriate peers in turn pressure Mr. Chao to treat her well, since she is such a good wife. Such is Mrs. Chao's reputation that when people have marriage problems, they come to her to consult about them. During my fieldwork there was a businessman, Mr. Kuo, who died from a sudden illness. After his funeral, his wife found that Mr. Kuo had a mistress and a five year-old son in Vietnam. At that time Kuo's friends wanted Mrs. Kuo to give some money to the mistress, since she had served as Kuo's wife in Vietnam, and it is not easy for a single mother to make a living there. But Mrs. Kuo was reluctant to give them money since she had not been aware of their existence. When Mrs. Kuo came to Chao for advice, Chao recommended that she give the mistress enough money for her and the son to survive on, but nothing more than that. Both sides were ultimately satisfied with her suggestion.
Although she has suffered her share of emotional torture, contradiction, and pain, it seems that Mrs. Chao has for the moment succeeded in maintaining her family's unity. As we have seen, she achieved this end by "rationally" deciding that she needed to perform the role of a traditional first wife. Rather than being incorporated into the ideology of the traditional patriarchal family, I would argue that Mrs. Chao has strategized to benefit her family by appearing to conform to these traditionally prized wifely virtues. The degree of reflexivity she has about her own situation is striking, and indicates that Mrs. Chao's decision to perform the role of traditional wife is a means of negotiating agency in a context of severely limited choice and economic duress. As Judith Butler points out, the gender, identity, character, desire, and behavior of an individual are shaped through performative practices (Butler 1993, 5). Every individual is moving in accordance with the script that is inlaid in history, culture, and society. Through citation and repetition of the script, the norm and paradigm are reconstructed and reinforced. According to Butler, this script can powerfully inform how an individual acts, but not absolutely determine the outcome. Individuals can still achieve agency by differentiating their performance from the given script. On first appearances, the gendered arrangement of cross-border accumulation between Taiwan and Vietnam is employed by Mrs. Chao to reinforce a traditional patriarchal order within her marriage. Although Mrs. Chao could have chosen to divorce her husband when she found out about his extra-marital relationship, she did not. She consciously chose to be a traditional magnanimous wife who supports her husband's enterprises and takes care of the family. By so doing, she succeeded in "outsourcing" the responsibility for taking care of her husband to the Vietnamese mistress. At the same time, she
avoided the victim status associated with being a cheated-on woman and also limited the damage to her nuclear family. In the approbation of the expatriate men in Vietnam, she had won a kind of patriarchal dividend in a market of gender inequality.

Deniz Kandiyoti, in her research on women’s strategies for bargaining with patriarchy in sub-Saharan African and in South, East Asia, and the Muslim Middle East, points out that some women rationally choose to resist entering into the realm of modernity as they do not see any empowering alternatives there. She argues that through keeping to the old patriarchal order, the women may be able to urge men to stick to the obligations and secure the “female half” of the patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti 1988). As I said above, somewhat like these women, Mrs. Chao is not simply adhering to the traditional patriarchal order, but employing patriarchy as her paradigm when looking for alternatives to make her marriage work. Her consensually polygynous family is thus not a traditional but a post-traditional one.

Decided to divorce the husband

"Father, let them have forgiveness, for they have no knowledge of what they are doing."—Luke chapter 23 verse 34 (Quoted by Mrs. Sun)

Mrs. Sun grew up in a well-off family and met her husband in college. She married her husband right after graduation and, taking advantage of Taiwan’s boom period of export industrialization, they founded a chinaware company
together in the 1980s with some support from her parents-in-law. A few years later, when the company was operating smoothly, they opened a restaurant, as this had always been Mrs. Sun’s dream. The company succeeded in the flourishing economy of the 80s, and Sun and her husband kept so busy at work that they hired a housemaid to help with chores and taking care of their young daughters. Later, in the 1990s, like all other enterprises in Taiwan, Sun and her husband’s company faced a situation where production costs, including labor and land costs, were rising sharply. After discussion, they decided to relocate their chinaware company to Vietnam. Sun’s husband took charge of the company in Vietnam and Sun stayed in Taiwan to take care of their two girls, her parents-in-law, and their restaurant.

At the beginning, Sun’s husband came home every month, and Sun also visited him when she had spare time. Later, Sun’s husband came home less and less because of work. Not long after her husband’s company totally relocated in Vietnam, Sun caught her husband living with a local woman. She was so angry and hurt that she went back to Taiwan right away. Mrs. Sun felt cheated and uncertain of everything between her and her husband. After struggling with the decision for two years, she decided to divorce her husband. She said:

The pain his betrayal brings to me not only comes from those two years of struggle, but also from every word and everything in our memories. I don’t know what is real and what isn’t. Even seeing soap opera plots similar to my own story causes me pain. How could a man who loved you for over
ten years suddenly turn to someone else? Does that mean he never loved me that much? (Mrs. Sun)

What really defeated Sun is that her parents-in-law not only knew about her husband’s affair, but actively helped him to cheat on her. After the affair was exposed, her parents-in-law told her that it was normal for a man to have extra-marital relationships, and that a good wife should turn a blind eye to it. Sun explained to me why she eventually decided on the course of divorce:

I am economically independent; I have my own friends and social circle. As an independent woman, I don’t have to tolerate an unworkable marriage. […] I have been very independent since I was young. Even when he was away, I managed our family and my restaurant so well that he had no need to worry about us [Mrs. Sun, their two daughters, and their parents-in-law]. (Mrs. Sun)

Sun’s economic independence makes her more confident to resist the traditional Confucian thinking that marriage is woman’s destiny. Her statement also suggests that she thinks an independent woman should not be trapped in an unworkable marriage:

If our love no longer exists, I should walk away … It is his fault, why should I take the responsibility for him? He works overseas to earn an income for the family, but so do I [work for the family]. Since I can behave myself well, I don’t see why he can’t. (Mrs. Sun)
As opposed to Mrs. Chao's strategic traditionalism, Mrs. Sun's critique of her marriage comes from an avowedly modern perspective. Kuo-Shu Yang in his research on Taiwanese families casts two family styles: the patrilineal axis family and the bilateral axis family (Yang 1997). He defines a patrilineal axis family as the traditional Confucian family which has the following characteristics: The idea of family includes at least a two generation kinship family (and can be extended to other kin). Patrilineal axis is the core of the family. Kinsmen as the central of a family have a higher status than women. The role one plays in the family determines how one should interact with other family members. Family interests come first over individual interests. And respect for seniority is emphasized.

A bilateral axis family, on the other hand, as Yang defines, is more modern and westernized with the following characteristics: A nuclear family in which the husband and wife's marriage is the core of the family. Men and women are equal in terms of power and position. And individual satisfaction is valued and personal interests are respected. Yang further points out that in reality many families in Taiwan are living in a combined family style and continuously negotiating between the patrilineal axis and bilateral axis.

According to the census data conducted in 2006, about 65% people think that it is better to remain single than stay in an unworkable marriage and about 63% people consider that it is better to have a divorce than stay in an unworkable marriage. If the marriage is not workable, individual satisfaction and interests
should be respected. Mrs. Sun’s point of view reflects the popular trend of bilateral axis family concept in Taiwan that the core of a family should be based on romantic love between equals, the ideology existing in Taiwanese society alongside more traditional patriarchal ideas about the Taiwanese family.

The crude divorce rate in Taiwan, according to the Taiwanese Ministry of Interior, was 2.21% in 1990, 4.24% in 2000, and 6.06% in 2010.\textsuperscript{52} With the increase in divorce rates in Taiwan in recent times, people’s attitudes towards the breakup of marriages have become more liberal. Yu-Fang Cheng’s survey on this issue found that in 1984, the mean response to the proposition “it is fine to have a divorce if the marriage does not work out” was 2.15 on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 indicated “strongly disagree”, and 4 indicated “strongly agree”. In 1995 the mean response was 2.55, and in 2005 it was 3.28. Younger generations were more likely to accept the idea that unsuited couples should get divorced; and no matter in which generation, women were more inclined to accept this idea than men (Cheng 2008). From the survey data we can see people’s attitude towards marriage has loosen from the traditional Confucian ideology that women should put their families’ interests in front of their own, and thus for the sake of the unity of the family they should stay in the unworkable marriages. Mrs. Sun’s thinking reflects this trend:

For my daughters’ sake, I had to divorce him, or my daughters would have grown up in an unhappy family with the parents fighting all the time over

\textsuperscript{52} http://sowf.moi.gov.tw/stat/year/y02-03.xls accessed on 27th October, 2011

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extra-marital affairs. Though my husband did not want to get divorced, I insisted. (Mrs. Sun)

In response to her demand for a divorce, Sun’s husband begged Sun to forgive him for the sake of their family, and told her that his life in Vietnam was so lonely and stressful that he needed someone there to comfort and support him. Sun felt that was true, but also that it guaranteed his infidelity would be repeated in the future. Sun told me:

Even if I stop his affair this time, such thing will happen again ... It is shameful to admit that my marriage has an intruder and is failed, especially when the intruder is a Vietnamese hostess. But it would be even more shameful if I accepted his affair and tolerate it. (Mrs. Sun)

Even being an independent woman, it was not easy for Sun to face her failed marriage, especially given that she felt the mistress was vastly inferior to her in terms of economic, educational and social status. She explained that if she lost her husband to a woman better than her, she would be able to accept it. But it was unacceptable to her that her husband was having an affair with a “hostess”, and that this woman was thwarting her diligent efforts to be a good wife, good mother, and good daughter-in-law. In this aspect, my findings concur with those of Shen, who finds that first wives tend to consider themselves the “moral” party, and to portray the mistress as a “despicable” Other (Shen 2008a). In Mrs. Chao’s case we can also see her Othering her husband’s mistress by telling her children that “the aunt was hired by her”. In doing so, she established a
hierarchy between herself and her husband's mistress where Mrs. Chao is the boss and the mistress is the employee, in other words, not a family member. This Othering occurs not only because the mistress is threatening the first marriage, but also because the disparity in the global economic status between the countries of the wife and mistress is projected onto their interpersonal relationship.

Mrs. Sun also wants her husband and the mistress to understand it is never easy to be a good wife, mother, and daughter-in-law at the same time. She said,

I didn't fight for custody of my two daughters, because I understood it was not easy for me to win this battle. I also wanted to teach my husband the lesson that a hostess could not be a good mother to our daughters, or a good daughter-in-law to his parents. Later, he ended up sending our daughters to a boarding school in United States. (Mrs. Sun)

Mrs. Sun guessed that her ex-husband sent their daughters to boarding school because he finally realized it was not possible for the mistress to take over her position as a mother. But that situation also made it hard for her to see her daughters. After the divorce, although she has an independent income, she still has to bear the brunt of the anger of her parents-in-law, who blamed her for not just putting up with her husband’s affair for the sake of the whole family and accused her of being “selfish”. She now also has to bear the loneliness of a life that was once filled up with family members.
Subsequently, Sun gave up her Buddhist beliefs and entered a Christian group from which she gained support and comfort. Buddhist thinking tells people that what one has been through follows the law of causality or karma, and therefore one should look into oneself for the reasons behind any bad things that happen. Sun could find no acceptable answer through this Buddhist thinking, but the Christian ethos gave Sun a way to explain her marriage. Sun quoted verses from the bible, and said that it might have been God’s decree that she should experience these things. That way she could understand why her ex-husband was not the one she should spend the rest of her life with.

Sun employed modern family ideology to make her decision. She believed that an independent woman should not tolerate her husband’s affair and should not continue to attach herself to the husband. She believed that it was her husband’s fault, and thus she had no obligation to take care of his family any longer. However, although Sun understood and explained herself in a modern way, she does sometimes felt regret and thought of herself as a bad wife and mother, since she did not pay enough attention to her husband and put her own interest above that of the family and her daughters.

**Discussion**

Mrs. Sun and Mrs. Chao had very similar backgrounds. They were both in their forties with college degrees, which is a relatively high level of education for women of that generation. They married after falling in love with their husbands, and each has two children. They both own their own properties, and their
husbands are both running their businesses in Vietnam. Their husbands both
got involved in relationships with local women in Vietnam, and both were
discovered by their wives. Yet Mrs. Sun and Mrs. Chao made different decisions
by employing different gender ideologies. Mrs. Sun adopted a modern script
and divorced her husband, while Mrs. Chao followed a traditional script and
stayed in her marriage. Through their performances of different kinds of
femininity, they each enact their imaginaries of what a "good" woman—in one
case "modern", in the other "traditional"—should do when confronted with
marital infidelity. They each negotiated the agency necessary to act, but by way
of markedly different strategies.

Conclusion
Adrian Van Breda's research on living-apart families indicates that couples
experience many emotions in the separation, including depression, loneliness,
and less life satisfaction. The one left behind would have to take the
responsibility of homemaking and taking care of other family members which
increases the stress of parental role and gender role responsibilities (Van Breda
1999). Those duties usually fall upon the wives, and these become an extra
burden to them. This chapter incorporates in-depth research undertaken with
first wives in the home country and demonstrates how stay-behind wives
perceive their lives when their husbands are more than 2000 kilometers away,
and facing the possibility that their husbands' might having an affair in Vietnam.
Through my fieldwork interviews, we can see that when facing a husband's
(possible) extra-marital relationship, the first wives consciously employ different
versions of gender norms to deal with the situation.
When the wives first discovered their husbands' betrayal, they could have pursued different paths to deal with the situation. For securing the family union and keeping one’s marriage intact, the traditional patriarchal polygyny is put to work as a paradigm that rationalizes the subject's choice of accepting her husband's affairs, and thus forms an unusual revival of the institution of polygyny as a response to transnational economic accumulation. In the bargain, the first wife accepts her husband's extra-marital relationship, and takes it as a traditional polygyny one. She puts herself in the position of the elder sister/big wife with the mistress as the younger sister/concubine like in traditional polygyny family order, and performs the role of a magnanimity wife with traditional virtues. In so doing, she gains more power and therefore secures her position as a proper first wife. Polygyny here is not restored but strategized to make the marriage work under modern transnational economic deployment and become a post-traditional marriage arrangement.

Although having a similar background and facing similar situations, the way that first wives use when tackling their husbands' extra-marital relationships can vary. Another subject hires the modern point of view to review the situation. In contemporary Taiwan where women are more economically independent and empowered compared to the former generations, women tend not to stay in a marriage that is not working. To divorce one's husband is reasonable when one discovers a husband's infidelity. Drawing on the modern family notions to support her decision, she reasserts her self-identity, does not tolerate an unworkable marriage and divorces her husband.
However, other wives choose not to know or pretend to know nothing about their husband's affairs thereby keeping their dignity and avoiding the need to face the awkward situation and dilemma. Taking no response as their response to their husbands' affairs or possible affairs, they underscore the importance of economic security to the whole family which is also why they accepted the cross-border family arrangement in the beginning. They hold their bargain that the husbands earn overseas while they take care of the family back in Taiwan, and expect this sacrifice will bring the family a better future.

Shen explains this transnational triangular relationship in terms of an international division of labor in familial and intimate relations. In her study, the Taiwanese businessmen divide family labor into two parts: Taiwanese wives were labeled as family-watchers with the duties and responsibilities of maintaining normal families; meanwhile, the Chinese second wives were viewed as sex and entertainment providers who gave the men physical comfort (Shen 2005). Through in-depth interviews, however, this chapter discloses that the wives are not passively dominated by their husbands to fulfill the position of family-watchers. They consciously employ different strategies to rationalize their decisions and obtain the desired results when faced with their husbands' extra-marital relationships. As a result, post-traditional polygyny and modern family divorce are paralleled in the same context.
Chapter 7: Home, Family and Locality

In this chapter I seek to understand the reformulated meaning of family and home for Taiwanese expatriates in Vietnam in the context of transnational capitalism. In particular, I am interested in how these men make themselves “at home” in Vietnam both socially and spatially. I will argue that, even though they may enter into long-term relationships with Vietnamese women, they do not seek or desire immersion in the local socio-cultural context. Rather, they maintain a distance from their local social worlds by means of their privilege as transnational elites, and construct Vietnam as an unhomely place by constantly criticizing the levels of development and modernity to be found there. They build for themselves a bubble that basically excludes locals, and reproduce a “Taiwanized” milieu in Vietnam by means of language, food, housing, and social activities pursued with compatriots. All the while, they maintain their original homes and families in Taiwan as sites for eventual return and retirement. Somewhat contradictorily, however, they also build families and comfortable homes in Vietnam—refuges to which they can repair at the end of an exhausting day in an alien land. As we shall see, Taiwanese expatriate men not only attempt to secure the social reproduction of their families at home in Taiwan, but also put in place strategies for securing the future existence of their second families in Vietnam, especially in the cases where they have had sons with their local mistresses.
Symbolic capital

As discussed in Chapter 1, Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1986) identifies three fundamental forms of capital: economic, cultural, and social capital. Economic capital mainly consists of those resources that can be directly converted into money. Cultural capital is classically linked to the accumulation of knowledge, and is acquired principally by way of the institutions of school and family. Yet cultural competence is not inherent cultural capital, but constructed to be. As Bourdieu has clearly points out,

Cultural competence in all its forms is not constituted as cultural capital until it is inserted into the objective relations set up between the system of economic production and the system producing the producers (Bourdieu 1990, 124).

As to social capital, it principally refers to the social connections of an individual or group, or as Bourdieu and Wacquant put it:

social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 119).

Bourdieu also includes the category of symbolic capital, which is the form that the "fundamental" species of capital takes when it is recognized as legitimate within a particular social field. Thus prestige or social superiority within a
particular milieu, for instance, could be forms of symbolic capital that resulted from the conversion of the other forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986).

Taiwanese expatriate businessmen experience a dramatic rise in the stocks of their capital—economic, cultural, and social—on relocating to Vietnam. In comparison with the native population, they find themselves wealthy, mobile, cosmopolitan, and in possession of valued forms of professional knowledge.

Kam Louie, in his discussion of Chinese masculinity, comes up with an analysis that is sympathetic to Bourdieu’s theory of capital, and provides us with a more culturally specific way of thinking about how Chinese men construct and evaluate privileged forms of manhood. Instead of using Yin and Yang (陰/陽) as a framework, Louie deploys the concepts of Wen (文, cultural accomplishment) and Wu (武, martial valor). He suggests that both Wen and Wu contribute to the constitution of masculinity, where Wen mainly refers to literary excellence, civilized behavior, and general education, while Wu principally refers to a powerful physique, fearlessness, and fighting skill. Traditionally, a combination of Wen with Wu was considered to be the best form of manhood (wen wu shuang quan, 文武雙全), although one species could be foregone in favor of the other depending on the context. In the period of contemporary globalization, Louie argues, economic power is considered to be the new model of Wu, and the traditional predominance of Wen over Wu is destabilized (Louie 2002). In terms of economic power as Wu, Taiwanese expatriates assert their status over local men in a cultural context in which these ideas of Wen and Wu (or Văn and Vũ) are also salient.
In Pei-Chia Lan’s research on high-skilled western workers in Taiwan, she indicates that these elite migrants succeed in converting their cultural capital (especially linguistic capital) into economic capital, since an ability to speak English is highly valued in Taiwan (Lan 2011). In my study, Taiwanese businessmen are able to perform a similar conversion of the cultural capital they possess as expatriates from an economically “advanced” East Asian nation, and the perceived cosmopolitanism of their identities as globally mobile investors and high status corporate employees.

Many Taiwanese men told me of their experiences of being accosted by Vietnamese girls in the factory or on the street, no matter how old they were themselves. This clearly made them feel they were highly valued, “like Westerners in Taiwan”, as Mr. Chu remarked. One day, three businessmen and I were having dinner in a seafood restaurant near the Maximart shopping center in Ho Chi Minh City. While we were chatting in Mandarin and waiting for the food to be served, a young Vietnamese woman came up to us. She said she was studying Mandarin and would like to have some Taiwanese friends so that she could practice her conversation. She gave her phone number to the men present, but not to me. After she left, the men laughed out, and told me that it happens all the time. They explained that the woman must have thought I was the girlfriend of one of the men, so she didn’t give her number to me.

Another time, when I went with Mr. Han to visit his mistress’ natal family in the rural village before their wedding ceremony, a neighbor pulled her daughter to
the window and told us that she was single and willing to marry a Taiwanese man. These and many similar experiences demonstrate that Taiwanese businessmen are considered highly desirable dating and marriage prospects in Vietnam by dint of their status as elite East Asian foreigners. This desirability is in itself a form of masculine symbolic capital that these expatriate men found themselves acquiring on arrival in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, people generally believe that it is very important for a man to competently support and be the pillar of his family (cột trụ gia đình), and to take a leading role in society (Tran 2004, 214). Both Taiwanese and Vietnamese societies are deeply affected by Confucian culture, and compared to other foreigners in Vietnam, Taiwanese businessmen are considered to be family-oriented in a way that is compatible with Vietnamese understandings about kinship. In the course of my fieldwork, a number of Vietnamese women also mentioned to me that Taiwanese men are much more tender and gentle than Vietnamese men, as they are open to western ideas about gender equality. At the same time, they told me, Taiwanese men are more devoted to family than are Western men. Their economic power, capacity to run businesses, and perceived devotion to family make the Taiwanese men the perfect amalgam of Wen and Wu in the imagination of these women.

The Hong Kong Chinese elite migrants studied by Aihwa Ong in the US experienced a problem around the recognition and legitimation of their cultural capital in the eyes of upper class circles in their host nation. They longed for social acceptance by the native elites, and the economic opportunities this
insider status might bring (Ong 1999, 107). By contrast, the Taiwanese businessmen in my study never actively strove for social recognition in Vietnam. With some exceptions (such as the arranged marriage of an expatriate’s son to the daughter of a local official), Taiwanese expatriates were not interested in gaining acceptance into elite social circles in Vietnam, and did not themselves value the recognition of the local upper classes. Rather, like the young woman approaching our table, it is as though the social field of the host nation pro-actively recognized and legitimated their capital for them. Their high levels of economic capital, for instance, are perceived as enhancing the men’s ability to support their families, which in turn is recognized as the hallmark of a “capable” man. In this manner, their economic capital is converted into locally legitimized cultural capital, or symbolic capital.

There but not there
Masao Miyoshi explains the distinction between a Transnational Corporation (TNC) and a multinational corporation (MNC) by showing that the latter builds its head office in one country, and runs businesses in many other countries. Although MNCs in general have increasingly flexible loyalties to their country of origin, most of their managerial staffs come from that home country. TNCs by contrast unsentimentally sever the connection with their home countries entirely and move across borders to chase profits and avoid strict local regulations (Miyoshi 1993, 735-736). However, Taiwanese businesses running in Vietnam do not fit into either of Miyoshi’s categories. Most of these companies take orders in Taiwan while carry out production in Vietnam. Although the highest-level managers come from Taiwan and the companies retain an importantly
 Taiwanese identity, large numbers of middle-level supervisors are from China (People's Republic of China, PRC), demonstrating that convenience sometimes takes precedence over absolute loyalty to Taiwan. Taiwanese businesses in Vietnam neither cut their connections with the home country, nor do they move restlessly from country to country (Wang 2004). (Although some of the men in my research had moved their businesses to Vietnam from China, they have "settled" in Vietnam, and do not plan to move again in pursuit of lower labor costs.)

Aihwa Ong and Donald Nonini, in their research on transnational Chinese, suggest that Chinese ethnicity is a key factor of overseas Chinese economic success in Southeast Asia. By using a fraternal network of ethnic Chinese, overseas Chinese are able to avoid attempts at localization on the part of the host country, for instance through the imposition of taxation. They are able to penetrate local markets by means of their ethnic social capital; and achieve economic accumulation by crossing from country to country (Ong 1999, 7; Ong and Nonini 1997). The investment strategies of the Taiwanese businesses in my research are closer to the Chinese transnational capitalism Ong and Nonini describe, especially in the early stages of their investment in Vietnam. Given the capacity of Taiwanese and Sino-Vietnamese to communicate in the lingua franca of Mandarin, and the perception among Taiwanese businessmen that their local counterparts are familiar with the same Confucian cultural values and meanings, early encounters led to the deployment of an imaginary of transnational Chinese community and kinship.
Yet their notion of fraternal network is not limited to ethnic Chinese, but includes all Asian societies affected by Confucian thinking, including China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, where their cultural backgrounds are seen to be similar to that of Taiwan. Confucian thinking is used as a way to manage local employees and construct an atmosphere of “family” that generally exists in Chinese society, and Vietnam is often considered as a “little brother”. One of my businessman informants Mr. Yang, the owner of a leather factory and two shoe factories, has been in Vietnam for approximately twenty years. Having more than six hundred employees, he expressed his understanding of the local Vietnamese in these words:

They [Vietnamese] are similar to us [Taiwanese]; most are Buddhist\(^53\). So every month I ask my secretary to buy some fruits and snacks for the altar, and we do the ritual together with all the supervisors to invoke health and safety for all employees. You have to treat them as family, and then they will be loyal to you. (Mr. Yang)

Mr. Yang uses ritual to construct the atmosphere of “family” in his company where he is the head of the family, who cares about all his employees’ health and safety. In return, he expects employee loyalty. Another informant Mr. Han also mentioned to me that he treats his employees like his children, which makes things easier to cope with if there is conflict. While the fraternal network of ethnic Chinese posited in Ong and Nonini’s research is a key to successful

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\(^{53}\) In Vietnam, more than half of the population is at least nominally Buddhist. Yet in Taiwan, only 21.7% of Taiwanese are Buddhist, 31.4% identify as folk religion, and 25.7% are atheists. http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/171678.pdf

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economic accumulation, I found in my fieldwork that it was only in the early stages of Taiwanese investment in Vietnam that businessmen heavily depended on/collaborated with ethnic Chinese-Vietnamese—usually as interpreters, collaborators, and sometimes as the front for registering their companies. Later, as most of my informants indicated and as is also mentioned in other studies (Kung 2010, 224; Wang and Tsai 2007), the Chinese-Vietnamese were considered “too smart” to be trusted or controlled.

The desirability of the “parallel” Confucian cultural context to be found in Vietnam is such that investors will trade off the possibility of higher profit margins in non-East Asian countries like Cambodia or Laos for the sense of cultural familiarity and proximity they experience in Vietnam. This desire for cultural legibility in fact limits the mobility of their capital. Thus while some had already moved from China to Vietnam, none of my informants had plans to relocate again:

I am not going to move back or to another country. Like most of my friends, I will leave my property here [to my illegitimate children] after I retire. (Mr. Yang)

In my fieldwork I found that my Taiwanese men subjects who have children with their Vietnamese mistresses often planned to pass any property that can’t easily be repatriated to Taiwan to their children in Vietnam and thus form a local lineage. Establishing such a lineage in Vietnam does not mean, however, that the businessmen are “localizing” themselves in Vietnam.
Said has argued that since the era of imperialism, there has been a clear distinction between the "us" of the Occident and "others" of the Orient. Western subjects use this distinction to affirm the nature of their cultural and national identity, and reinforce the orthodoxy of the dominant tradition of defining selfhood in this way (Said 1994). Taiwan is not a colonizer of Vietnam, yet the structural inequality between the nations in the context of global markets makes the expatriate businessmen firmly believe that they are superior to the local people. Chinese Confucian culture is understood by the men as "advanced" and "civilized". This plus their perceptions around the diligent work ethic of Taiwanese people explains for these men why Taiwan had become one of the Four Asian Tigers. Vietnamese culture by contrast is considered by these men to be less advanced; although Vietnamese people may revere classical Chinese culture, theirs is seen as nothing but a poor copy of Chinese civilization. As Mr. Wei, the grandpa who runs a chrome factory, said,

We used to be as poor as Vietnam is nowadays. But we are hardworking and do not fear hardship. Like when I started my business, my wife and I worked two shifts. This is why we succeeded. Now, you want to teach them [local people] about your Taiwanese experience? They don't even want to hear about it. (Mr. Wei)

Another informant Mr. Tu also put it,
Letting them [local youths] work as part-timers in my factory is helping them, giving them a chance to earn money. Playing outside on the dusty ground won’t help [their economic condition]. I used to take part-time jobs when I was in my teens. One day they will be grateful. (Mr. Tu)

Mr. Tu, in his fifties, owns a frozen food company in a relatively remote area that takes two hours driving from Ho Chi Minh City. When I visited his company the first time, he walked me through his whole factory area and explained all the processing procedures to me. In a corner of the factory, I noticed a group of local youths sitting on small plastic stools peeling raw shrimps on the floor. There were baskets of peeled shrimps next to each of them. They did not look like regular employees, so I asked Mr. Tu about those working youths. Mr. Tu told me that they were all from this neighborhood; he was helping them by offering them a chance to earn some money on piecework. In such discourses, success in accumulating economic capital is connected to the idea of the superiority of Taiwanese/Chinese cultural capital.

As indicated in Kam Louie’s analysis, non-Chinese people are seen as being excluded from obtaining Wen and Wu, and conceived of as needing civilizing by Han culture (Louie 2002). Vietnam, although influenced by Chinese culture, is portrayed as an inferior little brother and in need of “tuition” by Han elders. This attitude is reflected in the men’s practice of living in an elite Taiwanese “bubble” in Vietnam, and interacting only with people from other well-off Asian Countries, or exclusively with members of their own national expatriate community. As suggested above, the status difference in the global economic and political
order between Vietnam and Taiwan is understood in terms of binarism between "hard-working Taiwanese" and "lazy Vietnamese":

They are different from us; they aren't eager to earn money. They want money but don't want to work hard. The attendance rate is really low here: some workers only work three days a week. The other three days they can always find reasons for their absence, such as "My grandfather or grandmother is sick", or is dead. Some people have even had their grandmother die three times! (Mr. Wei)

While I was in the field, some Taiwanese factories were experiencing strikes over pay rates, even though the existing salary levels in those factories were already higher than others, especially those in state-operated factories. This situation made the Taiwanese businessmen further confirm their imaginary of a "hard-working us" versus "lazy others", irrespective of the particular details of the workers' pay claims.

As members of transnational enterprises, the Taiwanese businessmen's first significant contact with local people in Vietnam comes from the experience of managing them within companies. However, these interactions are usually limited in nature since most companies do not use Taiwanese citizens as middle level supervisors working directly with large numbers of Vietnamese workers. Rather, PRC citizens are employed to fill these roles, since they are cheaper to hire, and allow the Taiwanese upper management to avoid direct conflict with local employees.
You have to use some middle-level PRC supervisors, then lower-level Vietnamese foremen. If a conflict develops, we can say, "Oh, that's the PRC supervisors' fault, they didn't report the situation or they made the wrong decision". It's like playing good cop/bad cop. Then you won't lose their trust. Otherwise, the Vietnamese are sure to go on strike. (Mr. Chang)

Most informants told me that it was very difficult for a foreigner to "control" local workers; the best way was to "let locals control locals" (Yi yi Chih yi, 以夷制夷). Wang's research on Taiwanese transnational investment and the Taiwanese business community in Vietnam also indicates that the businessmen's management "skill" is based on disciplinary practices applied to inferior Others (Wang 2004).

From the language using we can also find that my Taiwanese businessman informants were living in a bubble. Most of my male informants in Vietnam could only speak Vietnamese at the level of basic conversation. A few did not speak any Vietnamese at all, and only one spoke the language with any fluency. Those who did speak Vietnamese rarely used it for social purposes. Most used the language exclusively for management purposes, or for conversation with their housemaids and drivers, waiting staff in restaurants, and sometimes with their mistresses.

You have to speak Vietnamese to your housemaids and drivers, and teach them how to work for you. Especially the maids, they lack of training. You
have to train them yourself. Have you heard the Vietnamese have “three failings” (San Man, 三漫/慢)? They were colonized by French, so they learned to be romantic (Lang man, 浪漫); later they defeated the Americans, so they became arrogant (Ao man, 傲慢); and their original nature is undisciplined (San man, 散漫). (Mr. Ting)

Such discourses establish the fundamental differences between the Taiwanese expatriates and locals and the imperative these superior others have to teach and bring knowledge to them. Mr. Ting was introduced to me by Mr. Hu on the day when Mr. Hu was hosting an interview for a potential mistress. Mr. Ting has been running his chemical company in Vietnam for over five years. His residence is on the top floor of the office building in his factory compound so that he can always keep an eye on his company. Once Mr. Ting complained about his local housemaid as she always threw away the expensive, high quality Taiwanese tea leaves after only one infusion. After having “taught” her about this failing several times, one morning the maid made him a cup of tea with two tea bags, but nevertheless the tea was tasteless. Mr. Ting called the maid into the room and asked her why she had used two tea bags. She answered that, since he always told her she was wasting the tea and that she should use it several times, she collected two tea bags that had been given to visiting guests yesterday and used these to make Mr. Ting’s tea that morning.

We can tentatively read this (willful) misunderstanding on the maid’s part as an act of indirect resistance by which she questioned the hierarchy of power and status between herself and her expatriate boss. Mr. Ting, however, took it as
further evidence of how ignorant the locals were, not to even know the
difference between high quality tea leaves and an ordinary tea bag.

The use of local language in everyday life is usually seen as a way to immerse
oneself in local society, but in these instances the Taiwanese businessmen use
language to establish their distance from local social worlds. The fact that they
speak Vietnamese mostly to their employees, maids and drivers is an index of
the way they segregate themselves in their factories, houses and cars. Rather
than needing to speak to local people in the course of getting around or making
everyday purchases, the men use their private cars to take them everywhere,
and send their maids out to shop and perform other chores. In this way they
effectively insulated themselves from spontaneous interactions with Vietnamese
strangers. The Vietnamese language these men learned for management
purposes was not to be confused with Vietnamese ordinarily used in
conversation. As Mr. Wei put it,

Of course I have to speak some Vietnamese. Though I have an interpreter
in my company, it is necessary to understand if she does her job correctly.

(Mr. Wei)

Another businessman Mr. Han expressed that Vietnamese language is a
management tool for him,
I don’t speak Vietnamese in front of my employees, so they won’t be aware that I understand what they are talking about. This will allow me to control my company without being cheated by them (Mr. Han)

Language in this way becomes a non-reciprocal tool used to “control” one’s company and one’s employees, and to overhear without communicating. Here we can see the Taiwanese businessmen insulated themselves in their expatriate bubble, forming a special sub-culture in which they act with their own habitus and impose their own value on locals.

**Housing**

The residential arrangements of the Taiwanese businessmen in my research mainly consist of two types: living in the factory compound, or privately renting a house in a nearby area. Some business owners built their own dwelling places above their factories or offices, such as Mr. Ting we saw above, so they could live as they liked, yet never be far from their businesses. While other expatriates tend to rent houses in more central locations in Ho Chi Minh City, many Taiwanese people reside in the more distant District 10 and surrounds (see Figure 4). District 10 is near to District 5 (the original China Town area) and has lots of restaurants, cafés, and massage parlors were run by Taiwanese. (Korean expatriates are known to prefer to be located in nearby Tân Bình District, near Tân Sơn Nhất airport) Those employed as managers by Taiwanese corporations typically live in the company housing complexes that are included in their employment packages. These complexes usually are built in a one or two bedroom apartment style, or in suite style, and come with
cooking and cleaning staff. In some big companies, due to the large numbers of Taiwanese and PRC managers and supervisors, the dormitory zone in the factory is very much like a community area, including facilities such as athletic fields, swimming pools, tennis courts, billiard rooms and gyms.

**Figure 4: Residential map**

Source: by the author
Figure 5: Small gym in the factory housing compound

Source: by the author

Figure 6: Swimming pool on the fourth floor of an office building

Source: by the author
Figure 7: Factory and dormitory zone of an international company

Upper: factory. Left to right: 1-factory area, 2-producing lines, 3-dormitory, 4-employees’ rest area. Source: http://www.pouchen.com/4.aspx (captured at 4th July, 2011). The factories I visited in Vietnam usually had a ban on taking photos in the factory area, but their style and amenities are quite similar to the one I found on the Internet.

Factory housing complexes with their own leisure facilities and in-built ideology of self-containment tend to further insulate the expatriates from local life. In any event, Taiwanese managers are kept so busy that many informants indicated they rarely had time to use the leisure facilities. Since the factories in Vietnam are working with foreign companies and clients in other countries, Taiwanese managers are expected to work long hours to be available for customers in
different time zones. This very availability is part of the quality of service that 
Taiwanese companies pride themselves on.

Work obligations and living arrangements like this tend to make those engaged 
in upper management feel that they inhabit a space and time that is more 
globally than locally determined and defined. Living within the walls of the 
company naturally limits their opportunities for social interaction with locals, and 
pushes Taiwanese employees to form a small social in-group. The members of 
these groups are colleagues during office hours and friends after hours. This 
kind of living arrangement helps develop an atmosphere of surrogate family and 
close friendships among the expatriates. Sometimes this atmosphere also 
leaves the businessmen confused. Once Mr. Tsue, the manager of a 
masterbatch company introduced to me by Mr. Chu, told me he did something 
that left him feeling chagrined: he lent twenty thousand USD to one of his 
colleague—an amount that he would only ever lend to a family member and 
really close friend. He had actually only known this colleague for about one year, 
yet he felt they were good friends. Not long before he told me this, his colleague 
left Vietnam without repaying him.

In my fieldwork, it was very common to see the men helping each other both in 
their business and private lives. With their long working hours, the managerial-
level employees in particular were used to remaining in their enclosed domiciles 
after work, and only went out to restaurants or Karaoke on Sundays. This kind 
of lifestyle clearly enhances solidarity and mutual dependence between the
men. Once, in a gathering, two businessmen introduced themselves to me as "brothers from different parents".

We are used to calling each other in the morning, sometimes to plan some recreation or other after work, sometimes to discuss the market situation, and sometimes just to make small talk. (Mr. Ku & Mr. Chang)

From time to time I even heard stories of how the men helped each other to cover up their affairs from their Taiwanese wives. If one of the first wives called while a man was with his mistress, the other men would aid him by lying that they were drinking or playing golf together.

The businessmen are, then, effectively spatially and socially insulated from the local context in Vietnam. The glaring exception to this distancing is, of course, the fact that these men invite Vietnamese women into their social circles and domestic spaces.

**Never in Taiwan**

Most of my Taiwanese informants in Vietnam were middle aged, and one was over sixty. Most of them were under no illusions as to why they were popular among young Vietnamese women. Mr. Wei, the grandpa who owns a chrome factory, was over sixty with grey hair and the wrinkles of age on his face. Once he told me:
Yup, girls here always say I am handsome. Haha, handsome? It is not me but Mr. Ho Chi Minh who is handsome [meaning the picture of Ho Chi Minh that appears on the Vietnamese Đồng]. But when a man hears that, of course he feels happy. [...] It has never happened, and would never happen in Taiwan. So, why not [have a mistress and have fun here]? (Mr. Wei)

Mr. Wei's response is interesting in the fact that it shows he is aware of the commercial basis of his "attractiveness" in Vietnam, yet he is also able to enjoy his status as a highly eligible man there. Here, the literature on bounded or staged authenticity within commercialized sex and tourist encounters is perhaps relevant. Analysis of the so-called Girl Friend Experience (GFE) in prostitution in Western contexts shows that "Johns" or the male customers of female sex workers find a way to negotiate acceptable levels of authenticity within the limits of a brief relationship with a very clear commercial basis (Bernstein 2001, 2007; Holt and Blevins 2007). Erik Cohen, in his critique of the idea of authenticity in tourism, argues that the commercialization of culture does not irrevocably destroy the meaning of the commodified cultural products for either natives or tourists (Cohen 1988). Cohen refers to a "playful" mode of resort-style tourism in which the engagement with the other takes on the form of "recreation" rather than deep experimentation or existential challenge. Recreational tourist audiences for staged performances of authenticity may well understand that they are being offered a heavily commoditized form of culture, and yet playfully consent to take it as "real". In other words, they negotiate a desired and acceptable level of authenticity.
In some ways, we can argue that Taiwanese expatriate businessmen in Vietnam are also engaged in the negotiation of authenticity within their commercially framed relationships with local women. They clearly understand that the women are motivated by material desires, at least at the outset of their involvement, yet also appear to find "true" happiness in a performance of intimacy that is, by their own admission, substantially staged.

**Back to family**

Mr. Shih was nearly fifty, and had been running a plastics factory in Vietnam for almost ten years. His two boys were college students when I met Mr. Shih, but his wife and children rarely came to Vietnam as they were not used to the hot and humid weather. Mr. Shih returns to Taiwan every three to four months, usually scheduling his trips to coincide with his sons' summer or winter vacations, so that he can spend more time with them. Mr. Shih was introduced to me by Mr. Chu, who is his good friend in Vietnam. At the time I met him, Shih was quite upset over his (ex-) mistress. Mr. Chu thought his friend should tell me his story in person, and so we arranged to meet. Shih started his story with a cigarette:

I met her in a karaoke bar in District 10. That day he [Mr. Chu] was there, too. Though I have seen dozens of karaoke girls, she was the most special one. She was so pretty, with a friendly smile and kittenish eyes. "I want this girl," I told myself immediately. Of course I took her out [to a hotel] that night, and gave her some money afterwards as usual ... After that day, she
started to text me like a girlfriend and come to visit me at my company on weekends.\textsuperscript{54} ... We...aah...we are very matched in bed ... She was so sweet and so hot. I’d never dated a girl like her in my life ... That is how we started. I don’t know why she picked me, maybe because I am a foreign businessman, but I can still feel her genuineness and feel a connection with her. We were so happy back then; we really had a very good time. (Mr. Shih)

Aware of that his girlfriend might be interested in his status or wealth, Shih still clearly tasted authenticity within their relationship. Indeed, he now chided himself for losing sight of the true nature of things: “I always tell myself to watch out, but still got lost in the relationship.” He continued,

Once she caught me visiting another karaoke bar and having sex with another girl, and she got so angry ... I might have been at fault if we had been a normal boyfriend and girlfriend, but she worked in a karaoke bar. How could I be sure that she wasn’t going out with other people? ... She never asked me not to go to other bars. How could I know she cared about that? ... After then, many times, I caught her lying to me. But since she was not my wife, and she was so hot, I never questioned her words, and usually we ended up on the bed. (Mr. Shih)

When lies accumulated between us, I knew we would break up one day, but being with her still made me feel very happy. She never asked for

\textsuperscript{54} Mr. Shih’s dwelling is directly upstairs in his company premises.
money from me, and I never asked her to quit her job ... I guess neither of us was honest with the other. After being together for about one year, one day she suddenly disappeared for a while; and when she came back, she was kind of different, like...I don’t know how to say ... She asked me for money, saying her mom was in hospital. I don’t know if she was lying. I think I gave her money because I hadn’t given it to her before, so I felt like I owed her. But each time she got money, she disappeared for another few weeks without a phone call or a text. I felt more and more alienated from her, so later I decided to end the relationship. (Mr. Shih)

Mr. Shih had been to his girlfriend’s home many times, and had gotten to know her housemates and her landlord. However, the details of her family in the Mekong Delta were a mystery to him. He did not even know if her parents were alive, but nevertheless gave her 3000 US dollars as a “payment” for her company and the sex they had.

It sounds like I am rational and know how to do damage control. But actually I miss her ... She knows my body well, and I miss the smile she always wore when we began our relationship ... I think I am a coward. I regretted the affair, and decided to be a family man again. I went back home, faced my wife’s smile, and digested my own guilt. I know I deserved to feel guilty. (Mr. Shih)

Mr. Shih had broken up with his girlfriend a couple months before I met him, but he was still melancholy. Out of a sense of guilt he went back home to spend
time with his family, and even took them on a trip. Shih decided to do whatever he could to make it up to his wife, although he did not think she knew about his affair in Vietnam.

After Shih had finished telling his story, Mr. Chu offered his telling opinion:

See, this is not all wrong. If a man has gone too far, and realized his fault, then he will become a better man. Otherwise he might fall prey to 'sea-sickness' [falling in love with one's mistress] and abandon his family. (Mr. Chu)

**Family in Vietnam**

Those among my businessman informants who had been with their mistresses for more than a couple of years typically considered their mistresses not to be merely sex providers or girlfriends, but to be their "wives" in Vietnam. This was especially the case when they had had children together. For these men, children born to their Vietnamese second wives were unambiguously considered to be family members and descendants. This leads us to conclude that the men were engaged in constructing quasi-permanent homes away from home for themselves by establishing "normal" nuclear families in Vietnam. This home-building does not mean, however, that the men were prepared to willingly abandon their first families in Taiwan—something of which I practically never heard happening in the course of my research.
My informant Mr. Ho runs a seafood factory in Vietnam, and on the first occasion we met he introduced his Vietnamese mistress as his wife. It was not until later, when we got acquainted with each other and he needed me to bring a package of coffee beans back to his Taiwanese wife that he told me he had two wives. Of his affair in Vietnam, he told me:

Like other men in Vietnam, I will keep my Vietnamese wife and our son a secret till this little son is fifteen years old. My [Taiwanese] wife will then be sixty years old and too old to get a divorce. (Mr. Ho)

Mr. Ho called his local partner his “Vietnamese wife” (Yuehnan taitai, 越南太太) and his first wife his “Taiwanese wife” (taiwan taitai, 台湾太太). These appellations, contrary to the usual distinction between a “big wife” and a “small wife”, seem to emphasize the transnational organization of Mr. Ho’s extended family without assigning pre-eminence to the “first”, “home” wife over the “second”, “away” one. I was able during my fieldwork to observe the rather simple family life of Mr. Ho and his Vietnamese partner. Ho worked in his factory during office hours, and his Vietnamese wife took care of their child and the house. When he got home after work, Ho played with his son while his wife prepared dinner. This kind of life style was also seen in cases of Ms. Vo, the successful real estate woman, and some other informants in Vietnam. Echoing what other men had told me, Ho explained “It is very important that man has someone taking care of him.” He not only had someone taking care of him in Vietnam, but also another back in Taiwan. Ho was fifty-five-year-old at the time
we met, and his little son was only five. When I asked him about the relationship with his Taiwanese wife, he said:

At my age, no one talks about being in love or not being in love. But I have to say, I’ve been married to my [Taiwanese] wife for more than 30 years, since I was a poor young man. Now, it’s something more like indebtedness and gratitude than love between us (Enyi tayu chingai, 恩義大於情愛). (Mr. Ho)

I was curious as to why Mr. Ho had wanted a child with his Vietnamese wife, since his eldest son in Taiwan was almost thirty years old. He explained:

It was an accident, but later I thought, I won’t be here [in Vietnam] forever. I have built a lot of things here and I can’t take all my property back to Taiwan with me. I need someone I can trust to take care of my business, and that will be my son [the one he has with his mistress]. My factory will become his one day, and he will be able to make a living without me being around then. When I leave I will give all the property that can’t be repatriated [to Taiwan] to him. (Mr. Ho)

In relation to his seafood business, Mr. Ho had constructed aquatic farms and extensive water systems. These were sunk costs that would not be possible to relocate or repatriate. Due to the nature of the manufacturing business that most Taiwanese expatriates in Vietnam have invested in, the factory itself and other physical assets cannot simply be moved back to Taiwan or sold for a good
price locally. Mr. Ho was not the only one planning to pass his business onto his "Vietnamese" children. Mr. Han, who held a traditional wedding ceremony with his mistress Lam while I was in the field, also harbored thoughts of doing things this way. He planned to have a son\textsuperscript{65} with Lam. As some of his investments could not be withdrawn in the form of cash, by having an heir in Vietnam he would not need to worry about Lam’s future or his properties in Vietnam.

I won’t pass my money to Lam. She might be used by her brother. But my son is different. That is my own child, so it’s fair enough for him to have my money, especially if I am not able to take care of him in other ways. […] Rather than give him money and let him spend it like water, it’s better to teach him my business and let him take it over after I return to Taiwan. (Mr. Han)

In traditional Chinese thinking, a father will pass his property to his sons, which is indicative of the concept of the patrilineal continuity within the family (Yang 1992, 124-125). In addition to conforming to this cultural expectation, the fact that their “Vietnamese” children are considered by the Taiwanese businessmen as their rightful heirs and family members demonstrates that they are seen as “legitimate”. The preparation for their children’s (and their mistresses’) futures also indicates that the men do indeed plan to leave one day. In lieu of being present to provide care, the men take responsibility for their Vietnamese children by securing their economic futures subsequent to their planned return to Taiwan. However, the fact that they will leave their property to their sons

\textsuperscript{65} Mr. Han and Lam gave birth to a boy the next year. But I did not have chance to ask him what would have happened if he had a girl.
rather than their local partners suggests that the men do not see their Vietnamese mistresses as fully legitimate trustworthy family members. Indeed, the mistresses are considered to be the ones most likely to betray them:

Men are strange beings. We kind of feel we have responsibility for the women after sleeping with them, but at the same time we don’t want to be cheated by them. (Mr. Wei)

You know, there was one poor guy who registered his company under his mistress' name. Once he went back to Taiwan and when he returned, his company had become the mistress' brothers' company. (Mr. Cho)

Leaving their property to their sons is a strategy whereby the men can avoid being "cheated" by their mistresses or their scheming family members. Individuals often tell of experiences or stories involving themselves or others to construct their self-identity. Through these stories they are able to admonish each other against being betrayed by their Vietnamese mistresses. It is hard to tell the authenticity of the stories, but they always appear to influence other people who experience similar situations. The story of men having their companies stolen by their mistresses was told to me in several versions over the course of my fieldwork. No one really knew who the poor men in the story were, but everyone warned each other about their fate. This reveals how much these Taiwanese businessmen fear the prospect of becoming the ridiculous, moneyless man in these stories.
Even though the men and their mistresses may have been together for several years and have lived like husband and wife, this distrust persists, and the men do not consider their Vietnamese second wives as worthy heirs to their fortunes. Furthermore, in a Confucian patriarchal society a woman would not be considered as a rightful heir, especially when she is a mistress. In this context, if they pass their properties to their mistresses, my male informants worried that the properties would later belong to the mistresses' fathers or brothers; in worse scenario, their properties might belong to some male strangers if the mistresses re-married.

The meaning of home and family

The men in my study deployed a number of different arguments to explain why it was natural and inevitable that their family lives had to be organized in the way they were.

Taiwanese wives won't come again after visiting Vietnam once. It is too hot and the living conditions aren't that good. They can't stay here long-term. [In these circumstances] it is quite natural to find someone else to keep you company ... I wouldn't ask her [his wife] to come and stay here with me. She has things to do, she wouldn't be happy to live here ... Ask her to help in my business? No, that would lead to lots of disagreements. It is better she stays in Taiwan. (Mr. Cho)

Mr. Cho, who was in his early fifties and owned a lighting company and other businesses, explained things thus:
A relationship between husband and wife needs some give and take. Over the past years, I have made a good life for my family [in Taiwan] and lived up to my responsibilities. My wife of course should be able to turn a blind eye. Either that or all the Taiwanese businessmen here should get divorced! (Mr. Cho)

Michele Barrett and Mary McIntosh indicate that, although there exist various type of families (e.g. single-parent and co-habitant ones), and while female labor market participation is rising constantly, the basic concept of a family still consists of a husband as breadwinner and a wife as homemaker (Barret and McIntosh 1982, 7). This notion has, however, been subject to significant challenge in both developed and developing nations in recent decades. Sheba George’s research on Indian migrant nurses in America indicates that when the wives went to the United States and found well paid work in healthcare, their husbands typically found it difficult to secure jobs with a comparable income in the United State. This reality often meant the husbands could only find part-time employment or they became full time housekeepers (George 2005).

Parreñas, in her research on Filipina migrant workers and their families, also points out that when the mothers go abroad to work in North America, the fathers left behind face the need to fill the role of homemaker. Instead of taking up the nurturing role, however, the husbands often choose to work far away from home to keep their distance from the feminized role of caregiver. To avoid being seen as less masculine, they sometimes had affairs (Parreñas 2005b, 331-332).
Both in Taiwan and in Vietnam, by contrast, the businessmen in my study remain the breadwinners and the wives/mistresses are the homemakers. Unlike the men in the studies cited above, who experience a challenge to their gendered identities, the men in my study are able to affirm and accentuate their masculine dominance by establishing two families in two countries connected by global flows of capital. The men are engaged in constructing quasi-permanent homes away from home for themselves by establishing “normal” nuclear families in Vietnam. They create a homey space equipped with caring Vietnamese mistresses with the traditional Confucian characteristic they value (sometimes with children as well) and maintain their original homes and families in Taiwan as sites for eventual return and retirement. They make themselves the successful men who are able to well support two families at the same time.

Businessmen construct overseas families is not unheard of in Chinese history. In the book The Customs of Cambodia (Chenla Fengtu Chi, 真臘風土記56) of Yuan Dynasty, it mentioned that because Chenla was a fertile land and local women were willing to marry a Chinese foreigner, one could easily get to live in affluence; many Chinese businessmen sailed to Chenla would settle down and thus form local families there while keeping their original families back in China (Zhou 1992). Back in feudal China, women were not allowed to board on ships. Therefore when men went to Southeast Asia for trading business, they had to live separately with their wives. Lacking reliable transportation, there was no guarantee these men could return. Often these men settled down in Chenla and

56 The book was originally written by Daguan Zhou 周達觀, a Chinese diplomat of Yuan Dynasty, recording the customs and life in Angkor.
build up local families with local women. Their local wives were considered as an official family member, a concubine, by the family back in China and would be recorded in the family pedigree together with their children. This kind of practice thus formed the extended families across border. In my research, although my male informants also constructed their local families, they did not settle in Vietnam. Instead, they tried their best to keep their Taiwanese wives in the dark and were always prepared to return back to their first families in Taiwan one day. Leaving their assets behind to the children of their mistresses became a way to fulfill their duty as a father, resulting in the formation of parallel lineage in Vietnam.

Yet establishing local families does not mean my male informants are immersing themselves in local society. Instead, by using local housemaids and personal drivers they can live in Vietnam with too much contact with local people. They built themselves a Taiwanese bubble in which they think and act with their habitus and also construct their superiority by Othering local people. Rather than seeing their establishment of local families as a way to localization, it is more like they include their mistresses into their elite Taiwanese businessmen’s field.

New technologies enable the migrants to retain contact with their sending communities and to be involved in the everyday life of their original home more easily and frequently regardless of the geographic separation (Levitt 2001). Given the benefit of modern communication technologies, Taiwanese businessmen in Vietnam are easily able to keep contact with their families by
international phone calls, faxes, SMS, and Internet instruments like email, and Skype. At the same time, however, they are also able to use their geographic separation as a firewall to manipulate their freedom and accentuate their masculinity in Vietnam. By so doing, they establish homely spaces for themselves in both Taiwan and Vietnam, and also (plan to) establish economic security and ongoing reproduction for both families after their return to Taiwan and, presumably, their death. These practices demonstrate well how globalization not only changes the patterns of production and accumulation, but also alters people's living arrangements and their very notions of family.

Conclusion

Although the businessmen in my research are professional rather than unskilled migrant workers, they share some of the difficulties of transnational family life with their working class Asian counterparts. Economic globalization not only changes the pattern of how enterprises operate and accumulate capital, but it also transforms how people organize the lives of their family and of their household. In the experience of the male subjects in my research, it is not just that family life has been re-organized across a significant spatial divide, but rather that their whole notion of family has been reconfigured. As I have argued above, when the men form stable relationships with their mistresses, they begin to regard them as members of an extended family rather than merely as receiver of sexual or affective services. One informant showed that he made a black and white distinction between mere commercialized sex and having a long-term mistress by saying: "If you just want milk, you can buy it at market; no need to bother to raise a cow" (Mr. Tu). Rather than asserting that the need for
an economic “front” motivates Taiwanese expatriates to take local mistresses and second wives (Kung 2004), we can argue that such a rationale can instead function as a post-facto justification for an already formed relationship.

The men in my study typically order the different chapters of their families according to a hierarchy whereby their “first” and “home” families reside in Taiwan while their “second” and “away” families reside in Vietnam. The meaning of family for these men has shifted from the traditional kinship family into overlapped families across the border. They make themselves at “home” in an enclave in Vietnam both socially and spatially and prepare to withdraw back to their forever home in Taiwan one day. The notion of “family” and “home” no longer sticks to the same place, but roams with the subject through a transnational space.

Nevertheless, there are moments when this clear symbolic order breaks down, and the spatial and social priority of the Taiwanese family comes into question. This occurs not just in moments of “seasickness”, but also in the more level-headed planning around the economic security and social reproduction of the Vietnamese chapter of the family after the man’s projected return to Taiwan. Just like the locally invested capital that cannot be repatriated to Taiwan but must be left to a locally produced son, the men’s affective and familial investments in their Vietnamese mistresses are also left behind to continue a parallel existence.
Chapter 8: Money and Power within the Families

The main reason why Taiwanese businessmen relocate to Vietnam is to ensure the economic welfare of their families by means of remittances. In Shen’s research, as mentioned earlier, she sees cross-border triangular relationships as an international division of labor (Shen 2005). Using this logic, the flow of money between the male and female subjects can thus be perceived as a form of compensation. However, in this chapter, I will argue that the flow of money in these transnational families can at times carry different meanings, particularly since each of the subjects involved in the flow of money perceives the situation differently. The money sent home by Taiwanese businessmen could at various times be described as fulfilling the men’s responsibility, responding to their economic ability, supporting their wives, or something to be spent by their wives in conspicuous consumption. On the other side, the money Taiwanese businessmen gave to their mistresses could at time be used to distance their relationships and make the relationships commoditized. Yet sometimes could also be perceived as living expenses of their families. In addition, money is not the only remittance that travels across borders among the families in my research. The gifts sent and received within the cross-border families can also be translated differently. In this chapter I will address these issues.
Capitalist Confucian society

Taiwan is a Capitalist Confucian society which is deeply affected by traditional Confucian ideology as well as capitalist accumulation thinking. The old Chinese dicta say: ‘Families are the foundation of a nation’ (*Guo chihs pen tsai chia*, 國之本在家) and ‘Cultivate oneself, take good care of one’s family, well rule the country well, and bring peace to the world’ (*Hsiushen chichia chihguo pingtienshia*, 修身齊家治國平天下). These reveal that the family is the basic unit of a Confucian society, not the individual; only after taking good care of one’s family can one do something big and meaningful (i.e. bring peace to the world). On the other hand, a capitalist society accentuates the accumulating of wealth. As Louie argues, economic power is considered to be the new model of *Wu* masculinity (Louie 2002). We can arguably say that a man who accumulates economic capital and offers his family well-off lives is one achieves manhood and success.

Since bettering family income is the main reason for the businessmen to relocate to Vietnam, money inevitably becomes the proof of their contribution and connection to their families. As Mrs. Chao, the first wife who “permitted” her husband to have a mistress, told me:

I know quite a few first wives. One of them, her husband hasn’t sent any money home since he took a mistress there, and another one’s husband even asked his wife for revolving funds. My husband was never like that. He cares about our family, cares about me, which is why I stay in this marriage. (Mrs. Chao)
Mrs. Chao considered her husband’s financial remittance as his contribution to and his way of taking care of the family. Through Mrs. Chao’s words we could also see that she considers a man should support his family, otherwise, there is no need to stay in the marriage. Since most of the time the Taiwanese businessmen husbands were absent from their families, the easiest way for them to show their care and to contribute to their families was through sending money. One of my businessman informants, the global footwear company director, told me:

I am not saying that money is everything, but money is very important. Why I am here? I am here for earning more money for my family, and I did. The price is that I have to stay in Vietnam, far away from home, and live a stressful life. That is also what my wife asks me to do, bring money home. She always tells me the cost of the children’s education fees, and how much the living expenses are, the tax, and blah blah… (Mr. Hsu)

I do send money home each month. I give them [wife and children] a steady and well-off life. I do the best I can do here. (Mr. Lu)

These men desire a stable family base and the sentiment of being connected to their families in Taiwan. However, at the same time, they also desire to have some freedom and masculine agency in Vietnam. By sending money home to provide their families a comfortable lifestyle, they think that they are entitled to have a little “freedom” in Vietnam, which not only banishes their loneliness but
also reinforce their hypermasculinity as mentioned in previous chapters. These hypermasculine capitalists think they can/need to do both keeping secured families in Taiwan while having extramarital affairs in Vietnam. For those businessmen sojourning between Taiwan and Vietnam, they are neither in Taiwan nor in Vietnam, but in a special time zone of their own. In that special time zone they are able to stay connected with their Taiwanese families, and at the same time maintain temporary yet intimate affairs. Since the separation from their families is only temporary, these men will return to normal family lives eventually when they retire from their career. For this reason, they tend to keep a good relationship with their families.

The capitalist Confucian ideology not only imposes on Taiwanese men but on women as well. Economic issues are important factors that influence people’s decision making. For the first wives, even after learning of their husbands’ affairs in Vietnam, it was never easy for them to demand their husbands quit their jobs or withdraw their investments. As Mrs. Chao said:

He is usually far away in Vietnam. Even if I ask him to break up with that woman [his mistress], how could I know if he did it or not? And divorce is never a choice for me. I am the one who accompanies with him for more than twenty year ago, takes care of his family and enables him to excel his business overseas without having to worry about the children and his aging parents. Till now he has been successful, and we have a quality life, I would never give him to another woman. So the only option is to ask him to come back. But he is in Vietnam for his business and the whole family, and
all the investments have been put in. I am just a member of the big family. Though I feel so hurt, how could I ask him to leave Vietnam for my personal emotional reason, and allow our family to live a not so good standard? (Mrs. Chao)

Another first wife Mrs. Wu, who would rather spend an afternoon with me than stayed home with her husband, also made a similar statement:

The reason why he is in Vietnam is for the higher income. If I asked him to quite the job and come back to Taiwan, what we have strived for, devoted [our energies to] and endured so far would be a waste. Not to say that under the current economic crisis, I don’t even know whether he can get a new job having the same level of salary in Taiwan or not. (Mrs. Wu)

In the context of capitalist globalization, although the businessmen have more chances to pursue wealth, on the other hand they and their families also become the victims of capitalism. Craving for economic capital, these businessmen relocate to different countries, form transnational families, and some even construct cross-border triangular relations. When I asked Mrs. Chao if she could go backward in time would she still let her husband go to Vietnam, and surprisingly, her answer was “yes”.

I will let him go and do all the same. It is bloody true that the market in Taiwan is shrinking. If he did not relocate our company to Vietnam, we could never have this life standard today. I know his life in Vietnam is hard,
toilsome, and boring. But he continues to fight the hardships and doesn’t give up. All I need to do is take care of the family, and turn a blind eye to his affair. He will come back home one day, and then we will have a happy family together. (Mrs. Chao)

My Taiwanese wives informants seldom requested their husbands give up the businesses or careers and to come back to Taiwan. It is because of economic considerations that the husbands moved to Vietnam and thus form cross-border families that the husbands stayed in Vietnam and wives and children stayed in Taiwan. For the sake of the whole family’s welfare, it is difficult for the wives to ask their husbands to come back. This is especially so for those wives of entrepreneurs who made substantial investments in Vietnam; to ask their husbands to withdraw would mean giving up the money they had poured into Vietnam.

_When father is absent_

A father’s relationship with his family can possibly be simplified as one-way care that manifests itself in the form of economic support. In Talcott Parson’s study into the role of parents in a Western middle-class family, he argues that the father is the instrumental leader who provides economic support while the mother is the expressive leader. Only when the father acts as a good provider can the mother concentrate on her maternal role to educate, foster, and take care of the children (Parsons 1959). However, in migrant workers’ cases the situation can be quite different. In Parreñas’ research, she points out that although located at a distance, those Filipino migrant mothers who work

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overseas stay involved with family decisions and continue to be intimately attached to their children left in the Philippines (Parreñas 2005b, 318). According to Parreñas, these migrant mothers are the main breadwinners of the families, yet at the same time they are the family caregivers since the fathers tend to avoid the feminized care work. By way of sharing the bank account with the eldest daughter and/or other close female relatives, and by using international communicating technologies like phone, SMS, and sending parcels, the Filipino migrant-worker-mothers are able to show their love for their children and manage to be present as the mother of the family at a distance. This is in sharp contrast to my research, in which my male informants played limited roles in their family lives. They arguably are merely the breadwinners who provide monetary support to the family whilst they are in Vietnam. Unlike the Filipino migrant-mothers, they do not actively participate in family decisions. Their behavior could empower those wives mentioned in Chapter 5, but at the same time it also makes these overseas husbands symbolically absent from their families. As Mrs. Chao’s son told me,

Mom decides everything. What school to go, what to buy, what to do … everything. She is quite assertive after my father went to Vietnam. And my father does not care about it … He is preoccupied by his business I think. And when he is back, he is on holidays … Guess we all have been used to the family arrangement. (Mrs. Chao’s son)

Mrs. Chao’s son was only about six years old when Mr. Chao went to Vietnam, and he was in his twenties when we met. Most of the time during these years,
his mother made all the decisions for the family. Once he told me that when he was little he felt that his mother was very arbitrary and emotional, but he later found out that this was reasonable because of the burden borne on her shoulders. And now he feels more close to his mother than to his father. The son of another first wife informant, my former landlady, more precisely described his feeling on his father’s relationship to the family. He said,

Well, of course he [his father] said he is fighting for the family [‘s economic income in Vietnam], but I think it’s more about his self-achievement. I am working now, and we can be economically independent soon. We [he and his two younger brothers] can take care of my mom. We don’t really need his money. [...] we are used to our lives without him, when he is back, we feel awkward actually. (Mrs. Chien’s son)

Mrs. Chien’s son was in his twenties when we met. He had then graduated from university, served his military duty and had gotten his first job. He learnt about his father’s affair about five years previously. His father’s extra-marital relationship made him feel cheated as he used to venerate his father because he thought his father was sacrificing for the family by being in Vietnam. Upon learning of his father’s affair he even went to Vietnam to confront his father in the hope that his father would return to their family. But his father rejected him and alleged that his stay in Vietnam was for the family’s good. Since then, the father’s contact with the family became limited to money remittances, and occasional phone calls when necessary. This further distanced the man and his family. Clearly, some fathers work overseas for the better livelihood of their
families, however at the same time their physical absences limits their roles to mere breadwinners. When the situation includes the men's extra-marital affairs in Vietnam, it may become difficult for the families left behind to reckon the fathers' sacrifices. This is the deep contradiction in these families. The men suffer separation so their families can receive the economic benefits, but this separation can also destroy the family, at least in terms of sentiment, and in the worst case as an institution—divorce.

Get money home

When it comes to the decision whether to invest or work in Vietnam, the scariest thing for the wives is not the separation from their husbands, but the thought of their husbands' possible extra-marital relationships. Not only does the media in Taiwan frequently broadcast that Vietnamese/Chinese girls are willingly to become the mistresses of foreign men for money, and that men find it difficult to close the door on a seductress, but their relatives and friends also tell them that their husbands are very likely to keep mistresses while overseas. These and others make the wives panic. People mean well, but these messages really worry the wives. As Mrs. Wu told me:

My husband is in Vietnam, so I have to shoulder the heavy responsibility of taking care of our family on my own, and that is really tiresome. And often I have to listen to some alarmist talks from my relatives and friends saying that I should not let my husband go to Vietnam by himself, my husband may date young girls there. It sounds like, if my husband had an extra-marital affair, which would be my fault since I did not keep an eye on him.
But the reality is I am not able to go with him. The only thing I can do to keep him from having an affair is to ask him to remit all money home and believe that this would make him short of money to keep a mistress. (Mrs. Wu)

Mrs. Li, as mentioned in chapters 6, also used economic control to deter her husband from having an affair. She told me:

What those girls [Vietnamese mistresses] want? They want money only. I doubt they would like to be the housewives who take care of children and the parents-in-laws, do all the house chores, and have to worry about husbands’ possible affairs. [...] If they know this guy is in debt, owes lots money, they will never show up again. That’s why I ask our company to remit all of my husband’s salary directly to my account. I usually give him a little pocket money only. Since the company offers everything he basically needs, accommodation and three meals a day. He doesn’t need money. (Mrs. Li)

Living apart means that wives are not able to fully watch over their husbands’ lives. Therefore, Taiwanese wives use money as an insurance policy to eliminate the possibility for extra-marital relationships. Many of them believe that cross-border affairs occur due to the exchange of money and sex. The

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57 Mr. and Mrs. Li worked in the same company for many years. The business owner’s wife was actually a good friend of Mrs. Li. Through this special relationship, the owner was willing to help Mrs. Li limit the extent of her husband’s affairs.
Taiwanese wives in my fieldwork thus made sure not to allow their husbands to have any spare money so that they became less likely to keep a mistress.

The viewpoints and perspectives of those Taiwanese businessmen I interviewed are, however, quite different. In my fieldwork in Vietnam I found that the men tended to consider the money they remitted home as their compulsory obligation. As long as they are able to provide that, they could feel free to pursue other things such as having occasional fun. As discussed in previous chapters, the component of the men's hypermasculinity include economically supporting their conjugal families, as well as being able to have multiple sex partners. As Mr. Chu, the molding company manager, told me:

Mistress and wife are the same; they all cost you money! The only difference is that you put money in consideration before having affair with the mistress. (Mr. Chu)

From this perspective, it could possibly be true that if the Taiwanese wives cut the available money to their husbands, their husbands will not be able to keep a mistress. But the reality is never that simple. Not every wife can control her husband’s money, especially those whose husbands are business owners. They are unlikely to know the exact amount their husbands earn each month. And for those who are employees, it is possible to fake the extent of their income and to keep some from their wives. Informant Mr. Hu, the new arrival, strongly expressed his dissent toward his wife's intervention.
I won’t let her interfere with my business. She only needs to take care of the family, that’s it, that’s her major responsibility. You don’t see the wives of Yung-Ching Wang or Tai-Ming Guo intervene in their business, right? As long as I offer my family a top standard lifestyle, it is my business to do whatever I want here. (Mr. Hu)

Additionally, in my fieldwork I heard from a few informants the story of Mr. Ma, who I had once met at Mr. Wei’s place:

Mr. Ma was a businessman keeping a mistress locally. Once his wife accidentally found out about his affairs and came to Ho Chi Minh City to keep an eye on him. His wife controlled all his money in order to sever his extra-marital relationship. But Mr. Ma still managed to access his money by using excuses such as his companies need for revolving funds. He even borrowed money from his friends, and had them ask his wife for the money by saying that Mr. Ma had lost money to them through gambling. In order to cover up his affairs, Mr. Ma even rented a unit for his mistress next to his golf club as he knew his wife would not go golfing with him. And if his wife asked his driver where Mr. Ma visited that day, his driver’s answer would be—the golf club—and this would satisfy her.

Mr. Ma’s story became an anecdote in the businessmen’s community. People mocked Mr. Ma for the fact that his wife was overpowering him. Mr. Ma actually cared about his wife and marriage and he did not want a divorce. Yet he did not

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58 王永慶 and 郭台銘, they are both in the top five richest businessmen in Taiwan.
want to break up with his mistress either. The story shows that even though a man is the breadwinner of the family, the power relationship between him and his wife could be overturned when his wife goes to Vietnam to oversee him and control all his money. Besides, although cutting a husbands' money can be an effective way to prevent him from having extra-marital affairs because economic ability is linked to hypermasculinity, it is also possible for men to finance the cost of keeping mistresses from other sources.

The role that money remittances play in their marriages

For my first wife informants, collecting money from their husbands was not only a matter of limiting their husbands' potential affairs, but it also acted as insurance in cases where they may want to file for a divorce and/or live independently later on. Marriage laws in Taiwan dictate that divorce can only exist on the condition that both parties are willing to disjoin. Otherwise, marriage litigation is based on the concept of “defect”, which means the party who wants a divorce must file a lawsuit. In that case, the applicant must propose evidence that the respondent has fact of violated their marriage, i.e., in the first wives' cases, the husband has abandoned his family, has extra-marital affairs, or does not economically support his family. Of importance to the women is the fact that child custody is based on which party can provide the children with better care, and that judgment takes into account the two parties' economic circumstances. Thus it might be more difficult to obtain custody for those first wives who are economically dependent on their husbands and with limited assets under their name. Besides, even if the first wives do not want a divorce, securing money from their husbands could empower them economically and enable them to be
independent. Therefore, "obtaining money and properties from the husbands" becomes the fundamental strategy for those first wives who find their husbands in extra-marital affairs.

Take my former landlady Mrs. Chien's case for example. Mrs. Chien had been a house wife since she married her husband thirty years ago. Although she knew about her husband's betrayal for almost ten years and on many occasions wanted a divorce and to escape from her unhappy marriage, it was difficult for her to make the decision because in so doing she would lose her only economic support. All the properties were registered under her husband's name, which meant she would need to find a job after thirty years out of the job market. This was a challenging task. She told me even though it was her husband's fault; she was the one who had to pay for it if she divorced her husband.

I devote all my energies to run our marriage, but my husband treats it like a piece of dirt. So I am preparing for my own future now. I learned how to drive, and asked for a car from him. I try my best to claim more money from him and save it little by little. When everything is ready, I will be able to divorce him. Or at least I don't have to depend on him. [...] I deserve the money. After taking care of his mother who had been bedridden [and passed away years ago], and his three sons, the money is just a compensation package. (Mrs. Chien)

Mrs. Chien was an accountant before marriage. After marrying her husband, her husband asked her to quit her job and stay home to take care of her
mother-in-law. With the coming of their three boys, she was always busy with the house work. Mrs. Chien’s husband went to Vietnam with friends more than ten years ago for a possible investment opportunity and later they founded a karaoke parlor there. When Mrs. Chien found out about her husband’s affair with a hostess in the Karaoke she was angry and shocked.

I couldn’t believe that this could happen to us. I gave up my career for him, for taking care of this family. [...] When he said Vietnam was a good place to invest, I supported him. I sacrificed myself to accomplish his dream, and this was what I got of it. (Mrs. Chien)

When Mrs. Chien found out about her husband’s extra-marital relation with a local woman in Vietnam, she asked him to return to Taiwan. However, her request was immediately rejected by her husband and he told Mrs. Chien: “it is a man’s nature to have an affair on occasions, why should she be so serious.”

For many years, I asked for a divorce since he was reluctant to break up with the hostess. But he rejected. He even accused me of being immature and overcritical. [...] Without his agreement, it would be difficult to seek a divorce. [...] When people told me about his affair, it was so embarrassing. I had to pretend like I didn’t know, and sometimes I joked to myself that if it really did happen, it meant my husband was very charming. [...] These recent years, sometimes he came back with nice attitude, like nothing had happened, and sometimes he even brought me gifts. But I think that was
because he knew he was getting old, so he needs his family now. (Mrs. Chien)

For the Taiwanese first wives in my research, like Mrs. Chien, it is even harder for them to file divorce litigation, because they will have to search for evidence across the border their husband’s extra-marital affairs were committed in Vietnam. Facing limited options, Mrs. Chien tried her best to secure money from her husband:

Unfortunately I lost my husband [’s attention], but at least I got money. (Mrs. Chien)

Since Mrs. Chien’s three boys had already reached adulthood when I met her, and her parents-in-law had passed away, she had already decided to live her own life with the money she had secured from her husband, regardless of whether her husband agreed to a divorce or not. “My sons are on my side; this is the most important thing.” Mrs. Chien told me that since she had taken responsibility for the family it was now her turn to have her own life.

According to Peter Blau’s social exchange theory, most human’s activities are based on the norm of reciprocity. This means that every single thing has its own cost price and benefit for exchange, which includes external rewards like money or jewelry, and internal rewards like power, face, or affection. An interpersonal relationship is a balance of the reciprocal actions of giving and receiving. People consider the possible exchange cost and outcome, and rationally
choose the most attractive one. Reciprocity is the criterion of the exchange, and if the subject is not be satisfied with the result, the exchange would not occur (Blau 1964).

In reality, what makes people consider a reciprocal exchange will vary from case to case, especially when one is faced with limited choices and is forced to follow a specific social system. In Mrs. Chien’s case, her natal family did not support her divorcing her husband for his infidelity. Instead, they quoted the slang saying “when the husband is playing around, we take him as lost; and when he is back, we consider him found again” and recommended her to stay in her marriage as long as her husband continued to bring money home since she was economically dependent on her husband. This exchange did not satisfy Mrs. Chien as she considered her cost (tolerating husband’s affair and staying in her marriage) was higher than her reward (her husband’s money). Yet with limited choices, she stayed in the marriage.

In a marriage, not everything can be calculated to ensure that the outcome is equal and mutually beneficial. When a relationship involves affection, it is hard to judge fairness. For those Taiwanese first wives facing their husbands’ extramarital relationships, it is not easy for them to regain trust and affection. Rather than saying that they are exchanging their husbands’ affairs for money, I would suggest that money and tangible properties are considered more reliable and practical when compared with their husbands’ attentions. As long as the first wives can be economically independent, despite being emotionally devastated
by their husbands' affairs, they can choose to live their own lives. But if they cannot support themselves financially, they may lose their options.

**Divorce her husband before his retirement**

Other than economic independence, other family members and friends' support could also empower the first wives. Later in 2011, Mrs. Chien, my former landlady, told me that she was going to divorce her husband just before he relocated back to Taiwan. This was a total surprise to me. I had known that due to her economic dependency she has been tolerating her husband's affair for many years. Not only that, her father and brothers—the male members of her natal family who were supposed to support her if she was mistreated in the conjugal family—also convinced her not to pursue a divorce because "a man will come back home eventually".

After her husband had left for Vietnam and similarly to other first wives who join social groups to fill their spare time, Mrs. Chien joined a ballroom dancing class where she found her passion. After several years she had become a teaching assistant in the class and had gotten to know a lot of friends there. Once in 2010, when her husband came back to Taiwan unexpectedly, he went to the dancing class looking for Chien and saw Chien dancing with another man. Out of rage Mr. Chien punched the man in the face. It turned out that the man was Chien's dancing teacher who was demonstrating the male dancer's part with Mrs. Chien. At the same time, the teacher's wife, who was also a teacher in the class, was demonstrating the female dancer's part with another assistant in
another corner of the classroom. This incident made Mrs. Chien feel totally humiliated. She told me,

How come a man cheating on me with a hostess could treat me like I am a faithless wife? How could he be so unreasonable? [...] We had a serious fight that night. He did not even apology to me or my teacher. I just wanted to divorce him! And he kept saying that if I insist on a divorce, that means I have a thing with my teacher. Can you believe it? From that time, I started to prepare the evidences for filing a divorce. (Mrs. Chien)

Supported by her sons and her friends, Mrs. Chien recorded all their fights through phone calls over her husband’s affairs and prepared a divorce settlement. Even though her husband was reluctant to have a divorce and said he was coming back for good, Chien told him that she had all the evidence needed for the court to judge in her favor. He was given the option of choosing to sign the settlement or to go to the court. Finally, Mrs. Chien successfully divorced her husband.

He told me that he is coming back to our family, for retirement. So we don’t need a divorce. I was like, oh no, I’d better do it quickly. [...] He is coming back and I am supposed to forgive him and take care of his rest life? No way! [...] I have my sons’ support, that’s most important. (Mrs. Chien)
Although after many quarrels and difficulties, Mrs. Chien successfully divorced her husband. In an earlier stage of her marriage Mrs. Chien was critiqued by her husband for not being able to help the family economically (see chapter 3), and she thus experienced a lack of power in the family. However, on this occasion the power relationship in the marriage had obviously reversed. In my research many men who are the breadwinners of their families consider themselves as the head of the family. The economic power they use to support their families (both in Taiwan and in Vietnam) enables them to control their families. Yet in reality, that may not work. Traditional mothers are resisting patriarchy in their own way. They sacrifice for the whole family, and win respect and glorification among their relations and social networks (Zhou 2000, 154). Take Mrs. Chien’s case as an example; although without economic independency for thirty years, she was able to gain power through her son’s support and was able to divorce her husband just as he was coming back for retirement. In this example we can see the power reversion in Chien’s marriage and that she successfully resisted the traditional patriarchal paradigm “a man will come home eventually” and a wife should wait for him.

**Spending husband’s money**

Like most of my first wife informants in Taiwan, Mrs. Chao, the first wife who “permitted” her husband’s affair, had no need to work. After moving on from her husband’s overseas affair, Mrs. Chao’s daily life consisted of ballroom dancing, yoga classes, cooking classes, floriculture classes and charity work, which not only cost money but also demanded a lot of her time. Her husband gave her 100,000 NTD (about 3,300USD) monthly pocket money, which did not include
any expenditure of the whole family. He sometimes brought her gifts when he returned to Taiwan on holidays. When we were discussing how much money her husband gave her, Mrs. Chao told me:

He is not a good mate, but is a good head of family and a good father. He does take care of our family. So I can do whatever I like without worrying about money. (Mrs. Chao)

The average household Disposable Income (DI) of families whose head of family is aged between fifty-five and sixty-four \(^{59}\) is 1,024,000NTD (about 34,000USD) per year, while Final Consumption Expenditure (FCE) is 728,000NTD (about 24,300) per year. In my fieldwork investigation, my first wife informants of Taiwanese businessmen usually receive more than 40,000USD living allowance per year, not including children’s education fees, their pocket money, or gifts. Those wives of managerial employees receive less than this amount as their husbands earn less than the business owners, yet this is still higher than the average for most of the people in Taiwan. In Mrs. Chao’s case, the big house she lived in was bought before her husband’s move to Vietnam. Her 3,300USD monthly remittance was for Mrs. Chao only, and did not include other expenditure like children’s tuition fees, school hostel fees, and any other living disbursements. According to Mrs. Chao, the household expenditure for her and her two children was roughly around 50,000USD per year. This expenditure is much higher than average family expenditure in Taiwan. While on lunar New Year’s Day and other traditional festivals, Mrs. Chao would also

cash out more money and give her parents and parents-in-law big red-
envelopes on behalf of her husband.

Mrs. Chao was involved in many kinds of recreation and frequently devoted
herself to charity works. She once told me "it takes lots money to do charity". Spending free time and spare money on charities made Mrs. Chao feel that she was doing something meaningful and needy. Similarly, it enhanced her social and cultural capital as she became known as a philanthropist who was willing to give, and who was supported by a wealthy husband willing to let her devote herself on mercy works. In addition to charity works Mrs. Chao also pursued many recreations. Thorston Veblen has highlighted the relationship between leisure and social class. From the historical perspective, Veblen indicates that in feudal societies leisure is occupied by upper class people who are able to spend time and money on non-productive activities to demonstrate their wealth and to leave the dirty heavy work to those from the lower classes (Veblen 1994 [1899], 38-40). Both charity works and recreations fit into what Veblen calls conspicuous leisure and consumption that the leisure class pursues.

Veblen further indicates that, after industrialization, it is common to see a wife's position as one pursuing vicarious consumption that would honor the husband's social status while the husband applies himself to work. A wife that does not have to work indicates the economic ability of the husband, and the consumption and recreational activities that his wife pursues on his behalf are a display of his wealth (Veblen 1994 [1899], 80-81). The big house Mrs. Chao's family lived in and the fact that her children were attending private schools
demonstrates the economic status of Mr. and Mrs. Chao. Additionally, the recreational activities and the charity works Mrs. Chao participated in linked directly to their social status. Spending their husbands' money not only fulfills the first wives' lives but also furnishes the men's "faces" and honors them since these prove the men's success in business.

**Money talks**

The Taiwanese businessmen in my research no doubt were great breadwinners for their families. The men worked and contributed in terms of money while their wives took care of the family. This kind of reciprocal relationship, however, resulted in the men thinking that as long as they could provide for their families with high living standards they were entitled to have some freedom to satisfy their other desires in Vietnam. As Mr. Ho indicated:

> If you give her [the first wife] enough money each month, she won't bother to interrogate you anything ... It is just like, any problem related with money, leave it to me; other problems, she can take care of them. Not enough [money]? Just tell me, I can handle it. Then she will feel secure and satisfied. (Mr. Ho)

According to Mr. Ho (and also to other informants in my fieldwork), the only matter was money. As long as they gave their wives enough money, that showed their contribution to the family. So there would be no problem at all. These businessmen have the same thought in respect of their mistresses.
Here is the thing, wife and mistress all want money from you. If you are rich, that’s easy, just give them money. But if you are poor, wife will stay with you and help you. And the mistress will leave you. So what do you think a man should do? I will say making big money and be a rich guy. (Mr. Hu)

As I have addressed in Chapter 4, these businessmen believe that economic capital can empower them and allow them to do things ordinary men cannot. This includes having a young beautiful girlfriend and being called as “a handsome guy” by the Vietnamese girls. The “money talking” belief that these men possessed not only exists between them and their wives or them and their mistresses, but also in their everyday lives. In the course of my fieldwork in Vietnam, several times these Taiwanese businessmen offered me positions in their companies. The Invitations were often like: “come to my company, you will definitely be satisfied with the salary” or “I have three companies, you can choose whichever one to work in and make a salary requirement”.

Of interest, I once heard in my fieldwork story of a man who stopped sending money home since he took a mistress in Vietnam, and was later chased out by his Taiwanese wife when he wanted to return to the family. Yet my male informants condemned this kind of man as being irresponsible and good-for-nothing. Although this story might be used to rationalize the men’s extra-marital affairs and defend for them as they at least were good bread-winner to their families in Taiwan, it also reveals their logic of mistress-keeping.
You want to have a mistress? That's fine. But you have to take good care of your family in Taiwan first. (Mr. Ting)

Rемitting money home is taken as their duty and traditional role as the head of the family as expected in Confucian society. A man who is unable to support his family is considered to be a good-for-nothing and non-masculine. This also suggests that only those Taiwanese businessmen who are able to support their families economically are able to reinforce their masculinity through mistress-keeping.

Whether having a mistresses or not, my male informants in Vietnam consider money an extremely powerful tool. Money makes their status rise dramatically and also affects how they deal with all other things in their lives. When they apply the logic of “money talks” on their extra-marital relationships, Taiwanese businessmen held that after taking good care of their families in Taiwan, it was okay for them to have local extra-marital relationships. Here the term “taking good care” very much refers to money remittances, which further reinforces their logic that one who manages his wife/family in Taiwan well and also keeps a mistress in Vietnam is “real men”. Conversely, one who fails to support his family in Taiwan would be a “real loser”.

**Who’s money**

When Mistress Ms. Tsai was introduced to me by a friend, she arrived wearing a Chanel dress and carrying a LV handbag on her arm. In an industrial park about two hours away from downtown Ho Chi Minh City, her outfits were quite out of
the ordinary. Ms. Tsai was a 28 year old Chinese woman with short straight hair, slim, and fashionable. She and her partner met each other eight years ago while her husband was investing in China. Later, her husband decided to come to Vietnam to set up another company. Ms. Tsai accompanied him in order to take good care of him. Ironically, this is not what people usually expect from a mistress. Ms. Tsai and her husband had a son, who was seven years old when I met her and was attending the Taipei School in Ho Chi Minh City. When I first met Ms. Tsai’s partner, I mistook him as her father, because he was about 60 years old. His children in Taiwan from his first wife were about the same age as Ms. Tsai. On one occasion Ms. Tsai took me to her house to show me her husband’s “love”:

He loves me. He built this swimming pool and this Jacuzzi for me; this room is for me and my friends to play mahjong. He buys me name brands, and takes us [Ms. Tsai and her son] to travel a lot. The weather here is too hot, or I will take my parents here to live with us. [...] I feel bored here when he is busy working, so I am used to inviting friends home to have party here [...] My housemaid will help me prepare food and snacks. I love partying! You should come join us, there aren’t many people here I can talk to in Mandarin. (Ms. Tsai)

Ms. Tsai constantly complained about the hot and humid weather in Southern Vietnam and claimed that her life there was extremely boring, which made me

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60 The company in China was then in the charge of her partner’s brother.
wonder why she wished to move to Vietnam with her husband. She answered my question:

We all know that men always need women to comfort them, accompany and take care of them, which is why I am here. I am not saying that I do not allow him to have other women in Vietnam, but those women just want his money. I was worrying that he might be cheated out of money by Vietnamese women. (Ms. Tsai)

Instead of putting herself in the position of a mistress who squeezes money out of her partner, Ms. Tsai worried that her partner might be cheated by other women. While Ms. Tsai did not intervene in her husband's business affairs, all their family expenditures had to go through her. She carefully made sure no one could cheat money out of her husband, even their servants. Once when I was visiting her on a Sunday afternoon, her husband's masseuse arrived late. She complained to me in Mandarin that the masseuse always came late and she was going to deduct money from her hourly rate. Accompanying her husband while trying to prevent him from being taken advantage of by other women is not what we would normally expect from an ordinary mistress. She was doing much more than offering entertainment and sexual services for money. In my fieldwork, Ms. Tsai was not the only mistress who was keen to protect her husband's property. In the case of Ms. Lam, after her wedding ceremony with Mr. Han she noticed that Mr. Han had given me a red envelop which is a Taiwanese custom as an expression of thanks to someone who is single and who helps out during the wedding ceremony. Ms Lam saw it, and expressed her
discontent. Mr. Han tried to tell her about this custom, but obstructed by his poor Vietnamese, he could not get the message across.

Ms Tsai and Ms Lam were mistresses who were assumed to squeeze money from the men. However, as the above examples show, these mistresses assumed the more traditional role of a wife after building up stable relationships with their men. They saw themselves and their husbands as a unity sharing a common interest. Thus, what they were doing was trying to protect their men’s money, which was the families’ money as well. Another example was Ms. Vo, the successful real estate businesswoman. When she asked her husband to relocate his factory to an outlying area and to lend her the land which contained his original factory, she found out that the land her husband had bought was registered under a Chinese-Vietnamese interpreter’s name\(^6\). The interpreter was then reluctant to return the land to her husband. Ms. Vo told me,

He [the interpreter] thought my husband is a foreigner so he can cheat him. I had to show him that he better not mess with my husband. I went to the interpreter’s house with a group of men, my brothers, my cousins, and a lawyer. I made him return the land to us. (Ms. Vo)

Later, since Ms. Vo’s real estate business was very successful, she no longer asked her husband for money. Once she even gave her savings to her husband when he was in need of revolving funds. In Ms. Tsai’s case, she often used the

\(^6\) Foreigners were not allowed to purchase land in Vietnam. So Ms. Vo’s husband bought the land and registered it under the interpreter’s name. They then signed a contract indicating that the land was leased to Ms. Vo’s husband for fifty years and all that the rent had been prepaid.
pocket money her partner had given her to spend on their family. These transactions made the money the mistresses received from their partners more like family expenses rather than mistress-keeping fees. As discussed in Chapter 5, after building up stable relationships with their Taiwanese partners, the mistresses assumed non-commodified roles as second wives, mothers etc. Therefore, their partner’s money was seen as their families’ money; protecting their partner’s property was actually protecting their families’ common interest.

*The meanings of gifts*

In addition to the cash remittances from the husbands to their wives, there are also other forms of remittances flowing in the cross-border families. As discussed in Chapter 4, Simmel points out that money is not only a currency, but also represents a transaction and the exchange-based relationship of the two in the transaction. This turns the relationship of the two parties into an indirect and replaceable one (Simmel 1978, 378-379). Simmel goes further and indicates that women feel embarrassed and degraded when receiving money from their lovers when it does not involve prostitution, yet this feeling often does not extend to non-monetary gifts (Simmel 1978, 381). In my research, my Taiwanese businessman informants use gifts remittances not only to stay close to their Taiwanese families but also to demonstrate their economic ability as successful businessmen.

What women need is our attention. They want to feel valued. [...] If a Gucci bag can make her happy, then why not? Don’t you think it is trouble saving and face making? When she goes out with her friends, she can show her
friends the name brand bag I bought her. Her friends must envy her. (Mr. Ku)

In addition to gifts flowing from Vietnam to Taiwan, gifts also flow from Taiwan to Vietnam. However, these gifts are much less expensive but far more practical. Both the wife informants and the businessman informants told me that the wives regularly purchased food for their husbands to be brought or sent to Vietnam in case they missed Taiwanese food. Normally these included noodles, dumplings, Vacuum-packed meals, cans, and all kinds of sauces and pastes.

I usually prepare some packed food for him [her husband]. All he needs to do is to boil it in hot water or heat in a microwave. I know he sometimes works late; and I don’t want him to have instant noodles all the time. These can prevent him from starving after-hours. (Mrs. Li)

The type of food that wives prepared for their husbands shows their attention to their husbands’ daily lives in Vietnam, and their consideration as these meals are ready-to-eat or easy-to-prepare. Parreñas in her research on transnational families points out that by sending home international parcels (Balikbayan) those Filipino female migrant workers express their sentiment, care, and love toward their families (Parreñas 2005b, 328). In Parreñas’ field, the parcels usually contain something not expensive and easily obtainable daily items like soap, cloth, or some goods for daily use. This is how the mother workers demonstrated their love and care for the family members left behind. In my
research, the Taiwanese wives also showed similar thoughtfulness by sending their overseas husbands authentic Taiwanese food.

However, the gifts prepared by the Taiwanese wives often flowed into the hands of the Vietnamese mistresses as gifts from the businessmen. This usually happens without the knowledge of the original sender and receiver. Therefore, the meaning of these gifts also changes from being ordinary home country food to fashionable foreigner food as the businessmen passes on the gifts prepared by their wives directly to their mistresses.

Lisa Cliggett points out in her research about gift remittance in Zambia that migrants send gifts back to their home village mainly to invest in social networks for the future (Cliggett 2003). By sending a small sum of money or gifts home, Cliggett indicates, the migrants not only express sentimental attachment and loyalty to the sender’s origin, but they also maintain the kinship tie between the sender and receiver. In Zambia, it becomes a strategy for those migrants with extremely limited incomes to secure a place in the original community as a social insurance policy in case they need to return to the village life.

In my research, Taiwanese businessmen sending money also shares a similar meaning—sending more than enough money home shows they are taking their responsibility seriously and it secures a place in their conjugal families; their wives in Taiwan then use the money to buy gifts or prepare red envelopes for their parents and in-laws on behalf of their men folk. In so doing they maintain their connection with relatives and friends in Taiwan. Here the money
remittances are not only their duty as a bread-winner, but they are also a way to stay connected with their families and relatives.

**Conclusion**

In a capitalist Confucian society it is praiseworthy for a man to make money in order for his family to live well-off lives. Money thus inevitably becomes an important aspect in the lives of transnational families. While making that money, Taiwanese businessmen desire a stable base where they can always return to, but they also fancy their freedom and masculine agency while in Vietnam. Sending money home to their families in Taiwan fulfils the necessity of providing for their family, but they also feel that they are entitled to have some interludes in Vietnam—not only to banish their loneliness and relieve their work pressures, but also to reinforce their hypermasculinity. Yet this same masculinity, as a successful man who can well support two wives, can sometimes be deflated by their wives. The wives are sometimes able to demonstrate power reversion within the family by cutting off their men’s money or even divorcing their husbands—as in Mrs. Chien’s case.

The spending of a husband’s or partner’s money can carry different meaning under different situation. Taiwanese wives in Taiwan use vicarious consumption as a means to demonstrate their husbands’ social status while their husbands work overseas. Moreover, Some Taiwanese wives took money as an insurance policy to eliminate the possibility for extra-marital relationships, while secured money from their husbands to empower themselves economically and enable them to be independent.
On the other end, the money flowing between Taiwanese businessmen and their mistresses, as discussed in Chapter 4, was once considered as a cost and was used to commercialize their relationship. After building up table relationships, however, when the mistresses spend the money on their partners or their own families, the money could be read as their household expenditure. The meaning of the money is thus interpreted differently among the different subjects in the same context.

In the field of Taiwanese businessmen in Vietnam, my male informants apply logic to their everyday practices and convince themselves that by giving their families in Taiwan a well-off life, they are successful men and deserve a little fun in Vietnam. This practice re-emphasizes their logic that only a man who can support his wife/family in Taiwan well and who can also keep a mistress in Vietnam is “real men”. Conversely, one who fails to support his family in Taiwan would be a “real loser”.

In addition to the flow of money, gift exchanges were also understood differently by these men, their wives, and the mistresses. The gifts from the men to their wives actually helped them stay close to their families while also demonstrating their economic ability. On the other hand, those gifts in the form of local foods from Taiwan prepared by the Taiwanese wives and which ended up in the Vietnamese mistresses’ hands were understood as fashionable foods from overseas that the men gifted to their mistresses. The meaning of these gifts
thus transformed from the Taiwanese wives care for their men into something that the men used to please their mistresses in Vietnam.
Chapter 9: Conclusion

Overall

This research aims to examine and understand cross-border triangular relationships among Taiwanese businessmen, their Taiwanese wives, and their Vietnamese mistresses, a phenomenon that emerges under the new arrangements of global manufacturing. Until now, the special logics and sentiments of this three party relationship have been largely unexplored.

Under the re-deployment of global economy, the Taiwanese businessmen, including entrepreneurs and managers, become a new group of transnational migrant workers. Most of them are males looking for greater career achievements and wanting to earn more money for their families. Since overseas posting packages do not usually include family allowances and cover children's educational expenses and the foreign education system, and living conditions do not favor the wives and children, most of them decide to stay behind in Taiwan. As a result, many transnational families are formed. When these middle-aged businessmen, who are working and living in Vietnam without their families around, encounter young single local women, the controversial issue of so-called "mistress-keeping" phenomenon occurs.

Based on Bourdieu's theory, we can see individual practices as a dynamic outcome of one's internalizing the structural value of the field into an integral part of one's habitus. At the same time, the field is also affected and changed by the externalizing of individual habitus (Bourdieu 1984, 101). Bourdieu uses this
reproduction theory to indicate how the ruling class manipulates symbolic violence to produce/reproduce their superior social status, and legalize/rationalize the ideologies and structures that benefit them. Here, I suggest that mistress-keeping is a part of Taiwanese businessmen's social-reproduction in the field of Taiwanese businessmen in Vietnam. These men in my research externalized their Confucian Capitalist habitus in the field and used their economic capital to keep mistresses in Vietnam. The mistresses here are an objectified form of cultural capital that identifies these men as being in an ingroup who can sufficiently support multiple wives, as do those in the upper-classes. That is to say, their economic capital was used to accumulate cultural capital, and both are then converted into symbolic capital. By so doing, they further affirm their manhood and capability of providing for their families.

In the field of capitalist Confucian society in Taiwan, a man who accumulates economic capital and provides his family with a high living standard is an exemplar of manhood, and is considered being successful. In order to accumulate more economic capital—for themselves and their families—the men in my research relocated their businesses to (or worked in) Vietnam. Yet when they were in Vietnam, they entered a different field. According to what Bourdieu calls "a feel for the game" (Bourdieu 1990b, 66), the businessmen in my research are clearly aware that there are different values and ethical codes in the different fields, and act differently accordingly. When they are back in Taiwan, they act with reference to the social field constituted by middle class men in a capitalist Confucian society, in which a "real man" is supposed to take good care of his family economically and emotionally—be the breadwinner,
shares house chores, participates in children's education, and sometimes take
the family on a trip. When they are in Vietnam, they suddenly assume the roles
of wealthy, professional, and cosmopolitan businessmen. At the same time,
they apply their habitus to the field and indicate that when a man has offered his
family in Taiwan a well-off living style can he then have a little fun, such as
keeping a mistress, in Vietnam. They convert their economic capital into
cultural capital by using their relatively high economic capacity to keep
mistresses, which further affirms them as capable and masculine businessmen
who can well support both wives and mistresses (and of course their children as
well). These practices were deployed in light of the field they are in but also re-
construct the field and make mistress-keeping what a successful man
should/can do.

Although both my businessman and mistress informants interpreted their own
relationships as instrumental and self-interested commercial transactions, the
reality could be different depending on the flow of time in a relationship. The
women, for their part, recognize openly that their principal interest is
commercial, and consider entering into a relationship with a Taiwanese
businessman a form of remunerated labor. Through the ethnographic data, we
saw how such individual "profits" are coupled from the beginning with the
obligation to help one's family, and how women who break one social rule that
prohibits marrying foreigners can nevertheless conform to another rule about
being a good daughter and providing for one's family. The men, for their part,
professed their preference for their relationships with local women to be overtly
commercial in nature, since they felt they could deal with the potential for the

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proliferation of uncontrollable social and affective obligations much better by keeping within the metaphor of market exchange.

These commercial logics, forged against the background of massive economic disparity between Taiwanese investors and lower class Vietnamese women, importantly structure their relationships. As we have seen, the actors themselves make sense of their relationships in these terms, and often exclusively so. The “bravado” of the men’s statements about the instrumental nature of their affairs, however, are claims to masculine power; power to master the self, the emotions, and the female partner. And while the mistresses once put themselves on the market for purchase, as it were, they can do much to de-commodify themselves after building up stable relationships with their Taiwanese partners.

Even though the gender and cultural logics in Taiwan and Vietnam are both affected by traditional Confucianism and western modern ideas, they are still different in many ways. Through the cases of aristocratic polygyny, it is clear that in Taiwanese society male social status is significantly composed of economic capital, social capital, and sexual capital. In this manner, a man’s having multiple wives grounded on economic power is linked to his hypermasculinity. Yet this fantasy of men might be well punctured by the reality. In the transnational families in my research, the role of head of family has shifted from the husband, who used to act as the principle decision maker, to the wife since she has to assume the husband’s responsibilities after he leaves for Vietnam. The wife could thus gain more power by acting as the head of the
family and could enjoy greater freedom without her husband being present. As a sequence showed in my ethnographic data, some men find it difficult to retrieve their position back in their families.

For the Taiwanese wives, traditional Taiwanese thinking espouses the Confucian ideology that a good wife should support her husband, yet the traditional social expectation imposed on the wives can be utilized to rationalize their compromises and to keep their families intact. To compromise does not necessarily mean that the wives are in an inferior or subordinate position. When their husbands returned to Taiwan, the wives found several ways to resist their husbands’ power. This bargaining for leadership in the family could also erode traditional patriarchal gender arrangements.

On the other end in Vietnam, sacrificing for the family is always a highly praised female virtue. The mistresses, by entering a polygynous relationship—a traditional social institution—with richer foreign men, are able to help and take care of their natal families. Yet this sacrifice can also benefit the mistresses themselves in terms of economic capital, social capital, and globalized tastes. In this manner, the phenomenon of Vietnamese women being mistresses of foreign men could arguably be understood in terms of them being “traditional” women who are on the one hand willing to enter a polygynous relationship and eager to better their natal families futures; on the other as modern women who readily enter an open relationship and gain capital from it. The flexible version of “woman” the mistresses consciously play affirms and gives sense to their
roles as determined by economic/global structures. These enable them to meet social expectations and gain from the relationship.

Affects, albeit of varying levels of perceived authenticity, do indeed play an important role in the relationships between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women. The men clearly distinguish their long-term relationships with mistresses from transacted sex and sensuality. The men feel themselves victims of the harsh conditions created by Taiwanese and global capitalism and understand their mistresses as the people who can fill the emptiness of their transplanted lives and take away the pressure created by the unending demands of work and the difficulty of remotely managing the family at “home”.

As we have seen, relationships that were initially understood as explicitly commercial can transform into something else over time. Despite statements about “not being in love”, many of the mistresses I worked with appeared not to exercise the mastery over their own emotions they might like to have claimed for themselves. These women experience themselves to have exited from the “relationship market”, and to have taken on non-commodified roles as second wife, mother, and etc. Their relationships with their Taiwanese husbands often remain pragmatic and problematic, but they are also characterized by “something like love”.

Through the fieldwork data, we can see that not only men but also women think that men need sexual comfort, and believe that a man will naturally have extramarital affairs if his wife is not available. Facing husband’s (possible) extramarital relationship, Taiwanese wives consciously employ different version of
gender norms to deal with the situation. For securing the family union and making one’s marriage work, the traditional patriarchal institution of polygyny is put to work as a paradigm that rationalizes the subject’s choice of accepting her husband’s affairs—as we have seen in the case of Mrs. Chao, who claimed to “permit” her husband’s extra-marital affair. What eventuates is an unusual revival polygyny as a response to transnational economic accumulation. Polygyny here is not restored but deployed strategically to make the marriage work under modern transnational economic conditions, and thus becomes a “post-traditional” marital arrangement. Another of my subjects, Mrs. Sun who converted to Christianity from Buddhism, takes a different approach, adopting a “modern” bilateral perspective on family to make sense of the situation. Drawing on modern notions to support her decision, she reasserts her self-identity, refuses to tolerate an unworkable marriage, and divorces her husband.

Some wives choose not to know or pretend not to know about their husband’s affairs, so they can keep their dignity and do not need to face an awkward situation and dilemma. Taking “no response” as their response to their husbands’ affairs or suspected affairs, they underscore the importance of economic security to the whole family, which is also why they accepted the cross-border family arrangement at the beginning. They hold their bargain that the husbands earn overseas while they take care of the family back in Taiwan and expect that the sacrifice they make will bring the family a better future. The wives are not passively dominated by their husbands to fulfill the position of family-watchers. They consciously employ different strategies to rationalize their decisions and obtain the desired results when faced with their husbands’ extra-
marital relationships. As a result, post-traditional polygyny and modern family divorce are paralleled in the same context.

Money is inevitably an important issue for these transnational families. By sending money home, my male subjects had the idea that they were entitled to have some interludes in Vietnam—not only to banish their loneliness and relieve their work pressures, but also to reinforce their masculinity. Yet this same masculinity, as a successful man who can well support two wives, can sometimes be deflated by their wives. The wives are sometimes able to demonstrate a power reversal within the family by cutting off their men's money. Except money, family members' support is also a key factor for the Taiwanese wives to gain power. As we have seen in my former landlady Mrs. Chien's case, she was able to gain power through her son's support and was able to divorce her husband just as he was coming back for retirement. In this example we see the power reversion in Chien's marriage and that she successfully resisted the traditional patriarchal paradigm according to which "a man will come home eventually" and a wife should wait for him.

The spending of a husband's or partner's money can carry different meanings under different situations. The vicarious consumption carried out by Taiwanese wives in Taiwan was a means of demonstrating their husbands' social statuses while their husbands work overseas. On the other end, the money flowing between Taiwanese businessmen and their mistresses, as discussed in Chapter 4, is considered as a cost and is used to commercialize their relationships. Yet when these mistresses spend that money on their partners or
their own families, the same money could be described as "family expenses". The meaning of the money is thus interpreted differently among the different groups in the same context.

Economic globalization not only changes the pattern of how enterprises operate and accumulate capital, but also transforms how people organize the life of the family and household. In the experience of the male subjects in my research, it is not just that family life has been re-organized across a significant spatial divide, but rather that their whole notion of family has been reconfigured. As I have argued above, when the men form stable relationships with their mistresses, they begin to regard them as members of an extended family rather than merely as providers of sexual or affective services. Besides, rather than asserting that the need for an economic "front" motivates Taiwanese expatriates to take local mistresses and second wives, I argue that such a rationale can instead function as a post-facto justification for a relationship that is motivated primarily by affective needs and desires.

The men in my study typically order the different chapters of their families according to a hierarchy whereby their "first" and "home" families reside in Taiwan while their "second" and "away" families reside in Vietnam. Nevertheless, there are moments when this clear symbolic order breaks down, and the spatial and social priority of the Taiwanese family comes into question. This occurs not just in moments of "seasickness", but also in the more level-headed planning around the economic security and social reproduction of the Vietnamese chapter of the family after the man's projected return to Taiwan.
Just like the locally invested capital that cannot be repatriated to Taiwan but must be left to a locally produced son, the men's affective and familial investments in their Vietnamese mistresses are also left behind to continue a parallel existence on their own. The meaning of family for these men has shifted from the traditional kinship family into overlapped families across the border. They make themselves at "home" in an enclave in Vietnam both socially and spatially and prepare to withdraw back to their "final" home in Taiwan one day. The notion of "family" and "home" no longer sticks to the same place, but roams with the subject through a transnational space.

**Contribution**

My work is significant on a number of fronts. First, this study suggests that the cultural capital is keys in the forming and keeping of the cross-border triangular relationships in which authentic affects do exist. Instead of seeing transnational extra-marital relations as a tactic to accumulate economic capital, this research points out that the economic accumulation can only be founded on a stable relationship. The economic purpose of using a mistress' name as a front is rather a result or even an excuse for the affairs, not a cause. Secondly, extant literatures on transnational Taiwanese family models position this phenomenon as an international labor division in families and intimate relations, or exchanging local connections. These studies, however, focus on the men in the cross-border triangular relations and put the wives and mistresses in subordinate roles as home-makers and entertainment providers; the wives' and mistresses' feelings, reactions and agency have generally been left silent. My work offers an alternative viewpoint on this phenomenon through in-depth
interviews conducted with the wives and mistresses. Moreover, sentiments are an important part of human lives, but they are seldomly discussed in previous works. My work demonstrates that affects do play an important role in the relationships between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women. Furthermore, taking this phenomenon as a triangular relationship, my work challenges dominant perceptions that sympathize with the predicament of the wives. In doing so, I look to re-conceptualize the study of Taiwanese transnational families.

Research Limitations
This research involves the risk that the Taiwanese wives may not have known about their husbands’ affairs in Vietnam, or similarly the Vietnamese mistresses who may not know partners have already married in Taiwan. In order to protect my informants, I did not work with wives/mistresses whose husbands I had worked with, and vice versa. As a consequence, all the informants from the three parties in my research were approached via different channels, although it would have been ideal to be able to connect with members of the same polygynous families in both Vietnam and Taiwan. Because of this arrangement, I have only obtained limited information on their partners via the informing wives or businessmen unilaterally—solely relying on the description of the informants. These in turn limited my ability to form a comprehensive understanding of the sentimental components of these relationships. Yet I attempted to replenish the shortage of information by careful observations and through acquiring references from their relatives.
Moreover, it was a pity that I could not manage to interview those businessmen who have had unsuccessful businesses or have retired and left Vietnam. These kinds of cases could offer a supplementary reference on how they tackled the relations with their mistresses after leaving Vietnam, especially cases that men did left their properties to their children they have had with their mistresses. On the contrary, though I had a mistress informant whose husband had left, the case in which a mistress breaks up with the man and walk away with her money is lacking.

Furthermore, all of my male informants are working in manufacturing and related industry. It would be better if the services industry were also included as they should have more contact with local people and may have a different way of thinking.

**Future Research Direction**

Further research is needed to look into the cases of people from other countries who also keep mistresses in Vietnam. Although the basic factors of the relations are the same, the mistress keeping practice and the outcome may vary due to cultural differences. For example, Korean businessmen use a contract in mistress-keeping which enhances the commercial characteristic and set up a time frame of their relationships. Does the contract work out as they have hoped? And there are also Westerners having holiday girlfriends/escorts who can be replaced all the time. Are the relations of the western men and local girlfriends different from those in my research? Are their expectations different in the relation from my male informants?
In explicating the perspective of Taiwanese businessmen working overseas, my research looks to stimulate men's study on a key area of research enquiry in Taiwan. The ethnographic data of this research shows that the men possess different value and gender ideologies in Taiwan and Vietnam. These men seem much more patriarchal in Vietnam than in Taiwan. Is the paradigm of so-called good men changing with social circumstances? Or do they simply belong to a group of laggards in terms of gender ideology?

Furthermore, being a mistress of a foreign businessman makes the Vietnamese women move upward socially and even become the new middle-class. Will this bring any difference to them in terms of value and expectation of romantic love? All of these questions will require long term follow-up studies and further investigations.
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