

# **Sharing cultural values across generations in Vietnamese Australian families**

**Giang Thi Thanh Tran**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is about the sharing of cultural values in Vietnamese migrant families in Australia. It presents findings from a qualitative study based on in-depth interviews with 20 first-generation Vietnamese migrant parents from refugee and skilled migrant backgrounds, and 18 Vietnamese Australian children. It ascertains which Vietnamese cultural values persist in families after migration, and in particular, why and how Vietnamese parents and children preserve some cultural values, while modifying or discarding others.

Drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of capital and habitus, this study suggests a new way of understanding why Vietnamese cultural values are preserved in a modified form in the migrant context. It is shown that the values that have been retained and shared across generations – particularly those relating to harmony, solidarity and providing emotional support to parents – are seen as necessary and valuable in Australia. The value of maintaining fluency in the Vietnamese language is identified as important in maintaining family ties in the diaspora. Values that are not considered necessary and do not develop capital, such as some aspects of gender hierarchy and filial piety, have been modified or discarded. Vietnamese first-generation parents and children in migrant families are active agents in the process of sharing these cultural values when living in the diaspora.

The findings also demonstrate that there are differences between refugee and skilled migrant parents in the ways they share certain cultural values. The former group has attempted to carefully preserve values that existed in Vietnam at the time of their departure, while the latter group's process of sharing cultural values is more flexible. It

is further suggested that the varying habitus of refugees, skilled migrants and Vietnamese Australian children influences their different beliefs and practices regarding Vietnamese cultural values.

This study adds to the research aimed at increasing the understanding of cultural values of ethnic groups in Australia – in this case the process of whether and how Vietnamese cultural values persist in refugee and skilled migrant families. In particular, the study highlights the roles of parents and children in the process of preserving and modifying cultural values in the migration context. These issues have not been well addressed in previous studies. The thesis also provides a new perspective on Vietnamese cultural values in migrant families, particularly in skilled migrant families.

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## **Declaration**

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis. To the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

The thesis has been copy-edited and proofread by Dr Jillian Graham (Articulate Writing Solutions), whose services are consistent with those outlined in Sections D and E of the Australian Standards for Editing Practice (ASEP). Dr Graham's own fields of study encompass Musicology, Social History, Women's Studies and Psychoanalysis.

Signed



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## Chapter 1: Introduction

With almost 30% of its population born overseas in over 100 different countries, contemporary Australia is a highly ethnically-diverse society (ABS 2016). Migrants arrive with their own distinct set of cultural values associated with their homelands (Hartley 1995), and these may persist for a long time after arriving in the host culture. However, these may differ from, or even be at odds with, the dominant values in Australia (Bottomley 1979; Dempsey & Lindsay 2014). The ways in which these cultural values interact and the level to which migrants' values are preserved or modified are issues of great interest to sociologists. In addition, the succeeding generations of migrant families, who have been born and raised in the host culture, may develop different perspectives on their migrant parents' original culture. These issues provided the motivation for the present study, which investigates cultural values as they relate to the experiences of Vietnamese migrant families in Australia.

My personal interest in this project was sparked by my work as a lecturer in Vietnamese History at a university in Hanoi. One of the most important political events in the nation's history was the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Among other things, this led to the departure from their homeland of thousands of Vietnamese people to settle in other countries. When I was delivering lectures to my first-year students about this event, many would ask what happened to the lives of Vietnamese people after they had left our country. At that time, I knew very little about this aspect of Vietnam's history, and so could provide them with few answers to their questions. In Vietnam, there is in fact scarce research and publications about the experiences of

overseas Vietnamese communities, their families and succeeding generations. On receiving an award designed to provide opportunities for Vietnamese university lecturers to study overseas, the questions I could not answer motivated me to investigate in detail the experience of Vietnamese Australian families.

The focus of the study is the processes of the sharing of cultural values between first-generation parents and children within Vietnamese families in Melbourne. In this introductory chapter, I provide an overview of Vietnamese communities in Australia as background and context for the study. The research issues are then presented, followed by the aims of the project and chapter outlines.

### **1.1.The arrival of Vietnamese in Australia**

The Vietnamese community is the sixth largest ethnic group in Australia, with around 236,700 people, accounting for 1% of Australia's population(ABS 2016). There are a number of identifiable phases of Vietnamese arrivals to Australia, which relate to different socio-historical circumstances and reasons for migrating. The earliest Vietnamese came in the 1950s under the Colombo Plan, aimed at developing positive relations between Australia and Asia. These earliest arrivals were nearly all students. After studying, some of them returned to Vietnam, while almost all those in Australia at the time of the fall of the Saigon regime were allowed to remain in Australia permanently (Neumann 2015). During the Vietnam War, pre-1975, a number of Vietnamese women married Australian troops and then settled in Australia. Many children were left orphans after the War. Significant numbers of these orphans were adopted to Western countries, including by Australian families. Arrivals in this period

(1950s-1975) constituted the first wave of Vietnamese migrants, which was relatively small in number at around 1,000 people (Ben-Mosche 2012).

The largest Vietnamese community group in Australia comprises refugees who mainly left Vietnam by boat in the period from 1975 into the 1980s. Hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese left in the lead-up to the fall of the Saigon regime on 30 April 1975 (Truong, Dinh & Le 2001; Viviani 1984). They foresaw the coming collapse of the Saigon regime, and were determined to find a country that could accept them. Before and after the last days of the Vietnam War, they escaped and settled in various western countries, including Australia.

After the War, Vietnam was reunited. Many people, including non-communists and anti-communists in the South of Vietnam, were ready to accept the new regime (Truong, Dinh & Le 2001). However, the new government was faced with many challenges after taking over the South of Vietnam. Agriculture, forestry and many other industries had been destroyed by bombs and chemical warfare. The government planned to develop the economy drawing on socialist policies, such as investing in heavy industry, closing private businesses, and controlling wholesale trade. These initiatives resulted in a lack of stable food supplies, declining living standards, and a degree of social and economic instability (Dang 2013; Tran 1995; Truong, Dinh & Le 2001). Additionally, in the government's reorganisation of society, many people who had worked for the South Vietnamese government and army were forced to attend 're-education' camps and work in the 'New Economic Zones', which were established to increase food production. The conditions in these areas were often very difficult (Viviani 1984). Consequently, many people who did not support the new government,

or were concerned about their position in relation to the communist government, made the decision to leave the country, and to build a future elsewhere. At that time, the new government did not allow them to leave; therefore, many had to escape on boats in dangerous conditions and go to refugee camps in Thailand and Malaysia, and then seek settlement in other countries.

From April 1975, the refugee and asylum seeker policies of the Australian government began to focus on the Vietnamese crisis (Neumann 2015). After the White Australia immigration policy ended in the early 1970s, Vietnamese refugees became, in effect, a test case for Australian governments in their efforts to build a multicultural society (Thomas 2005; Viviani 1984). Thus, after the first fishing boat entered Darwin Harbour on 27 April 1976 with Vietnamese boat people on board, thousands of Vietnamese refugees from refugee camps were permitted by the Australian government to enter Australia (Neumann, 2015). This was the second wave of Vietnamese arrivals in Australia.

The numbers of illegal departures from Vietnam steadily decreased after a Memorandum of Understanding between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was signed in May 1979, which established a program called the Orderly Departure Program (ODP). Under this program, it was possible for people wishing to leave Vietnam to do so in a safe and organised way. Over 10 years after the ODP, well over half a million Vietnamese left their country to settle in approximately 30 different countries around the world (Kumin 2008). The program resulted in the third wave of Vietnamese arriving in Australia between the 1980s and 1990s. This group included dependent children, close

relatives, elderly parents and partners of the refugee group. They came under The Family Reunion Program (Nguyen & Ho 1995).

Recently, there has been a third group of Vietnamese migrants to Australia – skilled migrants. After the 1986 reform (*Đổi mới*) there were significant changes made in Vietnam's international relations, which have provided Vietnamese with opportunities to study and work overseas. These people have foreign language proficiency and professional knowledge, and have decided on migration to countries such as the United States (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), Italy, Sweden, New Zealand, Canada and Australia (Dang 2007; Nguyen 2014a). Australia has been a destination of choice in recent years for many Vietnamese skilled migrants because of its perceived educational, economic and employment opportunities (Watkins et al. 2003). In Australia, the numbers of international students from Vietnam have increased in recent years. In 2014, Vietnamese students constituted the fifth-largest group of international students in Australia, with over 17,000 students (AEI 2014). Many of them do not return after graduation (Nguyen 2014a), which results in an ongoing increase in the number of Vietnamese migrants in Australia.

Vietnamese people have mainly settled in major cities such as Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. In Melbourne, where this study was conducted, Vietnamese Australians live primarily in the suburbs of Footscray, Sunshine, Richmond and Springvale.

In summary, the Vietnamese community in Australia is complex, with people having arrived for different reasons, and from different backgrounds and generations. It is likely that cultural issues in this ethnic group may be shaped by these complexities.

Participants from refugee and skilled migrant groups were recruited, and represent earlier and later Vietnamese arrivals to Australia.

### 1.2. Research issues and aims of the study

One factor that contributes to the impact of migration on family life is the complex set of values, attitudes and behaviours that migrants bring with them (Hartley 1995). Living in a new environment, migrants not only face challenges in communicating with new people, speaking a new language, and adapting to a new cultural environment; they must also negotiate the differences between their package of cultural resources and the cultural system of the country to which they have migrated (Suárez-Orozco, Todorova & Louie 2002).

The experiences of children who are born and raised in the country of migration tends to be different. Research suggests that they generally absorb and adapt to the mainstream culture more readily than their parents (Chen et al. 2014; Ho & Birman 2010; Hofstetter et al. 2009). These contrasting situations have resulted in family tensions and intergenerational gaps because of the cultural differences across generations in many migrant families in western countries (Dinh, Sarason & Sarason 1994; Zhou 2009).

As in all cultures, Vietnamese family structures and relations are shaped by a distinctive cultural value system. It is generally agreed that the principal values at stake are emphasis on respect for age, a pronounced gender hierarchy and a collectivist orientation (Kibria 1995; Pham 1999). Thus, many Vietnamese children are socialised to practise filial piety (*hiếu thảo*), which entails certain obligations in terms of taking care of

parents, providing support to parents in their old age, and obeying them. Children are also expected to practise harmony (*hòa thuận*) and solidarity (*đoàn kết*) in their family relations, which work together to create tight relationships with siblings and relatives in extended families. With regard to gender relations, relationships between men and women in families are shaped by a strong sense of hierarchy. This norm typically sees fathers and husbands as pillars of the home, and as the primary breadwinners and decision-makers in households. In contrast, mothers and daughters are subject to paternal authority, and their role is mainly confined to performing domestic labour in the home (Pham 1999; Tran 1991). In many Vietnamese families, these gender values support the widespread preference for sons over daughters, due to their obligation to support parents socially and economically in old age (Le 2012; Tran 1991; Vu 2007). These different values that underlie Vietnamese family life are considered to be mutually supportive of each other, and together go to shape family relationships and dynamics. The view also is that deviations away from – or even rejection of – any one aspect of these values has implications for other values in the system.

Western societies such as Australia are arguably underpinned by quite different sets of cultural norms. Values that are often identified as being central to family life are egalitarianism and individualism (Donal 1995; Finch & Finch 1993; Rosenthal 1984). Thus, the values that specify that children should obey their elderly parents and provide for them financially are not such strong beliefs in western families. For many older Australian parents, financial independence and separate households from their children are common ideals (Dempsey & Lindsay 2014; Wolcott 1998). With respect to gender relations, many Australians believe that women and men should share

decision-making in families, and raise sons and daughters who will have equal access to education and economic independence. There are typically no cultural preferences for having children of one sex over another (Kippen, Evans & Gray 2007).

These differences in cultural values are known to have important effects on the Vietnamese migrant experience. First-generation migrants tend to cling to the set of values that existed in Vietnam when they departed, while their children who are raised in the host culture find it difficult to accept their parents' efforts to maintain these cultural values. The family tensions and intergenerational conflicts that result have had some coverage in the literature on Vietnamese families in the diaspora, with attention focused mainly on refugee families in the early stages of resettlement (e.g. Chan & Dorais 1998; Kibria 1995; Nguyen & Williams 1989; Nguyen & Ho 1995; Rosenthal, Ranieri & Klimidis 1996; Thomas 1999; Zhou & Bankston 1998). These studies have investigated the experiences of Vietnamese refugees in a range of western countries such as the USA, Norway, Canada and Australia.

What is missing from the literature to date is a longer-term perspective on investigations of cultural values within Vietnamese families after migrating to western countries, and especially how these values are shaped and adapted across generations. Another area that has received limited attention is the experience of skilled migrants, who migrate voluntarily, as opposed to refugees. In Australia, this former group now constitutes a sizeable population, but how family values are shared across generations, especially in skilled migrant families, is not well understood. Finally, little is known about the process of sharing Vietnamese cultural values when people settle in Australia, a country with a social and political environment that supports cultural

diversity. An improved understanding of cultural values in Vietnamese migrant families in Australia is thought to be an important area of study in developing a greater understanding of the migrant experience in this country.

These matters provide the background for the present study, the aim of which was to explore which cultural values remain in families after Vietnamese people migrate to Australia, as well as why and how first-generation parents and children in Vietnamese migrant families preserve some cultural values, while modifying or discarding others.

The project's primary research questions are:

- Which cultural values in families do first-generation parents want to share with their children? Why do they want to share those values and not others? How does this sharing take place?
- What are the views and practices of the children of Vietnamese migrants regarding those values?

The project has sought to answer these questions by conducting qualitative research with a range of skilled migrant and refugee families in Melbourne. A total of 20 first-generation parents and 18 children from both refugee and skilled migrant backgrounds agreed to be interviewed.

For its theoretical underpinnings, the project draws particularly on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of capital and habitus (Bourdieu 1977, 1984, 1986). These concepts are used to analyse Vietnamese migrant experiences of sharing cultural values with their children.

The concept of capital was chosen because it enables a deeper understanding of the reasons why some Vietnamese cultural values in families are preserved in the Australian concept, albeit sometimes in a modified form. The concept of habitus provides a means

to understand the process of sharing cultural values across generations. The habitus of refugees, skilled migrants and children influences their views and practices regarding these values. These concepts are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

The findings of the study are intended to provide greater understanding of ethnic groups in Australia, in this case whether and how Vietnamese cultural values persist in refugee and skilled migrant families.

### 1.3. Chapter outline

Chapter 2 gives an outline of the theoretical framework, and provides background information on Vietnamese cultural values in families and theoretical perspectives on cultural values in the migration context. The focus is on the core values in Vietnamese families of harmony (*hòa thuận*), filial piety (*hiếu thảo*) and gender hierarchy, and Bourdieu's concepts of capital and habitus. It is suggested that this framework enables an analysis that highlights migrant agency in the processes of preserving, modifying or downplaying core cultural values.

Chapter 3 includes a review of the literature on intergenerational relations in migrant families. It begins with an overview of the research into non-western migrant families in the West, with a focus on cultural differences between parents and children. The second section outlines the cultural issues and challenges faced by Vietnamese migrant families – mainly refugee families – in western countries. The literature review reveals research gaps. There have been very few studies that look at whether or how ethnic values are shared among Vietnamese migrant families.

Chapter 4 addresses the research approach to this study. It describes the research design and the qualitative methods employed, including the recruitment of participants, interviews and data analysis. I also reflect on the research process and the limitations of the study.

Chapters 5 to 9 reveal the findings of the study. Chapter 5 discusses the process of the sharing of harmony (*hòa thuận*) and solidarity (*đoàn kết*) values between first-generation parents and children. Through an analysis of parents' expectations, their efforts to maintain these values, and children's views and practices, it is demonstrated that parents and child participants want to retain tight relationships between family members when living in the diaspora. A united family with *hòa thuận* (harmony) and *đoàn kết* (solidarity) values is seen as a valuable asset that develops capital in their lives in Australia.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings in relation to participant experiences of language maintenance. From the narratives shared by parents and children about using the Vietnamese language, this chapter suggests that first-generation participants expect their children to maintain the Vietnamese language. The children also value the language heritage as an effective way to support family bonds, to understand other aspects of Vietnamese culture, and to support their work. This chapter describes the various efforts refugees and skilled migrants make to maintain the language. It argues that preserving the language is considered a vehicle to support family bonds when living in Australia. Further, living in a Vietnamese community in a social and political environment that supports multiculturalism provides opportunities for Australians of Vietnamese background to maintain their language.

In Chapter 7, one of the most important values in Vietnamese families, filial piety (*hiếu thảo*), is explored. In contrast to the findings in Chapters 5 and 6, where it was shown that many aspects of family values are shared by parents and embraced by children, some filial piety values, such as the need to take care of parents and provide for them financially have been modified by parent participants. They identified that these are unnecessary obligations in Australia, so they do not want to pass them on to their children. The findings also indicate that refugee migrants, skilled migrants, and the children of both groups have different views and practices regarding the obedience aspect of filial piety. This can be attributed to the fact that their habitus influences the process of maintaining and modifying these values.

Chapter 8 presents the findings relating to the processes of sharing, modifying and rejecting gender hierarchy in the families. The findings suggest that although parents came from different social classes and various age groups, and settled in Australia at different times, they aspire to modify the ideology of gender hierarchy. Patriarchal norms, such as attributing greater importance to sons, are challenged and rejected. It further shows that although refugee parent participants find it unnecessary to have their sons to maintain the family line, some still expect their daughters to be good women by practising the four virtues: *công, dzung, ngôn, hạnh*. Children's views and practices regarding these values are also presented.

Chapter 9 discusses the views of refugees, skilled migrants and children towards Vietnam as their homeland. This is to provide more evidence to demonstrate that the different links with Vietnam of refugees and skilled migrants reflect their different views and practices regarding sharing these cultural values in their families. It is

suggested that a growing distance has developed between refugees and their homeland because of past political issues. Thus, refugees tend to preserve the cultural values that existed in Vietnam at the time they left. This influences their dispositions towards maintaining cultural values and sharing with their children in a strict way. Children's views and practices regarding Vietnam are also presented. It is shown that children respect their parents' homeland, and most children from refugee backgrounds do not give much thought to the political issues that have deeply influenced their parents' dispositions.

Chapter 10 summarises the findings and themes of this project, discusses the contribution made by these findings, and reviews the theoretical framework developed in this study. Suggestions for further research are made.

This study argues that in Australia, Vietnamese migrants and children of migrants share and practise, sometimes in a modified form, those Vietnamese cultural values that could act as a form of capital. The values that have been retained – particularly those relating to harmony, solidarity and providing emotional support to parents – are seen as necessary and valuable in Australia. The value of maintaining fluency in the Vietnamese language was identified as important in maintaining family ties in the diaspora. Values that are not considered necessary and do not develop capital, such as some aspects of gender hierarchy and filial piety, have been modified or discarded. The habitus of refugee and skilled migrant parents and children influences the process of sharing cultural values in which they are active agents in the preservation and modification of these values.

## **Chapter 2: Cultural values in Vietnamese families and migration**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter outlines the key concepts and theoretical framework of this study. It begins by defining the concept of cultural values, before considering a range of cultural values common to Vietnamese families. An overview of the theoretical perspectives relevant to cultural values in the migration context will then be provided. These perspectives include the notions of ‘cultural transmission’, ‘acculturation’, ‘capital’ and ‘habitus’. It is argued that Bourdieu’s concepts of capital and habitus provide the most useful framework with which to explore and understand why it is that certain cultural values are typically preserved, shared and perpetuated within Vietnamese migrant families, while other values are modified or discarded.

### **2.2. Understanding cultural values**

The concept of culture has been defined with multiple meanings, in different disciplines and different contexts (Huntington & Harrison 2000), leading some to conclude that ‘there can be no generally agreed definition of culture’ (Jahoda 2012, p. 289). In an early definition, Edward Tylor (1871) sought to define culture by listing and describing its characteristic components. Within this framework, he noted that in an ethnographic sense, culture or civilisation was ‘the complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits that are acquired by humans’ (Tylor 1871, p. 1).

This idea was developed subsequently in the definitions of Krober and Kluckhohn (1952) with the argument that the components of culture are linked to human behaviour acquisition and to the drawing of boundaries between groups, and are strongly connected to values:

Culture consists of patterns for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values (Krober and Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 181).

These earlier definitions suggest that the concept of culture can be understood in relation to two dimensions: objective culture and subjective culture. Objective culture refers to the whole of humankind's material civilisation; that is, visible and tangible aspects such as food, clothing, and technology that humans have made and used over time. Subjective culture, on the other hand, refers to 'non-material' and intangible human aspects such as norms, values, beliefs, languages and religion (Triandis et al. 1993). The present study is concerned with the subjective aspects of culture.

One of the key characteristics of culture identified in the literature is that it is shared. With this feature, according to Haviland et al. (2011), culture 'goes deeper than observable behaviour'. On this issue, Hall (1977) notes three characteristics of culture: first, culture is learned; second, the facets of culture are interrelated; third, culture is shared. Expressing a similar view, Spencer-Oatey (2008) notes that culture is always shared by a group of people, and that in turn, it influences each member's behaviours. Hong (2013) also notes that a key element of this sharing is the sharing of culture from

one generation to the next, or from old members to new members of a group. This means that cultural components such as values, beliefs and attitudes can be learned from and shared among members of groups, and from generation to generation (Brislin 2000). Matsumoto (2009) identifies a range of functions that derive from these processes of ‘sharing’, ‘learning’ and ‘transmitting’ across generations. He suggests that they enable the group ‘to meet basic needs of survival, by coordinating social behaviour to achieve a viable existence, to transmit successful social behaviour, to pursue happiness and well-being, and to derive meaning from life’ (Matsumoto 2009, p. 5).

While ideas of sharing suggest the stability and continuity of culture, it is also true to say that culture is dynamic and that all cultures are subject to change (Samovar 2013). Haviland et al. (2011) suggests that cultures always change over time, and that these changes typically take place in response to a range of forces such as technological innovation, population growth, population movement and environmental crises. The dynamic nature of culture, Haviland has argued, also connects to the modification of values within the culture.

It needs to be noted, however, that assumptions about changing cultural values are not accepted by all. Some scholars tend to emphasise those deeper aspects of culture that they think are less subject to change. For example Hofstede (2005), in his book *Cultures and Organizations – Software of the Mind*, refers to the collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the members of one group of people from another, and argues that while cultural practices might change, the values that underlie these practices are typically more stable. He does accept that such processes as rapid technological change affect many aspects of culture. However, he argues that

people nevertheless continue to do things in essentially the same way as their ancestors did in the past, such as making money, impressing other people and making their lives easier. All such behaviours, Hofstede suggests, are part of a social game. In his view, the social game itself has not changed, and the unwritten rules of achievement, disappointment, belonging and other key attributes of human lives typically stay the same. According to this view, while culture is clearly challenged by modern life, social mobility and social policies, certain values remain stable by being passed on across generations.

As the previous discussion suggests, the ideas of ‘culture’ and ‘values’ are strongly inter-related, so that talking about one often means discussing the other. Values are considered to be a key feature of every culture, and it is also suggested that the core of culture is formed by values (Hofstede 2005; Samovar 2013). As Schwartz (1999, 2006) explains, values represent the implicitly or explicitly shared abstract ideas about what is good, right, and desirable in a society. In other words, the values of a society or culture provide standards that guide people as to what is appropriate and what is not in various situations – values are normative. He notes that these values shape and justify individual and group beliefs and actions. Like Schwartz, Hartley (1995) expresses values as beliefs that are common to a group of people and a major resource of control over social conduct. D'Andrade (2008) points out that in any society, there will be cultural values concerning what is good, what is bad and to be avoided, how people should treat each other, and how to socialise children. Drawing on the preceding discussion, the concept of cultural values is defined in the present study as beliefs,

norms and habits that are seen as good, right and proper standards for a member of a group in a particular context.

When studying the process of sharing cultural values in Vietnamese migrant families, it is important to understand Vietnamese cultural values. The following section will provide an outline of Vietnamese cultural values as background to this study.

### 2.3. An outline of Vietnamese cultural values

Vietnamese cultural values have been studied in many fields such as anthropology, history and cultural studies. One of the first researchers to study Vietnamese culture was Dao (1938). In this early research into the history of Vietnamese culture, he defined culture as ‘those activities and actions that occur in the daily life of humans’ (Dao 1938, p. 15). In his work, Dao sought to describe Vietnamese culture in relation to such domains as the economy (*kinh tế sinh hoạt*) (e.g. agriculture, industry, and trade), society (*xã hội sinh hoạt*) (e.g. family relations, customs, and beliefs), and knowledge and thought (*học thức và tư tưởng*) (e.g. religion, education, language, arts, and literature). He also argued that due to the different activities and actions of different nations, there are distinctive cultural systems in the world, and that Vietnamese culture needed to be seen as fundamentally ‘Asian’ as opposed to western. Recently, Tran (1998a), a leading scholar of Vietnamese culture, proposed that the composition of Vietnamese culture includes four main aspects: language, religions, beliefs and festivals. Tran (1998a) also thinks it is necessary to distinguish different cultural regions including the northern part (*Bắc Bộ*), the central part (*Trung Bộ*), the southern part (*Nam Bộ*), the central highlands (*Tây Nguyên*), and the

western North (*Tây Bắc*). Each area, he suggests, keeps its own features of Vietnamese culture such as ways of thinking, food, housing and folklore. Overseas, studies of Vietnamese culture have also focused on its distinctive characteristics. In a study into Vietnamese culture and customs, McLeod and Nguyen (2001) outline a range of features that characterise the basic features of Vietnamese culture, such as thought, religion, literature, art, architecture, family, festivals, leisure activities and performing arts. Similarly, Werner, Whitmore and Dutton (2012) argue that Vietnamese culture is heterogeneous, reflecting the country's shifting geography and multiple peoples over the past 2,000 years.

In these various studies, a number of key themes have been identified. Firstly, many researchers agree that Vietnamese culture is rooted in agriculture, and more specifically 'rice culture'. They suggest that many features of culture stem from this social aspect, including lifestyle, ways of thinking, the organisation of society, and behaviours (Dao 1938; Tran 1999; Tran 1998a). For example, growing rice requires that the land be irrigated, which means the sharing of water, and this working together leads people to have strong relationships in their communities. The tropical climate, with its unpredictable weather and natural disasters such as floods, requires people to build appropriate infrastructure together (e.g. dykes). Therefore, Vietnamese usually live in villages, which have close-knit relations. This is evidenced in the well-known Vietnamese saying '*bán anh em xa mua láng giềng gần*'(neighbours are much more important than relatives who live far away). 'Village culture' is seen to play a very important role in Vietnamese social life (Tran 1999). Further, the technology of the water buffalo and the 'slash and burn' method of rice cultivation have been traditional

among people both in the lowlands and the highlands, typically creating a sense of natural harmony between people and land, as well as between the living and the dead (Nguyen 1987). The relationship with ancestors is a powerful motif: showing respect for the souls of the dead and worshipping ancestors are among the most common rituals in Vietnamese society. Households typically have an altar – the piece of furniture of greatest value – which is located in the central part of the house. For every important lunar day, such as the new moon and the full moon, and for family events such as the anniversary of a death and New Year's Eve, family members usually prepare fresh fruit, fresh flowers and traditional foods, which they place at the altar along with incense. The worship of ancestors is not a systematic religion, but it has a major influence on the daily life of Vietnamese people (Nguyen 1978; Nguyen 1987; Vu 2007).

A second key feature of Vietnamese culture identified by scholars is its adaptation to foreign cultural values. In Vietnamese history, there have been many colonial occupations involving integration with other cultural systems such as those of China, India, France and the United States. At the time of Chinese domination around 1,000 BC, Chinese control had a major impact on Vietnam in many aspects such as religion, language and model of government (Tran 1998a; Whitmore 1987). For example, the Chinese government applied policies in order to develop Chinese language in Vietnam at that time. The Vietnamese language, however, did not die out, and a native system of writing called *Nôm* was established. The *Nôm* language has been interpreted as evidence of Vietnamese scholars' efforts to maintain the Vietnamese language and integrate with the Chinese language system (Tran 1998a). Similarly, the French occupied Vietnam and established French colonial rule for around 100 years (1858-

1954). In the colonial period, there was integration between western and Vietnamese culture, which was manifested in areas such as language. A new Vietnamese alphabet system based on Latin scripts was invented to transcribe Vietnamese language effectively (Werner, Whitmore & Dutton 2012). From this, new literary forms appeared in literature, music and the media (Jamieson 1993; Truong, Dinh & Le 2001; Werner, Whitmore & Dutton 2012). Those changes are thought by many to have enriched Vietnamese culture, and to have forged a new Vietnamese identity, necessary to Vietnamese people during the time of French colonisation (Tran 1998a; Werner, Whitmore & Dutton 2012).

In recent times, westernisation has been a particularly strong influence that has created new and blended values in Vietnamese culture, although it is thought by some that the core culture and traditional values have remained relatively constant (Dao 1938; Phan 1998; Tran 1999; Tran 1998a; Whitmore 1987). One of the phenomena that illustrate the influence of western culture on Vietnamese culture is the younger generation's beliefs about independent lives. Many young couples in contemporary Vietnam live separately from their extended families, and find it uncomfortable to live with their parents after marriage (Le 2012). Another aspect of Vietnamese culture seen as a consequence of the integration Vietnamese and western cultures is the modification of Vietnamese customs and rituals around weddings, the Tết festivals and other traditional events in contemporary Vietnam. There is a tendency among Vietnamese people to modify their ideas about these traditional rituals and the practices. These customs have been simplified in order to suit modern life (Dang 2016). It is evident that many aspects of Vietnamese culture have been integrated with

foreign culture systems, which has resulted in the modification of some features of Vietnamese cultural values.

The final factor that has shaped Vietnamese cultural values is religion. Vietnamese culture is traditionally based on the 'Three Teachings' (*Tam giáo*): Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. The influence of Buddhism leads people to believe that their present fate is caused by the actions of past generations, and that they should do good deeds for the benefit of future generations (*Để đức lại cho con cháu*). Confucianism strongly affects almost all aspects of social relations, and specifically encourages people to adopt an age hierarchy in which there is respect for the aged and other people of higher status, and in which children have the responsibility to obey parents. According to Confucian thought, the status of men is higher than that of women, and the roles of sons in worshipping ancestors and retaining the family name are more important than those of daughters (Nguyen & Ho 1995; Tran 1991). Taoism teaches people to seek happiness in the present, advocating the cultivation of inner strength, selflessness, spontaneity, and harmony with nature and humankind (Nguyen 1987; Nguyen & Ho 1995; Tran 1998a; Tran 1998b). Further, a more recent introduction, but arguably an important part of culture for many contemporary Vietnamese is Catholicism. Catholicism contributes to the development of a sense of harmony in communities and encourages husbands and wives to achieve a stable relationship in family (Vu 2007; Nguyen & Ho 1995). The teachings of these religions are thought to be important aspects in shaping Vietnamese cultural values.

In summary, Vietnamese culture is considered as having been influenced by many factors that have resulted in distinctive characteristics, values and identity. The beliefs

and values of Vietnamese culture find important expression in Vietnamese families, and this is described in detail in the next section.

## 2.4. Vietnamese cultural values in families

The Vietnamese family is seen as an important place for the preservation of Vietnamese cultural values (Le 2012; Thomas 1999). Through passing them on to subsequent generations, cultural values persist in families (Nguyen 2012). The cultural values within Vietnamese families are dynamic concepts that have been reported in many studies in different ways. Le (2012), a leading scholar in the field of Vietnamese family study, defines family cultural values as including 'norms and standards which can form the relations of family members as well as the relations between families and societies' (Le 2012, p. 54). He also argues that Vietnamese family cultural values are informed by integrating local cultures that are rooted in the 'rice culture' or 'irrigated crops' more than in the teachings of Confucianism and Buddhism. This view is supported by Tran (1998a), such that Confucianism is seen as being on the periphery of the Vietnamese traditional family unit, with the core values of the family and of Vietnamese cultural identity being related to 'village culture' or 'rice culture'.

In this 'rice culture', women/mothers/wives provide the foundations of family life. They are thought not only to have natural abilities in planting trees (*Trồng trott*) and raising animals (*Chăn nuôi*), but they also do most of the housework and manage the finances (*Tay cầm chìa khóa*), including being in charge of the household's money and monitoring everyday expenditure. The tasks required for rice cultivation may result in the need to have many children to create a large workforce for farming, and there are

strong relationships between families and the villages they live in (Kibria 1995; Le 2012). Along with the ‘rice culture’, Buddhist thought influences the cultural values of families. As suggested by Vu (2007), a researcher in the Vietnamese folklore field, Buddhism not only teaches people to take on the responsibility of looking after their parents and to show respect for ancestors, but also encourages them to adopt good behaviour within the family in order to facilitate close-knit families (Vu 2007).

Others have stressed that Vietnamese family culture is more deeply influenced by the teachings of Confucianism (Kibria 1995; Lai 1991; Nguyen 1998; Nguyen & Ho 1995; Phung 1979; Vu 2007; Whitmore 1984). Indeed, Confucian thought is mainly concentrated on the nature of relationships of individuals with family and country, and every relationship within society is regulated by these standards. In forming relations within social life, the order from inferior to superior is established depending on age, social position and parentage. Superiors should love, care for and educate subordinates. In turn, people of lower rank should show filial piety, and obey and support those of higher rank. Thus this idea informs values as well as relationships within Vietnamese families (Tran 1991; Vu 2007).

In addition to the values within Vietnamese families, most research on Vietnamese families highlights the harmony between the various religious teachings (e.g. Kibria 1995; Tran 1991; Trinh 1984; Vu 2007). In his writing on the influence of Confucianism on Vietnamese families Tran (1991) argues that ‘the traditional family in Vietnam has come under the deep influence of Confucianism, but this influence should not be understood only through the understanding of Confucian theories’(Tran 1991, p. 28) . This means that Vietnamese family values are indirectly informed by Confucianism. In

other words, a combination of ‘rice culture’, Confucianism and Buddhism influences the norms and values of many Vietnamese families.

The following section will describe three key sets of family values that are believed to have persisted in many Vietnamese families over generations.

#### *2.4.1. Harmony and Solidarity (*Hòa thuận – Đoàn kết*)*

One of the essential characteristics of Vietnamese families is harmony (*hòa thuận*) and solidarity (*đoàn kết*) between family members. In research into Vietnamese traditions, Toan (1960) notes that living together in harmony, sharing emotions and helping each other are common in Vietnamese families. When family members are sick or old, other members usually feed them and take care of them (Thomas 1999). Siblings are expected to get on well and support each other. Relatives and people bearing the same family name in extended families are expected to have strong relationships, and to share everything they have with each other. A family is regarded as prosperous and happy when most of its members live in peace and in union, gently and happily (Phung 1979; Tran 1991).

Historically, within Vietnamese extended families, a strong sense of solidarity has been expected. From an early age, all Vietnamese children are taught that relationships among siblings in nuclear families should be strong, and that there should be good support of and respect for relatives in the extended family. Expressions such as ‘*Giọt máu đào hơn ao nước lõi*’ (Blood is thicker than water), ‘*Chị ngã em nâng*’ (If an older sister falls down the younger ones should lift her up), ‘*Anh em như thể tay chân*’ (Love siblings as you would love yourself), and ‘*Sảy cha theo chú, sảy mẹ bú giì*’ (If your father passed away, you would get help from your uncles; if your mother passed away

when you were a baby, you should be breastfed by your aunties) emphasise the tight relationships between extended family members, and are adopted in the process of raising children.

Family members are expected to subordinate their personal interests to those of the family as a whole (Pham 1999). This means that for many Vietnamese people, family plays an essential role in their lives. This cultural value of harmony and solidarity is based on the idea that family members should devote themselves to their family, siblings and relatives (Lai 1991; Nguyen 1987; Phung 1979; Toan 1960).

#### *2.4.2. Filial piety (*Hiếu thảo*)*

Another value and norm considered very important in Vietnamese families is filial piety. As a central concept of Confucianism, filial piety has been defined as the children's obligations to support, respect, obey and express gratitude to parents by taking care of them in their old age. This is thought to be the fundamental pattern that shapes the hierarchy of parent-child relationships (Cline 2015; Dai & Dimond 1998; Yeh & Olwen 2003). Filial piety provides a foundation for sociocultural beliefs and behaviours in many families in China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam (Ikels 2004; Lieber, Nihira & Mink 2004; Quah 2003).

In Vietnamese families, filial piety is thought to be a basic moral that is passed on over generations (Dao 1938; Le 2012; Pham 1999; Phung 1979). Children are taught about filial piety from childhood in families and schools. Young children are usually required to obey and respect their parents, who in turn are expected to know what is best for their children. Disobedience to parents is seen as one of the most extreme violations of children's social norms (Pham 1999; Phung 1979). Additionally, it is believed that co-

residence between adult children and their aged parents is necessary. After starting families, sons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren are expected to live with and look after their parents. Providing financial support to parents is also seen as the responsibility of children (Dao 1938; Jamieson 1993; Phung 1979; Tran 1991). In other words, obeying, caring for and financially supporting parents form the basis of filial piety values in Vietnamese families.

#### *2.4.3. Gender hierarchy*

One of the fundamental values that exist in Vietnamese families is gender hierarchy. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the ‘rice culture’ afforded a high status to women in Vietnamese families. Women were thought not only to have natural abilities in planting trees (*Trồng trọt*) and rearing animals (*Chăn nuôi*), but also in managing household finances (*Tay cầm chìa khóa*) (Kibria 1995; Le 2012). However, the influence of the Confucian value system on Vietnamese society over a long time led to changes in gendered beliefs and roles in Vietnamese families (Lai 1991; Pham 1999; Tran 1996). It can be argued that Confucian influence led to a more patriarchal model of family relationships.

In Confucian thought, the head of the traditional Vietnamese family is a man, and women are submissive, good at domestic work and supported financially by men. Men as husbands and fathers are typically responsible for making decisions regarding most matters. Their responsibilities include providing for the material and financial well-being of all family members. By contrast, the role of women in Vietnamese families has been seen as less important than that of men. Women are expected to practise three submissions and obedience (*tam tòng*) and four virtues (*tứ đức*). The concept of the

three submissions means that before getting married, girls must obey their fathers, and when they get married, they must obey their husbands. On becoming a widow, they must obey the eldest son. The four virtues include *công*, *dzung*, *ngôn*, *hạnh*. A good woman is expected to be good at housework and at taking care of children (*công*), to be modest and humble in appearance (*dzung*), to be gentle and moderate in speed (*ngôn*), and to be of good morality (e.g. to be faithful, and remain a virgin until marriage) (*hạnh*) (Dao 1938; Kibria 1995; Luong 2003; Pham 1999; Phung 1979; Toan 1960; Tran 1991; Tran 1996; Vu 2007; Vu 2015).

Confucianism also holds that sons are needed for patrilineal reasons, to carry on the family name and line. This patrilineal obligation brings with it several responsibilities, including the ritual worship of ancestors and the care of ageing parents (Dao 1938; Kibria 1995; Pham 1999; Tran 1991; Tran 1998b). Thus elder sons, their wives and children usually live with the son's parents after marriage. The eldest son in each family is required to shoulder the main responsibilities of taking care of parents socially and economically, and of continuing family rituals. The worship of ancestors is considered a fundamental ritual that is practiced by sons. Sons are expected to worship their parents when they pass away, and maintain the practice of ancestor worship in their families. Due to the importance bestowed on sons – particularly eldest sons – many Vietnamese people prefer to have boys rather than girls; it is often a family's wish that as many children as possible will be boys. Meanwhile, daughters are carefully prepared for marriage through education in the norms related to the three submissions and four virtues. They are expected to leave their families and join their husband's families when they get married. Although the roles of sons and daughters in

families have been modified in contemporary Vietnam, the traditional ideologies of gender hierarchy persist in many Vietnamese families (Belanger 2002; Nguyen & Ho 1995; Phung 1979; Toan 1960; Tran 1998b).

These three sets of cultural values – harmony and solidarity, filial piety and gender hierarchy – mutually support each other in shaping family relationships such as those between parents and children, husbands and wives, and children and their siblings and relatives. By sharing across generations, these values have persisted in many Vietnamese families. However, Vietnamese cultural values in families are also subject to change over time. The following section will discuss the changes and continuities of those values in Vietnam.

#### *2.4.4. The changes and continuities of cultural values in Vietnamese families over time*

While much research has described important values in Vietnamese families, it is widely agreed that some dynamics of Vietnamese family values have changed over the years. Modernising processes have challenged some of these traditional values. One of these has been the impact of national political developments, which have challenged gender hierarchy in many Vietnamese families.

For example, after the 1945 August Revolution, a turning point in Vietnam's history, the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam imposed positive policies to enhance living standards, improve education, but challenge traditional values. These created dramatic changes in Vietnamese society (Truong, Dinh & Le 2001). In the first constitution of the new republic in 1946, the rights of women were protected. The basic principles also included equality between men and women in families and society (Khuat 1991; Le 2012). In order to reduce the high rates of illiteracy, a literacy

campaign was instituted aimed at assisting adults and women living in remote areas to learn to read and write. Women were then able to gain higher levels of education (Khuat 1991; Schuler et al. 2006). The new republic also rejected patriarchal hierarchies, including the outlawing of the practice of polygamy (Le 2012).

Although these policies led to the promotion of women into higher positions in both society and families, the war in Vietnam between 1946 and 1975 also had a significant impact on gender relations in families. Many young women were encouraged to take part in the war by joining and serving in the army. Most of them spent a long period of time as military combatants, missing the chance to marry at a marriageable age. As a result, many were spinsters after the war (Drummond 2006; Werner 1981). Further, while many young Vietnamese women took part in war, others had to tend the countryside during wartime. While their husbands were away from home serving in the war, these women had to take over the major responsibilities for agricultural production, take care of all domestic matters at home, and look after children and older parents-in-law (Drummond 2006; Khuat 1991). Overall, wartime conditions forced Vietnamese women's roles and status in both families and society into a situation that did not support greater sexual egalitarianism.

More recently, urbanisation and globalisation have also led to changing values in Vietnamese families. Since the 1986 *Đổi mới* reforms, Vietnam has become more integrated into the global economy. This has created economic opportunities for women (Luong 2003), and led to shifts in the division of labour between men and women. For example, Vietnamese women in rural areas often travel abroad or go to big cities to work, sending money home. The men in these families are left with the

responsibility for housework and childcare, challenging traditional ideologies regarding men's and women's jobs in families (Hoang & Yeoh 2011; Martin 2013; Vu 2015).

Furthermore, traditional attitudes towards the four virtues of women in many contemporary Vietnamese families have been changing, with old and new versions of the norm co-existing(Ngo 2004). As Nguyen (2007) argues, changes in youth values have emerged, particularly in youth sexual culture, with many Vietnamese young women having premarital sex, cohabiting before marriage, and dating multiple men.

Another aspect of Vietnamese women's status that was influenced by economic reform (*Đổi mới*) is their burden of responsibility for carrying out domestic chores while holding full-time jobs. Since the period of *Đổi mới*, Vietnamese women have been expected to be excellent at work and perfect at home (*Giỏi việc nước đảm việc nhà*). This expectation of performing the 'second shift' at home (Hochschild 1989) does not suggest an increase in gender equality. Thus, continuity rather than change has characterised gender roles in contemporary Vietnam when it comes to domestic chores, decision-making, and child-rearing (John et al. 2005; Luong 2003).

The requirement for male offspring to maintain the family line and support ageing parents is a belief that persists in many Vietnamese families. Research into contemporary Vietnamese families has pointed out that the reasons given for desiring sons over daughters include continuing the family line, looking after parents in their old age, and doing heavy and important family chores (Le 2012; Nguyen 2011). In many rural areas, the birth of a son is still the most significant event in a woman's life, and can promote their status in the family-in-law (Belanger 2002). Reflecting the persistence of this value, many families in contemporary Vietnam use ultrasound

technology and sex-selective abortions to ensure male births (Guilmoto 2012). As a result, the gender gap index in Vietnam in 2008 was high, with the gender ratio being 112 boys to 100 girls (Nguyen 2011).

Other values influenced by social changes and modernisation in Vietnam are filial piety, harmony and solidarity in families. Since the 1986 economic reforms (*Đổi mới*), Vietnam's urban population has expanded, especially in the big cities. Young people have tended to move to cities to study and work, and this has strongly influenced family models and relationships. For example, nuclear families have become a common model, accounting for well over 70% of families in cities (Barbieri 2009; Le 2012; Nguyen 2011). The extended family model, where three generations live together in the same household, are not common, though the relationships between family members remain strong (Le 2012). Additionally, children tend to live far away from home, making it difficult for them to take day-to-day care of parents. The economic reforms have promoted connections between traditional Vietnamese family values and new values – mainly western values. This trend has also changed parent-child relationships, in that they have become more democratic. Nguyen (2011) observes that in many modern Vietnamese families, children tend to be independent, and find it difficult to follow parents' directives. Many children see themselves as having the right to choose their own careers and marital partners (Nguyen 2011; Tran 1999).

However, despite the influences of urbanisation and modernisation, children continue to play a central role in providing support to their aged parents in many families in contemporary Vietnam (Barbieri 2009; Bélanger 2009; Knodel et al. 2000). The Vietnamese government's Law of Marriage and the Family (2000) stresses that

children and family members have principal responsibility for taking care of ageing parents (Le 2012). Old-age pension policies and healthcare systems have not tended to support the elderly. Many older adults in rural areas have low living standards and face financial problems (Bui et al. 2000; Goodkind, Truong & Bui 1999). Furthermore, the ideology of filial duties is still thought of as a key aspect of children's morality, even if their parents are not in need of assistance (Barbieri 2009; Le 2012; Nguyen 2011). Thus many older adults in Vietnamese modern families remain dependent on their children for their care.

In summary, Vietnamese family values have been undergoing a transformation in contemporary Vietnam. Although the influences of modernisation, urbanisation and social changes have resulted in alterations in family relationships as well as in values and norms, values relating to gender hierarchy and the obligations of children to their parents clearly persist in many families in contemporary Vietnam.

For people who leave their countries and emigrate elsewhere, the process of preserving cultural values in families can be complex. In the migration context, with the attendant changes in social environment, migrants often face challenges in speaking a new language, working in new jobs, communicating with new people and adjusting to a new culture (Suárez-Orozco, Todorova & Louie 2002). Further, their children are born and raised in the host culture, which leads to cultural differences between migrants and their children (Chen et al. 2014; Zhou 2009). The process of cultural values changing across generations is fully illustrated in the special circumstance of migration. The following section will explore three different perspectives that could explain how family cultural values are passed on.

## 2.5. Perspectives on cultural values of migrants

Within migration studies, a range of different frameworks has been applied to explain the process of changing cultural values among migrant communities and their families. Two of the more significant frameworks – ‘cultural transmission’ and ‘acculturation’ – are discussed in some detail below. Although these perspectives provide a way of understanding migrants’ cultural values and the ways cultural values are passed on within migrant families, they appear to provide a static picture of cultural values in which the transmitters (e.g. parents or older generations) and children are thought to be passive rather than active in the process of cultural change. This study therefore adopts Bourdieu’s notions of capital and habitus, which offer a better way to understand the complex process of the preservation and modification of cultural values.

### 2.5.1. *Cultural transmission*

The family is typically seen as a primary agent in the sharing of cultural values. Despite the different ways of conceptualising family and the continuing changes in family life (Dempsey & Lindsay 2014; Poole 2005), the transmission of values is thought to be a key defining and unchanging role. As Hartley (1995) explains: ‘Families in all societies are commonly expected to care for and nurture children, to provide financially for their members and to transmit cultural moral tradition and values’ (Hartley 1995, p. 5).

The concept of ‘cultural transmission’ has been influential in the studies of continuity and changing cultural values in families (Phalet 2001; Schönplug 2008; Trommsdorff 2008). The interest of scholars has been on the processes by which culture is passed

on across generations. Referring to the notion in general terms, Schönpflug (2008, p. 1) describes ‘cultural transmission’ as ‘the process of carrying cultural information from one generation to the next, and from one group to the next’. The cultural information Schönpflug refers to includes cultural elements such as values, knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Within the cultural transmission framework, Berry (2002) has proposed three types of transmission: vertical transmission, which refers to the transmission between generations within a family or society; horizontal transmission, referring to the transfer between peers; and oblique transmission, which refers to the transmission from societal members of earlier generations. Phalet (2001) stress that cultural transmission is never a complete process; rather, cultural values are continually shaped and reshaped by the ongoing interactions between people and groups and their environment.

In family contexts, Trommsdorff (2008) suggests that the intergenerational transmission of culture is viewed mainly as a process that takes place from older to younger generations such as parents to children and grandparents to grandchildren. According to Trommsdorff (2008), the transmission processes within families are typically influenced by three factors: agents, contents and the cultural context of transmission. The agents are those who are involved in the cultural transmission process, the contents are what is transmitted, and the cultural context are the circumstances in which the transmission takes place. It is suggested that the beliefs, values and cultural knowledge of the agents (e.g. parents and children) can affect the outcome of cultural transmission (Nauck 2001; Trommsdorff 2008). In addition, the

topic and content to be shared and the cultural context have been thought to have an impact on the process of transferring cultural values in families (Trommsdorff 2008).

In migrant families, the intergenerational transmission and cultural transmission perspectives have been adopted to explain the process of the transmission of the cultural values of the first-generation to their children. The idea of generations has a distinct definition for migrant families, with 'generations' being defined by age, life stage at arrival of the foreign-born (first generation) and those born in the country of settlement (second-generation and subsequent generations) (Rumbaut 2004). Nauck (2001) argues that intergenerational transmission is one of the major mechanisms of cultural continuity in the migration context. The successful transmission by parents to children of values brought from their country of origin is considered important. These similar family values of parents and children can support coordinated family adaptation in migration situations (Phalet 2001).

Furthermore, in relation to the cultural transmission of a particular group in a migration context such as that of refugees, the maintenance of cultural values can be seen as an important way to perpetuate cultural identity, which in turn can help them to recover after losing homes, property, status and family members (Camino 1994; Malkki 1995). Preservation of their cultural identities can be seen as an effective way for refugees to engage with their new environment and reconstruct a livelihood (Loizos 2000). This helps explain the importance of cultural retention in refugee groups in the early stages of resettlement, when cultural transmission is considered to be the best way to preserve cultural values and enhance the ability to settle into a foreign cultural environment.

While the idea of cultural transmission has brought ‘insight to what causes continuity and discontinuity of culture over generations’ (Schönpflug 2008, p. 27), there are some limitations to this perspective. One of these is that cultural transmission processes are typically seen as a one-way path, where transmitters (e.g. parents or older generations) are thought to play a key role in transmitting their cultural values to their children. This characterisation makes sense if children are inclined to passively accept these values from earlier generations. However, children tend to learn and act under the influence of broader contexts such as peers, schools and the social environment (Bornstein & Cheah 2014). In this situation, as Ellen (2013) notes, ‘the cultural transmission process is potentially more hazardous’ (Ellen 2013, p. 3), and the influence of parents in the process of cultural transmission is more limited.

Phalet and Schönpflug (2001) argue that the cultural transmission process in immigrant families is complicated. This process is necessarily more complex than in a more slowly-changing society, where the culture of an older generation is more readily passed on to the next generation. The views and practices of migrants and their children can be influenced by various factors in new environments, which often results in migrant parents’ and children’s values diverging to some degree. Thus the passive, one-way process of intergenerational transmission has limited applicability in the case of migrant families.

### *2.5.2. Acculturation process*

Another concept adopted within migration studies to understand the nature and dynamics of cultural values in families is acculturation. Immigrant or migrant culture has been characterised as a ‘culture of origin’, including language, ideas, beliefs, values

and behavioural patterns; that is, all that immigrants bring with them when they settle in a new country (Bankston & Zhou, 1994; Zhou, 1997). In the process of migrating, Suárez-Orozco, Todorova and Louie (2002) argue that migrants not only experience a disconnection from their familiar social and cultural practices, but are also often isolated from sources of support in their new destinations. Resettlement in a new country and a new cultural context requires migrants to adjust to new environments, where they must engage with new people, a new language, and different norms and values. Further, it is suggested that the longer the stay in the host country, the greater the opportunities for the migrant to adapt to the dominant culture, which often leads to a decrease in commitment to their own ethnic cultures (Dhruvarajan 1993; Williams, Thornton & Young-DeMarco 2014). Acculturation, therefore, can be thought of as an inevitable process that migrants experience when living in host countries.

Broadly, the concept of acculturation refers to the process of cultural change and adaptation that occurs when individuals from different cultures come to integrate with each other (Gibson 2001). A major proponent of acculturation theory is Berry, who has characterised acculturation as a more detailed process of adopting the other's cultural characteristics, language and social interactions when people living in a host culture (Berry 1992; Berry 1997).

In his characterising of the acculturation process, Berry (2005) identifies four distinct strategies typically adopted by migrants and migrant communities: assimilation, separation, marginalisation and integration. Assimilation, as Berry defines it, refers to a situation in which people do not wish to retain their cultural identity, and instead seek to adopt the cultural values of the host culture. Separation, in contrast,

occurs when people have little or no interest in adapting to another culture.

Marginalisation is defined as occurring when migrants cannot adapt to the mainstream, but lose a sense of their original culture and cannot preserve their cultural identity. Integration is considered a process of balancing between adaptation to and continuity of the culture of origin.

From this model, integration strategy, which for Berry constitutes some social ideal, is more readily adopted by ethnic groups if the dominant society is sufficiently accepting of ethnic values and cultural diversity, and creates a social environment that meets the requirements of all ethnic groups living in the society (Berry 1992, 1997). Berry has further argued that depending on the different cultural aspects of the ethnic group, personal behaviours, and the reaction of the receiving societies, ethnic groups tend to display different levels of acculturation (Berry 2005; Sam & Berry 2006). This model could be an important tool for policy makers in applying policies related to cultural diversity in multicultural societies such as Australia. The policies of destination countries have an impact on the maintenance of culture by immigrants, who may have more opportunities to preserve their cultural heritage when the society of settlement is supportive of the cultural pluralism that results from immigration. In this scenario, migrants are less likely to be forced to adapt to the new culture, and can be provided with social support from both institutions and society. In contrast, when societies do not accept cultural diversity and instead apply assimilationist policies, it may be more difficult for ethnic groups to maintain their cultural heritage.

Another factor that affects the process of acculturation is thought to be the cultural value orientation of ethnic groups. As Huntington (1996) argues, the differences

between western and eastern cultural value systems results in challenges when people from eastern countries migrate to the west. For example, by analysing data from 73 countries and validating seven cultural orientations, Schwartz (2006) discusses distinctive cultural characteristics of these groups, such as embeddedness as opposed to autonomy, hierarchy contrasted with egalitarianism, and mastery versus harmony. Cultural value orientations, he argues, result in different behaviours in different countries, groups and regions. Values related to egalitarianism and intellectual autonomy influence the level to which people take individual responsibility for their actions and make decisions based on their own personal understanding of situations, as in western countries. By contrast, embeddedness and hierarchy result when the attitudes and behaviours regarding people's roles in and obligations to collectivities are more important than her/his unique ideas and aspirations, as in Southeast Asian cultures.

In line with the discussion about the difference between eastern and western values, Hofstede (2001) discusses the individualism and collectivism that represent the different ways people live together in western and eastern societies. According to Hofstede (2001), in collectivist societies, people not only grow up in their extended families, but also live closely together and typically develop more dependent relationships. Obligations to the family in a collectivist society are said to relate not only to financial matters but also to rituals. By contrast, in more individualist societies, people usually grow up in nuclear families, and according to Hofstede, learn to think of themselves more as "I" – as an entity distinct from other people (Hofstede 2001). In migration contexts, individualism is thought to characterise western cultures, whereas

collectivism relates more to non-western cultures (Schwartz, Montgomery & Briones 2006). According to this position, for migrants who bring with them cultural values from collectivist societies (e.g. Vietnamese migrants), and who migrate to countries where individualist cultures are dominant (e.g. Australia), the challenges of the adaptation process may be greater if they try to preserve their cultural package. Further, the process of acculturation, in which migrants adapt to mainstream culture by adopting new values and modifying their cultural background, is seen as a common trend among migrants from the non-western world.

While the acculturation model can explain processes of adaptation to the host's cultural values in ethnic groups, researchers have pointed to certain limitations in the approaches adopted by thinkers such as Berry and Hofstede. The way Hofstede divides western and eastern values tended to generalise the cultural values of individuals to where they were born and raised. In addition, he does not discuss the influences of globalisation and global mobility, where cultural values can be malleable. It is possible that migrants from non-western countries may already subscribe to some aspects of individualist culture before migrating to a western country. Central to these issues is the way acculturation is typically characterised as a linear, uni-directional process. This assumes that migrants are involved in the acculturative process directly. For example, migrants from an Asian background in a western country necessarily become more western and less Asian. Tardif-Williams and Fisher (2009, p. 153) argues that within the acculturation framework, there is 'the tendency to treat culture as an internal and relatively stable characteristic that defines people born within a specific country, place, religion, or social class'.

An alternative position is to see migrant family contexts as involving more dynamic processes, where parents and children are viewed as active agents who construct and transform different aspects of culture practices and identities over time in their daily interactions (Kuczynski 2006). On this issue, Zhou (1997) notes that when migrant parents find it difficult to practise and pass on their culture of origin to their children, they tend to select those aspects in their cultural heritage that are suitable to the new environment (Zhou 1997). Similarly, Tardif-Williams and Fisher (2009) suggest that migrant parents may find the norms and standards they are used to unsuitable in the new environment, and this can be brought to their attention by their more acculturated children. Thus the ongoing and complex process of modification and preservation of cultural values within migrant families is often not adequately explained by the conventional model of acculturation.

In summary, while both the cultural transmission and acculturation perspectives have something to contribute to the understanding of this area, they are limited by an overall tendency to see cultural values as static, and the process by which they are passed on as 'one-way'. Parents and children are not seen as active agents in passing on and adopting those values in the complex process of migration.

### *2.5.3. Bourdieu's concepts of capital and habitus*

The theoretical perspectives outlined above of cultural transmission and acculturation have clear limitations in assisting an understanding cultural values in migrant communities. A more productive approach to explain how migrants negotiate the preservation and modification of their culture in multicultural societies is one that draws on Bourdieu's concepts of capital and habitus. These concepts can better than

cultural transmission and acculturation in explaining why it is that migrants retain some of their original cultural values, but not others. I begin this section by explaining these two notions, before discussing how they have been drawn upon in previous migration studies, and their relevance to the present project.

According to Bourdieu (1986), capital is a type of power that can be accumulated, invested, converted and reproduced. As Harker, Mahar and Wilkes (1990, p. 13) state: 'the definition of capital is very wide for Bourdieu and includes material things (which can have symbolic value) as well as 'untouchable' but culturally significant attributes such as prestige, status and authority (referred to as symbolic capital)'. They go on to explain that for Bourdieu, capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange, and the term is extended 'to all the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation' (Harker, Mahar & Wilkes 1990, p. 13).

With Bourdieu's framework, there are three types of capital: economic, social and cultural (Bourdieu 1986). These forms of capital can be seen as resources for social advantage and social class differences in society. Economic capital refers to an individual's wealth, income, material possessions and financial assets (Silva & Edwards 2004). Social capital is 'the aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network or more or less institutional relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu 1986, p. 284). The final form of capital – cultural capital – is thought to be most relevant to the present study. Bourdieu characterises it as follows:

Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, i.e. in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods... and in the institutionalized state (Bourdieu 1986, p. 284).

The first form of cultural capital is linked to the body of an individual, and includes their values, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes. The second form is objectified cultural capital, which refers to cultural goods such as artworks, pictures, paintings and music. The third form is connected to institutional recognition, such as academic qualifications through education. My use of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is in the embodied state, which refers to the cultural values and attitudes of a cultural group (Wu 2011). It can also be considered as an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society (Yosso 2005). In families, cultural capital is seen as being cultivated and enhanced in the contexts of family practices (Silva 2005).

Another concept of Bourdieu's that is helpful to understanding the factors influencing the process of negotiating between cultural heritage and mainstream culture of migrants is habitus (Bourdieu 1977, 1984). Whereas cultural capital refers to the values and knowledge of an individual that can be accumulated and invested by owners, habitus can be understood as a disposition of an individual that can persist across contexts, allowing one to respond to cultural rules and contexts in a variety of ways (Webb 2002). It helps in understanding how individuals orient themselves to the world and how the world orients individuals (Silva 2016). Wacquant, a key interpreter of Bourdieu, has characterised habitus as:

The way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel, and act in determinate ways, which then guide them in their creative responses to the constraints and solicitations of their extant milieu (Wacquant 2013, p. 318).

In her book, *From Another Place: Migration and the Politics of Culture* (1992), Bottomley notes that 'habitus manifests itself in practice, in action and movement, in the way one orients oneself in relation to specific social fields... it should be possible to see something of the reproduction and reformulation of cultural beliefs and practices as they are handed down from parents to children' (Bottomley 1992, p. 123). It can be understood then that in families, habitus is the dispositions that individuals acquire early in life through daily practice. Family relationships and parent-child relations thus 'play important roles in fine-tuning the development of habitus' (Wu 2011, p.22).

Bourdieu's notions of capital and habitus provide useful ways to understand the migration experience. Social capital can be thought of as the strong bonds in ethnic communities such as networks, solidarity and tight relationships that enable them to create more resources when living in a new country (Zhou 2005). In particular, the family and community relations of ethnic groups, a form of social capital, can strongly support children in school performance (Bankston 2004), and contribute to the process of adaptation by the younger generation to a new society (Bankston & Zhou 1994).

Cultural capital is also helpful in explaining the process that migrants undertake in modifying and maintaining cultural values. This process can be understood as the exercising of agency through the creation of new forms of migration-specific cultural

capital. As Erel (2010) notes, cultural capital can be viewed as a ‘treasure chest’ that can be unpacked in the country of migration. Many other scholars of migration studies discuss how migrants not only use the cultural resources they bring with them to develop and create quite distinct dispositions, but create mechanisms of validation for their cultural capital (Coe & Shani 2015; Erel 2010; Trueba 2002; Wu 2011; Yosso 2005).

Seen in this light, the understanding of cultural capital as resources that migrants and migrant families draw upon may be more useful than the idea of transmission or acculturation in explaining what happens to ethnic cultural values after migration.

With this view, these valuable resources can be seen as a form of cultural capital that can be invested in and developed in the new context. Migrants in this situation are not viewed as passive agents in the process of sharing cultural values, but rather as active shapers of experience in the generating of cultural capital.

For relationships between parents and children in migrant families, the concept of cultural capital not only provides a way to explore the important insights of the relationships between people and society, but also enables researchers to understand what kinds of cultural practices have value or capital for a group or individual (Coe & Shani 2015). According to Coe and Shani (2015), the concept is useful in explaining which cultural values migrant parents seek to pass on to their children. They argue that in different social fields, cultural capital is valued differently. In migrant families, where migrants might be applying the ‘dual frame’ of their home countries and their countries of destination, cultural capital can be understood as the values migrant parents find meaningful in the social worlds they experience, and expect their children to inherit. Similarly, in a study of migration and the transnational habitus of Filipino

immigrants in Toronto, Canada, Kelly and Lusis (2006) concluded that in the migration and transnational context, cultural capital can be seen as ‘accumulated, exchanged, converted, valued, and devalued’. By this, they mean that migrants bring their specific cultural heritage to the new destinations, develop a sense of which aspects of their values have capital, and draw upon that capital in their new lives.

Likewise, in the migration context, habitus can ‘make sense both of the persistence of old values in new behaviours and of the ways in which new collective values are actively constructed by individuals’ (Robbins 2000, p. 4). In a study of Chinese skilled migrant mothers in New Zealand, Wu (2011) notes that while the mothers left their countries of birth and are living in a new country, their habitus is still intricately linked to China. Although the Chinese migrant mothers understand that they have to follow mainstream ways of living, their traditional Chinese values are not totally rejected, with many of them applying traditional Chinese teaching methods and maintaining the Chinese language at home. Similarly, based on interviews with Filipino immigrants in Toronto, Canada, Kelly and Lusis (2006) found that the habitus of Filipino immigrants is forged transnationally with reference to the Philippines. They argue that habitus needs to be place-bound, and that immigrants may indeed continue to judge their circumstances according to the ‘rule’ of their place of origin. Additionally, the habitus of immigrants creates some challenges for them in new environments. Immigrants from former Yugoslavia in Greater Vancouver, Canada, for instance, have brought their dispositions with them to Canada where different ‘rules of the game’ are applied in workplaces. As a result, many of them have been consigned to marginal positions in the Canadian labour market (Bauder 2005).

The cultural capital and habitus of migrants are shaped and accumulated in their homeland and brought with them to their new destinations. This includes their valuable resources of language, values and norms around how to live a good life. In their lives in the new environment, not only do they respond to new situations, but they also evaluate their cultural capital before either spending it or developing it in their children. These notions of capital and habitus are expected to provide a helpful perspective on the experiences of migrant families in this study. First-generation parents (refugees and skilled migrants) from Vietnam can be thought of as bringing with them the Vietnamese family values held at the time they left. Resettling in Australia, they come to recognise how much and in what ways these cultural values may be helpful in the Australian context. They will tend either to share, modify or reject their Vietnamese cultural values based on a sense of how these cultural values constitute capital. They also develop new forms of cultural capital in Australia. In other words, the notion of capital can help to explain the attitudes and behaviours of Vietnamese migrants and children regarding Vietnamese family values when living in the Australian context. Perceptions of which cultural values constitute capital inevitably vary from individual to individual and family to family. In this study, it is expected that this variation will be able to explain in part the anticipated diversity of experience among participants.

In addition, the habitus of first-generation parents in the study can be thought of as their dispositions, which were formed in the ‘social and historical space’ of Vietnam. The study is concerned with two identifiably distinct groups: refugees and skilled migrant families. The refugee parent participants migrated between 30 and 40 years

ago, while the skilled migrants migrated in the last 15 years. Therefore each group can viewed as bringing with them different cultural values shaped by being raised in different environments, which leads to a different habitus. Thus refugee and skilled migrant parents' habitus might provide them with different ways of responding to their cultural values when living in the new environment. In this sense, the concept of habitus can help to explain the different ways in which Vietnamese cultural values are shared in families, and the reasons why some old Vietnamese cultural values are preserved carefully in many refugee families in Australia, but not in skilled migrant families. Further, the habitus of the children of migrants who were born and raised in Australia was formed and shaped both in their family lives, where their parents shared with them Vietnamese cultural values, and in Australian society. It is expected that this concept will help to explain their attitudes and behaviours towards Vietnamese cultural values.

Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital and habitus strongly link to class and reproduction of a class society. Bourdieu (1977) argued that the knowledge of the upper and middle class are considered capital valuable to a hierarchical society. These concepts enable researchers to explore interactions of class and social inequality (Wu 2011, Yosso 2005). However, in migration, migrants tend to experience different class positions in different contexts, and their class positions may change over time due to the resettlement in a new land (Coe & Shani 2015). In the current study, the experiences of Vietnamese migrants and children in sharing cultural heritage in Australia are explored. The social class of the parents who are past refugees changes after moving Australia, and their children may also experience a different class

position. Thus, due to the complexities of parent and child class positions in the migration context, the current study does not explore class reproduction. Based on this analysis, the concepts of capital and habitus have been adopted in this study because they provide a useful way to explain the processes involved in the preservation, modification and rejection of Vietnamese cultural values by first-generation migrants and children when living in Australia.

## 2.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the notions of cultural value, along with background information about Vietnamese cultural values in families and perspectives on the cultural values of migrants. As noted, Vietnamese culture and cultural values in Vietnamese families have been predominantly influenced by the ‘rice culture’, Confucianism and Buddhism. As outlined in the literature, key elements of these norms, values and standards include filial piety, gender hierarchy and harmony in Vietnamese families. This background knowledge is important to recognising the significant role played by such values in shaping family relations in Vietnamese families. While cultural values in Vietnamese families have changed over time due to political developments, social policies, urbanisation and modernisation, the prevailing view is one of continuity rather than change. The cultural values of filial piety, gender hierarchy and harmony are thought to persist strongly in contemporary Vietnamese society, and continue to be shared across generations.

Regarding the study’s theoretical framework, the theories of capital and habitus are considered useful perspectives to bring to this research. Bourdieu’s theory of capital

enables an analysis to be undertaken of how and why Vietnamese family values are reshaped and restructured in the Australian context. Habitus helps to explain the factors that influence the attitudes and behaviours of migrants and children in terms of treasuring cultural values while underplaying values that are unsuitable in Australian society. These concepts are expected to assist with thinking about the important roles of agency whereby Vietnamese parents and children are active agents in the cultural retention process when living in Australia.

When discussing the cultural values of migrants, it is important to understand the relationships between first-generation migrants and their children. The following chapter will provide an outline of the literature on intergenerational relations in migrant families.

## **Chapter 3: Cultural values and intergenerational relations in migrant families.**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter aims to provide a review of the existing research on the intergenerational relations in migrant families in general, and on the changes and continuities of cultural values in Vietnamese migrant families in particular. First, an overview of the relationships between first-generation migrants and their children will be provided, with a focus on cultural differences across generations. The negotiations that take place within migrant families regarding the modification of migrant parents' cultural heritage and the preservation by the second generation of their parents' cultural values will then be explored. Finally, this chapter will examine the process of maintaining and modifying cultural values in Vietnamese families after migration. Through this review, some important gaps and limitations in the previous research on this subject will be identified.

This chapter argues that cultural differences across generations, which result in conflicts, are considered a common trend in migrant families. However, the roles of parents and children in negotiating cultural clashes need to be further explored. Additionally, although the general discussion on Vietnamese migrant families reveals that Vietnamese cultural values in families change after migration, what is missing is an in-depth inquiry into the process of sharing Vietnamese cultural values across

generations in Vietnamese migrant families, along with the factors influencing the process of these changes and the continuities of these values.

### 3.2. Intergenerational relations in migrant families

#### 3.2.1. *Cultural differences across generations*

In the literature on intergenerational relations in migrant and immigrant families, the cultural differences between first generation parents' cultural values and the mainstream culture in which their children are born and raised are comprehensive. First-generation parents in migrant families have often been described as clinging to cultural values belonging to their country of origin (Chaichian 1997; Choi et al. 2013; Dhruvarajan 1993; Hyun 2001; Renzaho, McCabe & Sainsbury 2011; Tingvold et al. 2012a; Yoshida & Busby 2012). For example, in a study of Confucian values in two groups of Koreans, one group living in Korea and the other in the United States (US), Hyun (2001) found that although these American Koreans enjoyed much more modern lifestyles and had a greater exposure to western ideas than Seoul Koreans, the former tended to hold onto traditional Confucian values much more than the latter. This study also shows that they tended to hold onto the traditional values they were brought up with when they left Korea 10, 20 or 30 years ago. Similarly, many immigrant parents in the US treasured their ethnic norms and cultural values, even though these values had changed in their home countries since they had left (Foner 1997).

Other research suggests that first-generation parents have a tendency to apply their values of origin in bringing up their children. Using the mother tongue as a vehicle for cultural continuity, encouraging children to participate in religious services in order to

create a sense of belonging, and providing traditional norms and standards as tools in shaping children's behaviours are conventional migrant parenting styles (Bankston & Zhou 1996; Chaichian 1997; Killian & Hegtvedt 2003; Nguyen, Chang & Loh 2014; Tingvold et al. 2012a). These parenting styles often result in conflicts between these parents and their children who were born and raised in the host culture. For instance, many Chinese children living in the US described their migrant parents as *lao-wan-gu*(old sticks in the mud or stubborn heads from the old world), and parental ways as old-fashioned (Zhou 2009). Other research found that there is a higher likelihood that Vietnamese-born children will create conflict with their immigrant parents than native-born Americans (Dinh, Sarason & Sarason 1994).

Another area in which researchers have identified conflicts between migrant parents and their children from Asian countries is in attitudes towards mate selection, dating and marriage. It is clear that in this regard, western societies are significantly different from those reflecting cultures affected by Confucian thought. In western culture, individuals' personal choices, romantic love and companionship are key factors in making decisions regarding marriage (Ingoldsby & Hamon 2003). Young people usually leave their parents' home, choose partners by themselves, and have long-term relationships before marriage (Dempsey & Lindsay 2014). By contrast, in many Asian cultures, parents tend to involve themselves in their children's marriages. Remaining a virgin before marriage is a strong moral value. Many researchers have argued that while first-generation Asians find it difficult to accept these western values after migration to western societies, the second generation easily adopt the marriage and dating values of western countries (Nesteruk & Gramescu 2012; Samuel 2010).

The children of migrants can be referred to as the ‘second generation’, if they were born in the host country, or the ‘1.5 generation’, if they were born abroad and brought to host countries between the ages of 5 and 12 (Rumbaut 2004; Zhou & Bankston 1998). Growing up in new countries can be a difficult and confusing process, and the children of migrants frequently experience pressure both to assimilate into mainstream society and to preserve their own culture of origin (Bankston & Zhou 1994; Sekhon & Szmigin 2011)

It is commonly asserted that the children of migrants have better opportunities than their parents to adapt to mainstream societies, and they tend to adjust to the host culture more rapidly than their first-generation parents (Chen et al. 2014; Ho & Birman 2010; Hofstetter et al. 2009; Nguyen & Ho 1995; Rosenthal, Ranieri & Klimidis 1996).

Through education and peer group activities, children and young people seem to be active in adapting to mainstream social values (Chen et al. 2014). With regard to intergenerational differences in acculturation and family conflict among Korean immigrant families, Hofstetter et al. (2009) argues that due to the requirements of the mainstream education system and of assimilating into American society, Korean American children have adapted to American society much more quickly than their parents. This finding is supported by Chen et al. (2014), who studied the roles of children’s cultural orientation. From a survey of 258 Chinese American children, the author points out the characteristics that lead to better adjustment by the children from migrant families. Children who exhibited higher English proficiency, greater English media use, and greater communication with American friends were more likely to adapt to the host country. Similarly, Ho and Birman (2010) studied the differences in

behavioural acculturation between children and parents, such as speaking English at school or at home, reading books in English or Vietnamese, watching Vietnamese or American films and eating western or Asian food. From the investigation, they concluded that migrant family members acculturate at different rates. According to Ho and Birman (2010), this is likely to result in cultural conflict and threaten the harmony in family relationships.

In line with these issues, other researchers have looked at the decrease in original cultural traits among the second-generation. Accepting new cultural values and practices may lead second-generation migrants to be alienated from their ethnic heritage culture. For instance, in a study about Italian families in Australia, Vasta (1995) found that many Italian second-generation children do not feel the same moral pressure from their community as their parents did. When they become parents, their parenting is more relaxed, and they communicate better with their children than in previous generations. Similarly, many Asian children in Australia do not want to maintain aspects of their culture of origin such as language, filial piety values relating to respect for the elderly, and obedience to parents (Mak & Chan 1995). They struggle to preserve the cultural values of their parents' homeland, and many of them prefer to connect strongly with western culture, and are inclined to take on the values and beliefs they consider necessary to becoming citizens of host countries (Foner 2009; Portes & Rumbaut 2001).

In summary, the cultural gaps between first-generation parents and children in migrant/immigrant families have been presented as a source of conflict in migrant families (Ho & Birman 2010). These intergenerational conflicts have impacted on the

process of sharing cultural values in these families. The maintenance of culture has been challenged by cultural differences across generations. However, the literature also suggests that another facet of the story is the extent to which first-generation parents and their children negotiate and accept their differences. The following section provides a brief literature review on this topic.

### *3.2.2. The negotiation of cultural clashes in migrant families*

Although migrant parents tend to cling closely to their culture after migration, many of them also work out compromises with their children, negotiating cultural clashes within their families (Foner & Dreby 2011). Indian and Haitian first-generation immigrants in the US, for example, permit their children to arrange their marriages by themselves, thus modifying their cultural practices (Lessinger 1995; Zephir 2001). In line with this, Zhou (1997) indicates that many Asian immigrants in the US who come from Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese backgrounds, and who have original cultures dominated by Confucianism, Taoism or Buddhism, often modify cultural norms such as submissiveness and excessive family obligations. These modifications, Zhou argues, present a way of validating their cultural practices in new environments, enabling them to overcome the difficulties of their new lives.

Similarly, through exploring family socialisation in Korean immigrant families, Choi et al. (2013) found that the principal norm in Korean traditional families is *ga-jung-kyo-yuk*, or family training and home education, whereby parents help children build the character and knowledge necessary to become respected people, and to acquire the basic rules for communal life. Although migrant Korean parents seek to maintain and share values related to *ga-jung-kyo-yuk* with their children, many other values can be

modified, such as the expectation that children must wait to eat until adults start eating, and must avoid eye contact and keep their heads down when reprimanded. Likewise, research into Iranian immigrants in Iowa City in the US found that while the majority of Iranian first-generation parents draw on Iranian cultural values in raising their children, most of them communicate with other family members in English, and about half of them observe and celebrate American holidays such as Christmas, Halloween and Thanksgiving (Chaichian 1997). Many immigrant parents also realise that it is necessary to make adjustments in order to respond to the changes of their family life in a new context (Foner & Dreby 2011; Zhou 2009). Immigrant parents aspire to preserve and share the values of their origin as a form of capital with their children; however, they do tend to be responsive to changes in their environment.

It has also been found that children of immigrants are deeply influenced by the core values of their culture, and can successfully negotiate between two cultures. Kasnitz (2009) found that children of immigrants in New York achieve success largely by remaining tied to the ethnic culture of their parents, while simultaneously engaging with mainstream American culture. Similarly, a growing body of literature on second-generation adult children in the US found that the children of immigrants are proud of their culture of origin and admire their parents for the sacrifices they have made to make a better life for their families in new countries (D'Alisera 2009; Zhou 2009).

A more nuanced picture emerges from research on children of Indian immigrants. A study on the attitudes to their parents' disciplinary practices of Indian teenagers living in the US found that while Indian parents are strict in raising their children, many children defend their parents' child-rearing practices, adding that when they have their

own children, they will try to find a compromise between Indian strictness and American freedom (Waters & Sykes 2009). Similarly, by examining the acculturation and identity of second-generation Indian Punjabis living in the United Kingdom, Sekhon and Szmigin (2011) highlight that '*izatt*', a concept of appropriate behaviour in different situations of Indian culture, powerfully influences Punjabi decision-making.

This phenomenon is replicated in the research into second-generation Vietnamese in the US and Australia. Bankston and Zhou (1994) confirm that Vietnamese youth in an immigrant community who have a strong commitment to Vietnamese values (such as obedience and hard work) and are heavily involved in the ethnic community do better in school, and have more ambitious academic goals than their peers without these characteristics. Projects on Vietnamese second-generation in Australia carried out recently by Tang (2012) and Nunn (2012) show that the members of the Vietnamese second generation are successfully integrated into mainstream Australian culture, but are also strongly influenced by their ethnic identity. In other words, cultural values can strengthen children, helping protect them from the negative impacts of racism on their self-esteem (Harker 2001). These benefits may also lead to the children of migrants becoming active members of both mainstream and ethnic cultures.

The literature outlined above has shown that the children of migrants tend to adapt well to mainstream culture, and that this has resulted in lower levels of maintenance of their parents' culture. The maintenance of aspects of the culture of origin are thought to assist in promoting the successful adaptation of young immigrants to their new homes. Meanwhile, the influences of cultural heritage and ethnic communities on

the children of immigrants are thought to improve their ability to communicate within their ethnic group.

In the following section, intergenerational relations in Vietnamese migrant families will be explored, with a focus on changes and continuities in Vietnamese cultural values.

### 3.3. Vietnamese cultural values among migrant families

As explained earlier in the thesis, Vietnamese people have migrated to many countries, and can be classified into distinct categories. According to Ben-Mosche (2012), before French colonisation (1858-1954), the first groups of Vietnamese migrants left Vietnam and settled in neighbouring countries such as Lao, Cambodia or China. In the period of French colonisation, some Vietnamese migrated to France to undertake courses of study, because of marriage or through joining the army. During the Vietnam War and through the decade of the 1980s, many Vietnamese from northern Vietnam went to Russia and Eastern Europe to study, work and settle following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The biggest group of Vietnamese migrants consists of refugees who escaped from southern Vietnam and settled in the US, Canada, western Europe and Australia after the fall of the Saigon regime in April 1975. The most recent groups of Vietnamese migrants are skilled migrants who study and work in the US, UK, Canada and Australia (Nguyen 2014a), and Vietnamese women who work as domestic workers in Taiwan or marry men from Taiwan, Korea and other Asian countries (Bélanger 2007; Bélanger, Linh & Duong 2011; Hoang 2016).

Most research into Vietnamese migrant families focuses on those who left Vietnam after the Vietnam War and settled in western countries. Studies on Vietnamese

migrant communities in such countries as America, Norway, Canada and Australia have identified that Vietnamese cultural values including language, parental sacrifice, parental authority, filial piety, education and harmony are maintained in refugee families (Caplan, Whitmore & Choy 1989; Chan & Dorais 1998; Cheung & Nguyen 2001; Nguyen & Williams 1989; Nguyen, Chang & Loh 2014; Nunn 2012; Rosenthal, Ranieri & Klimidis 1996; Thomas 1999; Tingvold et al. 2012a; Tingvold et al. 2012b; Tran 1998b). However, these studies mainly focused on parenting styles, adolescent attitudes, the acculturation process and intergenerational conflicts rather than on family values. For example, from their investigation of the parenting styles of Vietnamese immigrants in Norway, Tingvold et al. (2012a) note that Vietnamese parents draw on resources in teaching their offspring, including the mother tongue, extended family models and the expectation of strong relations between siblings. Relatives, brothers and sisters are thought to have important roles in shaping children's behaviours. The Vietnamese language is used as an effective way to foster relationships between children and other members of their extended families. Similarly, the findings of interviews with seven Vietnamese-Australian mothers in Western Australia, Nguyen, Chang and Loh (2014) show that the mothers expect their children to retain such values as Vietnamese identity, education, respect and parental control. Other studies on parenting styles in Vietnamese families indicate that many children of immigrants feel pressured, and disagree with Vietnamese parenting styles such as strictness and lack of empathy (Dinh, Sarason & Sarason 1994; Wong et al. 2011). Although these studies explored parenting beliefs rooted in traditional values that were built up through the resettlement process in the new countries, what is missing is an in-depth inquiry into

Vietnamese cultural norms that are shared in Vietnamese immigrant families and valued by children.

The values of harmony and solidarity (*hòa thuận, đoàn kết*) that relate to emotional interdependence continue to be preserved in many refugee Vietnamese families after migration (Thomas 1999; Tingvold et al. 2012b). In a Vietnamese Australian study, Thomas (1999) conducted fieldwork between 1992 and 1998 focusing on the ongoing dynamism of Vietnamese Australian identities. Stories are presented of Vietnamese Australians and their Vietnamese rituals, homes, and the spaces they inhabit in Australia. Thomas argues that the Vietnamese family in Australia is marked by the concept of harmony and family solidarity. By having family members live together in the same location, the Vietnamese family is viewed as a place of welfare and mutual dependence, in which family members are expected to take care of and maintain close contact with extended kin. This value was also found in a study about the Vietnamese community in Norway. Tingvold et al. (2012b) suggest that uncles and aunts are seen as significant people in the lives of Vietnamese adolescents, who feel that contact with members of their extended families is beneficial. Similarly, research into Vietnamese refugees in Canada found that many Vietnamese immigrants do not want to leave Montreal, Quebec because they want to continue living with their family members and relatives in the same location; this demonstrates their tight relationships (Chan & Dorais 1998). However, these studies do not focus on how the process of passing on this value from first-generation parents to children takes place in a migrant context, and in particular, how the values of harmony and solidarity are maintained in skilled migrant families with family members living overseas.

Much research has focused on the maintenance of the Vietnamese language in the diaspora (Ben-Mosche 2012; Nguyen, Chang & Loh 2014; Peter 1996; Pham 1998; Tingvold et al. 2012a). To support strong relationships in families, the mother tongue has been used to enhance the family bond (Peter 1996). For example, by examining the parenting styles enacted by Vietnamese immigrant parents in Norway, Tingvold et al. (2012a) point out that many parents understand that speaking Vietnamese provides an effective way for adolescent Vietnamese to maintain close contact with relatives; therefore many of them push their children to learn the language. By investigating the use of language by students in private and public domains, other studies found that the length of residence and age of residents in Australia influences whether or not language is maintained (Pham 1998). However, these studies do not focus on the process of maintaining the language as a family value, or on the views and practices of parents and children regarding their mother tongue. Additionally, for migrants living in Australia where the political and social environment supports cultural diversity, there may be more opportunities to retain the language.

On the topic of filial piety values, Nguyen and Williams (1989) conducted research on Vietnamese adolescents and their parents in the US. They argue that Vietnamese parents tend to adhere to norms of obedience and parental authority within their families, which leads to family tension and conflict. Similarly, in a recent study on second-generation Vietnamese in Norway, Fekjær and Leirvik (2011) suggests that when parents emphasise obedience and subordination, this has a negative influence on their children's school performance. Other researchers point out that values relating to age hierarchy in parent-child relationships may decrease over time spent in mainstream

societies (Nguyen & Williams 1989; Rosenthal, Ranieri & Klimidis 1996). James and Pranee (2003), who carried out a study on Vietnamese older adults in refugee families in Australia, argue that changes in the ideology of older parents towards filial piety need to be made, particularly when their children live in the same house.

Some researchers have considered the views of refugee parents on sharing cultural values with their children. Caplan, Whitmore and Choy (1989)suggests that Vietnamese parents believe that valuing hard work and academic achievement form part of their heritage; therefore they try to pass on these values to their children. Much research indicates that working and studying hard are important values that contribute to children's success (Bankston & Zhou 1996; Cheung & Nguyen 2001). Therefore many refugee parents want their children to adopt these values. It has also been noted in these studies that characteristics of parental authority – such as expectations of obedience and respect for parents – are maintained, even when their children are of university age or married. However, a shortcoming of previous research is that there is a lack of insight into the obligations of children to parents in terms of providing support and showing gratitude. Further, little is known about whether and/or how filial piety is practised in Australia, and why this sharing takes place across generations in such families.

A value that features in the literature on Vietnamese migrant families is gender hierarchy in families. Following migration, the gender hierarchy in many migrant families changes. Research into migrant men who come from countries that support patriarchal family values such as China, Iran and Brazil found that the men have had to accept the dominant gender ideologies of the host culture. In the process, they have

tended to lose power and authority within their families, engage in more domestic and childcare responsibilities, and develop more liberal views about gender roles in families (Chuang 2013; DeBiaggi 2002; Schonpflug 2001; Shirpak, Maticka-Tyndale & Chinichian 2011). Women often have more opportunities to study and work in host countries, so they can share the breadwinner role with their husbands (e.g. Gill & Matthews 1995). However, in many Vietnamese refugee families at the early stage of resettlement, it was found that there are conflicts and violence between husbands and wives when the gendered beliefs and practices of their home countries are challenged (Nguyen & Ho 1995). One US-based study on gender conflict in Vietnamese refugee families in Philadelphia points out that after settling down into a new life in the US, many Vietnamese men face unemployment, and their economic contributions decline significantly, while women have more opportunity to maintain their positions in families(Kibria 1990). Despite their increased power, Vietnamese migrant women continue to support a patriarchal family structure. Bui and Morash (1999) conducted a study into domestic violence in Vietnamese American families, and found that women's economic contributions do not reduce the dominance of husbands and the level of violence within families. The Vietnamese American women participants in the research hold traditional female roles, and chose to stay in abusive relationships rather than divorce. Other research into Vietnamese Australian families has found that after settling in Australia, even if men face issues like unemployment and financial difficulty, they are reluctant to change their higher status in families (Nguyen & Ho 1995; Thomas 1999). It is evident from the literature that gender hierarchy norms persist strongly in many Vietnamese refugee families after migrating to the west. However, to date there has been little research undertaken on how gendered beliefs and practices

in Vietnamese migrant families are enacted over time, or how parents communicate gendered expectations to their Australian-born children. Further, existing studies are limited in terms of understanding the views and practices of Vietnamese migrants towards the patrilineal obligations of sons.

In summary, Vietnamese cultural values in families in the migrant context are changing. While some values relating to harmony and solidarity have been preserved by the first generation, other values relating to filial piety have been challenged in host countries. The ideology of gender hierarchy remains strong in these families. Cultural gaps and conflicts between first and subsequent generations in refugee families in the early years of resettlement have also been found. However, there has been little research on the operation of the process of sharing cultural values in refugee families after many years living in their countries of residence. Further, views about and practices of these values by children born and raised in host countries have not yet been fully explored. In particular, few studies have looked at recently-settled skilled Vietnamese migrant parents and their children. Recent skilled migrants and their families may shape Vietnamese communities in the countries of migration because of their social class, and because they are well educated and generally migrate by choice. Little is known about whether and/or how family values have been shared in skilled migrant families, and how this sharing takes place across generations.

### 3.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, a brief review of the literature on intergenerational gaps in migrant families has been provided. Background information about the changes and

continuities of Vietnamese cultural values in families in a migration context has also been provided.

The review of the literature on intergenerational relations in migrant families reveals that migrant cultural values have been influenced by generational gaps. The first generation has been described as adhering to their cultural traits, while many children feel encumbered by their cultural heritage. This trend is common in many immigrant families in western societies (Foner 2009; Zhou 2009). However, the other part of the story relates to the important roles of parents and children as active agents in the process of modifying and preserving cultural values. Migrants can create mechanisms to validate their cultural values before developing new valuable resources in the mainstream culture. There is a gap in the literature on the operation of these cultural processes in migrant families in culturally diverse countries such as Australia. My study contributes to the literature by exploring the process of the sharing of Vietnamese family values between first- generation parents and the children of migrants in Melbourne, Australia.

The migration context has led to changes in the norms and values in Vietnamese families, and refugees have faced challenges in this regard in the early stage of resettlement in receiving countries. While values of harmony and solidarity have remained strong in many refugee families, other aspects of filial piety have been challenged. However, the process of maintaining and modifying cultural values across generations, the factors influencing the process, and the reasons why certain values have been preserved and others have been rejected have not previously been comprehensively researched. Following on from research into Vietnamese cultural

values and parent-child relationships in migrant families, the present research is designed to fill a gap in the literature by exploring the voice of first-generation parents and children in Vietnamese migrant families in Melbourne, Australia.

### 3.5. Research questions

The project seeks to answer the following questions:

- Which cultural values in families do first-generation parents want to share with their children? Why do they want to share those values and not others? How does this sharing take place?
- What are the views and practices of the children of Vietnamese migrants regarding those values?

Before answering these questions, it is necessary to describe the methodological approach employed in this project. This is the objective of the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4: Research Method**

### **4.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, the research methodology adopted for this study is outlined. The research design is described first, including its qualitative approach, in-depth interviews and samples. The process of recruiting participants, the demographic of participants and ethical considerations are then summarised. Next, the interview and data analysis processes are explained, and a reflection on the insider/outsider status of the researcher follows. Finally, the limitations of the method employed are pointed out.

### **4.2. Qualitative research with in depth-interviews**

In his book *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, Creswell (2013) indicates that qualitative approach enables us to hear the voices of individuals who are invisible, and to fill the gaps about complex human relationships and issues that cannot be reached by quantitative research. In other words, a qualitative approach can be useful in exploring what is going on behind the phenomenon (Strauss 1990; Waller, Farquharson & Dempsey 2016). The current study seeks to understand the process of sharing cultural values in Vietnamese migrant families living in an Australian context; therefore, a qualitative approach was employed to examine the continuity and selectivity of family values across generations in migrant families.

Another benefit of qualitative studies is that the data can allow researchers to reflect, simulate and generate theories (Neuman 2011; Waller, Farquharson & Dempsey 2016). In other words, researchers usually use qualitative methods to investigate areas about which they have little understanding, and thus they can contribute new ideas to the theories. Using a qualitative approach, this study is designed to explore Vietnamese migrants' experiences, and the views on and practices of the children of Vietnamese migrants regarding family values. The study provides further evidence to enable a deeper understanding of migrants' habitus, and of the capital concepts associated with their cultural values.

In studying families, a qualitative research approach provides opportunities for researchers to thoroughly explore family life, and how family members view and practise their relationships (Daly 2007). Using qualitative methods, it is possible to examine the process of interaction from the perspective of family members, as well as dynamics, negotiation and transitions. In other words, qualitative family research enables researchers to generate and understand in-depth and detailed information about family relationships and family members (Rosenblatt & Fischer 1993). A qualitative approach has therefore been selected as an effective way to explore the process of sharing Vietnamese cultural values in migrant families.

In-depth interviews were conducted for this study. Collecting qualitative family data from in-depth interviews enables researchers to gather detailed descriptions of recent family interactions from participants (Rosenblatt & Fischer 1993; Waller, Farquharson & Dempsey 2016). Conversations with interviewees allow researchers to explore the insights of participants such as their thoughts, feelings and experiences (Liamputpong

2013). This tool also allows researchers to gain access to the motives, meanings, actions and reactions of people in the context of their daily lives (Minichiello 2008; Strauss 1990). This is another reason why in-depth interviews were selected as an active technique to explore which cultural values Vietnamese Australian want to share/retain/reject in their lives in Australia, and why and how these processes take place. Further, in-depth interviews create opportunities for researchers to establish a close rapport with respondents, which can generate further interesting points for exploratory research (Liamputpong 2013; Waller, Farquharson & Dempsey 2016). Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were an effective way to encourage participants to share their stories relating to parents and children, husbands, wives, siblings and relationships with other relatives.

### 4.3. Samples

As the purpose of the current research was to investigate the sharing of cultural values across generations in migrant families, first-generation migrants and children of migrants were selected. First-generation migrants are defined as people who were born and socialised in another country, and who immigrate as adults (Rumbaut 2004). Therefore, the inclusion criteria for first-generation participants was that they were born and raised in Vietnam, and that they had immigrated in Australia at the age of 18 or older. The first generation had to be parents.

This study explored the views and practices of children of Vietnamese migrants.

According to Zhou and Bankston (1998) and Rumbaut and Ima (1988), the children of immigrants/migrants include the second and 1.5 generations who were born or raised

in host countries, and children who were born abroad and brought to host countries between the ages of 5 and 12. The children of migrants in this study are therefore second and 1.5 generation migrants who were born in Australia or brought to Australia at a young age, and who had begun secondary education. Having attended primary and high school in Australia, children have gained experience in the Australian education environment, and this would be different to first-generation migrants who were born and raised in Vietnam.

As discussed in the previous chapter, there have been different waves of Vietnamese migration to Australia. These waves of migrants are somewhat distinct, with each leaving Vietnam for a different reason and maintaining different links with Vietnam after migration. The biggest group of migrants was refugees who left Vietnam shortly after the war. At the time they left, Vietnamese society had not yet been influenced by the economic reform (*Đổi mới*) that resulted in significant changes of cultural values in families (Le 2012; Truong, Dinh & Le 2001). In contrast, skilled migrants were born and socialised in contemporary Vietnam, where family values have been undergoing transformation under the *Đổi mới* reforms. These differing situations of the two groups of Vietnamese migrants may be expected to lead to differences between them regarding the sharing of cultural values in their families. Therefore, the first-generation participant group in this study were chosen from two waves. The first group of interviewees was drawn mainly from people who left Vietnam as refugees from the late 1970s to the late 1980s. The second group were skilled migrants who have arrived in Australia since the 1990s to study and work. Children of refugees and skilled migrants were also selected. These groups are referred to

throughout the current study as ‘parents’ and ‘children’. The children and parents were recruited separately, and were generally not from the same families. Diversity was sought in the groups of parents and children to be interviewed. This included gender, age, class and level of education.

The sample of this study includes 38 participants, of which 20 were first-generation parents – 10 from each group – and 18 children, 10 of whom were the children of refugees and eight of whom were the children of skilled migrants. According to Waller, Farquharson and Dempsey (2016), once informational redundancy and theoretical saturation are achieved, a sample is deemed to be large enough. Based on data from 60 in-depth interviews with women in two West African countries that were conducted to test data saturation, Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) found that saturation occurred after the first 12 interviews. In the present study, the fieldwork was terminated when enough information had been provided to answer the research questions, and when the interviews ceased to reveal new information. When conducting the final interviews, I found that informational redundancy occurred, as participants were continually providing the same information as others.

#### **4.4. Recruiting participants**

Snowball sampling was used to gather participants in this study. This is a common method for a qualitative approach, which begins with a few respondents who then provide suggestions for other potential participants (Neuman 2011; Waller, Farquharson & Dempsey 2016; Walter 2010). One of the limitations of this method lies in the variation in snowball samples which can bias samples systematically (Waller,

Farquharson & Dempsey 2016). My participants were recruited in through network connections. Thus, to overcome this issue, I started by recruiting at least three unrelated participants for each group. After that, I asked them to suggest potential respondents.

#### *4.4.1. Recruiting first-generation participants*

I sought first-generation parent participants who came to Australia after the Vietnam War as refugees, and others who came to Australia more recently as skilled migrants. In recruiting the first group of refugees for the project, I confronted difficulties.

There are many Vietnamese community organisations that have been established by refugees in Melbourne, so after the Swinburne University Human Research Ethics Committee approved the project, I emailed flyers and advertisements to these organisations to encourage refugees to take part. However, no participants were recruited in this way. After that, I met with leaders of relevant organisations in Melbourne to discuss the issues, and requested that flyers be distributed. This approach was also unsuccessful. I did not acquire any refugee participants during the second month of the fieldwork period.

Following this, I decided to contact Vietnamese refugees who lived in the same area individually. I encouraged people at Asian services such as markets, clinics and temples to be participants. When I talked to them in Vietnamese with my northern accent, many wondered where I came from, if my parents served in the northern Vietnamese army during the Vietnam War, and whether my project was funded by the communist party. From their concerns, I understood possible reasons for refugees' reluctance to be involved in a study run by a northern Vietnamese person. However, after providing

them with full information about my project, some agreed to participate. After one month, I recruited three refugee participants, and they introduced me to their friends. Finally, I had 10 refugee participants.

Recruiting first-generation parent participants who came to Australia recently as skilled migrants was easier than recruiting refugees, even though I had only lived in Melbourne for one year and knew little about Vietnamese communities in Melbourne. I sent advertisements to acquaintances who were studying in Melbourne, encouraging them to share information about my project. They helped me to distribute flyers and information about the project to their network. This method worked well. After only one week distributing flyers, I received phone calls from three skilled migrants who were interested in joining my project. It took only a short time to get 10 skilled migrant participants. Most participants from this group were born after the Vietnam War. They were not influenced by the political issues of the war, but had come to Australia to study and work. Therefore, once they were aware of my situation as a PhD student from Vietnam who was conducting a study into Vietnamese migrants in Australia, most were happy to participate.

#### *4.4.2. Recruiting children of migrants*

Through the recruitment process outlined above, I not only recruited first-generation participants who were skilled migrants, but also 10 adult children from refugee backgrounds. For the group of children from refugee backgrounds, it took me only around two months to find participants. They were happy to participate in my study and introduce my project to their network. However, it was still difficult to find child participants from skilled migrant backgrounds. The reason for this was that the

Vietnamese skilled migrants had arrived in Australia to study and work in the 1990s and beyond. Many of them started families recently, so their children were still very young. In the beginning I aimed to select children who were over 15 years old, because that is when children begin to develop independent ideas, and are mature enough to understand their social environment (Galotti 2011). However, after six months, I had done only four interviews – far below the target of 10. I then sent a modification request form to the ethics committee with the aim of recruiting child participants who were under 15 years old. Finally, I recruited four more participants aged 14.

#### *4.4.3. Demographics of participants (see appendices)*

First-generation participants had lived in Melbourne for between eight and 36 years. Of 20 parent participants, half of them were past refugees who came to Australia between the 1970s and the 1980s. Almost all refugee participants were working class. At the time of the interviews, four of the 10 refugee participants had retired as outworkers and from unskilled factory jobs, five others worked as unskilled and semi-skilled workers in factories or as pickers in vegetable farms, and one refugee participant worked as a lab assistant in a university. In contrast, the skilled migrant participants had been living in Australia for between eight and 17 years. All participants in the group were Australian citizens or holders of permanent resident visas. The skilled migrant participants worked as lecturers, English teachers, interpreters, accountants and financial managers. The age of first-generation participants ranged between 34 and 70. Eleven first-generation participants were fathers, and nine were mothers. They had between one and five children.

The child participants were born in Australia, or came to Australia with their parents when they were aged between 5 and 13. The migrants' children were aged between 14 and 39. Of the 18 children, 10 came from refugee backgrounds and eight came from skilled migrant families. Six adult child participants were married, and three of them had children.

#### **4.5. The interviews**

The interviews were conducted between January 2015 and February 2016 in Melbourne, and took place at locations chosen by the participants. I conducted the interviews in coffee shops, community libraries and participants' offices. Many refugee participants preferred to be interviewed at their residences, which provided me with the opportunity to learn more about their families through their family photographs and mementoes. Many of them introduced me to their extended family members through showing me photographs. Mi, for example – a refugee mother of 63 – showed me a picture of her mother and sister who were living in the US. Mi also spent time talking about her sister's life after the war, and the difficulties they had experienced during the early period of resettlement in new countries. In some of my participants' houses, I saw altars with old pictures of their relatives. Many of them told me sad stories about people in the pictures who lost their lives on the way to Australia. This provided a valuable opportunity to understand what happened to their families during that traumatic time in the past, and the changes to their family structures that had occurred through their migration to Australia.

The interview durations ranged from 30 minutes to two hours. The first-generation parent participants preferred to be interviewed in Vietnamese, even though those from the skilled migrant group speak English proficiently. Sixteen interviews with child participants were conducted in English, and two children of migrants preferred to speak Vietnamese. The Vietnamese quotations by participants were translated into English and subsequently checked by an interpreter. It is better if researchers doing cross-language data analysis do the translations themselves. However, an interpreter is necessary to validate the transfer of meaning (Temple & Young 2004). Interviews were digitally recorded and field notes were taken. Pertinent information from the interviews and the participants was noted in my notebook after every interview.

Before every interview, I briefly described my project to participants, and gave them the information sheet and consent form. All participants signed the form before the interviews commenced. Consent forms for children who were under 18 years-old were signed by the child and a parent. The interviews followed the guidelines of a semi-structured interview schedule that included questions about family values (see appendix). The interviews were divided into three parts. In the first part, to break the ice between researcher and participants, I asked them general questions such as when/how they arrived in Australia and how many children/siblings they had. I conducted many interviews at the time of the *Tết* (Vietnamese Lunar New Year) and Mid-Autumn festivals (*Trung thu*), so I started by sharing stories about the traditional activities Vietnamese usually do at that time. This relaxed the participants before they shared their stories about other values relating to their families.

The second part of the interviews involved asking questions about the values parents want to share with their children. To begin this section, all participants were asked the same questions: 'When I say Vietnamese family values, what do you think of?' Almost all participants then talked about norms and cultural values relating to the relationships between parents and children, children and siblings and relatives, and husbands and wives. They were also asked about their views towards these norms and values, and which values they wanted to share with their children, and why.

In the third section, parent participants were requested to share their home practices involving these values. Parent participants shared stories about their children and the ways they practise Vietnamese values in an Australia context. In this section, child participants were asked about what their parents shared with them about family values and their practices relating to those values. In the final section, participants were asked whether there was anything further they wanted to add to the project. Participants also had a chance to add information that was not covered by my questions.

#### 4.6. Ethical considerations

The project was approved by the Swinburne University Human Research Ethics Committee. It was expected that the contents of questions would not cause suffering to the participants. The research subject matter is not of a highly sensitive nature and was unlikely to cause distress. However, it was possible that some questions might cause emotional distress to particular participants. For example, questions about expectations of elderly care could have made participants who had experienced great

difficulty in looking after their own parents uncomfortable, or provoke negative feelings. For participants who were refugees, the questions that related to the means of escape from Vietnam could have reminded them of past traumatic experiences. Participants were therefore provided with general information about the project and the interview questions before deciding to participate. It was made clear to them that if they felt distressed for any reason during the interviews, they could stop anytime. In all cases, participants were provided with information about available counselling resources. To ensure their anonymity, participants were given pseudonyms.

During the interviews, participants were happy to share their stories about Vietnamese cultural values in their families. Many of them enjoyed discussing the topics, and wanted to share their experiences of living in Australia. Interestingly, although I had issues in recruiting refugee participants, once they agreed to participate, many of them spent a lot of time sharing their sad stories about the journey from Vietnam to Australia by boat, and about their lives during the early stages of resettlement in Australia. This was very emotionally moving for me as a researcher who was born after the Vietnam War and had grown up in the centre of Vietnam. The stories relating to the losses of their family members during their journeys took me by surprise, because I had not previously known much about that era of Vietnamese history.

#### 4.7. Reflections on the research process

##### *4.7.1. Situating myself as ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’*

As a Vietnamese woman, I was an ‘insider’ with the participants in the study. Situating myself as an insider allowed me the opportunity to build a close rapport with my

participants. I learned about Vietnamese values through my own extended family, maintain those values in my own family, and share them with my son. These values helped me to identify deeply with the family values shared by my participants in the interviews. For example, many participants told me about Vietnamese sayings such as: ‘*Anh em như thể tay chân*’ (love siblings as you would love yourself’), and ‘*Giọt máu đào hơn ao nước lă*’ (blood is thicker than water). It was easy for me to comprehend the meanings of these sayings. My Vietnamese background provided me with an advantage, in that my participants felt comfortable to share their stories with me. In the interviews, many made comments such as: ‘You are Vietnamese, you might know well about that’, or: ‘In Vietnamese culture, you and I hold values such as...’ In other words, my participants felt that I was one of them, and my position enabled a close rapport, and meant that I was familiar with their values and understood the information they provided. However, one possible drawback was that some participants obviously felt quite close to me, and started to ask questions about my private life. For example, they asked about my son, my husband, how I teach my son Vietnamese values and about the extent to which my husband takes on domestic chores. Sometimes it became difficult to keep my sense of decorum during these conversations. It is possible that any personal stories I shared with them could have influenced the interview data in terms of sharing some cultural values in families.

In other ways, I was an ‘outsider’ to my participants in the study. Although I am a migrant living in Australia at the time of conducting the research, I was born and raised during the period of economic reform (*Đổi mới*) in Vietnam, and expect to return to Vietnam upon completion of my PhD candidature. This means that my experience has

been different from that of the migrant parent participants in terms of raising children and sharing Vietnamese cultural values in the diaspora. For example, after three years living in Australia, my son tends to forget the Vietnamese language, speaks English as his main language, and is somewhat alienated from his relatives living in Vietnam. I am not concerned, because he will have the opportunity to regain those values once he is living back in Vietnam. The outsider position allows me to be objective and to gain insight into the real picture for migrant families in Australia. For example, regarding the issue of values of filial piety, many parent participants told me that they do not think they need to be supported financially by their children when living in Australia. I listened to them and said that I wanted to know more about their stories because I usually live in Vietnam where parents still need assistance from children. This conversation made my participants aware that I had different experiences from them, and therefore I needed to understand their situations in some depth. In the interviews, therefore, I saw myself as an outsider. Thus my insider and outsider status influenced the research outcomes.

#### *4.7.2. The limitations of the method*

The first limitation relates to the tool used to collect data. Data came from the interviews, which are a resource for understanding how respondents understand their world (May 2011). Talking with people is an effective way for researchers to explore participants' beliefs, feelings and experiences (Liamputong 2013). However, I had no way of knowing how the beliefs and practices of cultural values discussed in the interviews translate into real-life behaviours, or reflect 'a reality that is "external" to the interview' (May 2011, p. 158). In this study, participants described and recalled

their behaviours towards cultural values in their families. What participants 'say' and what they 'do', however, may be different. For example, when male participants were asked about values related to gender roles, many of them described how they helped with domestic chores and childcare. However, I could not be sure whether this was actually the case in real life. As Minichiello (2008) notes, an informant may create a good story by distorting reality in order to enhance the interviewer's image of them. My project aimed to explore Vietnamese cultural values in migrant families. When participants were asked about such values as harmony as they relate to relationships between their family members, the informants tended to talk about strong and close relationships, and not to disclose any violence or family conflict.

Another possible limitation to the current study relates to my samples. As outlined in Chapter 1, the Vietnamese community in Australia can be divided into three principal groups, including people who came to Australia under the Family Reunion Program. Those people left Vietnam under different circumstances from the refugee group, and therefore may have different feelings about Vietnam; the ways of sharing cultural values in their families may also differ from those of the other group. This study, however, did not include people from the Family Reunion Program. Although participants came from the refugee and skilled migrant groups, the sample size of my study was small. Therefore, the findings of the study cannot represent the entire Vietnamese community in Australia.

Another possible limitation of my samples is that almost all participants came from intact families. Participants in this study reported largely harmonious parent-child relationships. However, many other refugee families experience violence and

family tension due to the difficulties of resettlement and different gendered expectations in the receiving countries (Bui & Morash 1999; Kibria 1990). As a result, many Vietnamese refugee parents have divorced. If the participants in this study had come from these families, the interview data about harmony and solidarity may have been different.

It should also be acknowledged that the study could be compromised by the impact of religious background on the sharing of cultural values. Different religions may have contrasting ideas about cultural values in families. For example, Buddhists tend to pray at their family altar every new moon and full moon, and to mark anniversaries of deaths; therefore men play a very important role in Buddhist families in maintaining rituals and their family lines. However, Christians do not tend to practise many family rituals. Thus, the two religious groups may differ in their views and practices regarding rituals. However, no demographic questions were asked of the participants in this study regarding religious background, though some parent participants said they take their children to temples or churches. There was therefore no data acquired about the influence of religion on the sharing of family values across generations.

#### 4.8. Data analysis

Each interview was recorded and transcribed immediately after interviewing. This enabled assessment of the early interviews so that improvements could be made to the subsequent interviews as necessary. After that, the transcripts were imported into Nvivo software, and separated into two folders ready for coding, one containing transcripts of the interview with parents, and the other those with the children.

To analyse the data, I employed thematic analysis focused on identifying themes emerging from the transcripts (Minichiello 2008; Walter 2010). As Braun and Clarke (2006) explain, thematic analysis – in which themes are selected by an inductive method – can provide a flexible and useful research tool to analyse the data. In other words, this approach to analysis is data driven. I read the transcripts carefully many times to develop an understanding of the values and family relations expressed in them.

I started by asking questions concerning which values the parents want to maintain, why and how they maintain them, and what children here think and do with these values. I then identified themes that emerged from questions I asked of the data regarding the core Vietnamese cultural values of filial piety, harmony and gender hierarchy. Themes relating to the maintenance of the Vietnamese language and of links with Vietnam also emerged from the interviews, and these were explored. The results of the analysis are presented in Chapters 5 to 9. These results are structured as a series of values within migrant families that form the capita that parents attempt to share with their children, and those values that they have modified in their families.

This chapter has outlined the methodology used in the study. The following chapters will present the findings from the interviews. Chapter 5 begins with a discussion of the harmony and solidarity values that parents of both refugee and skilled migrants attempt to pass on to their children as a form of capital, and which they find beneficial living in Australia. The children, in turn, value and embrace some aspects of these values as valuable assets passed on to them by their parents.

## Chapter 5: Sharing harmony and solidarity values

### 5.1. Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 2, harmony (*hòa thuận*) and solidarity (*đoàn kết*) in Vietnamese families are related to getting along well, sharing emotions and providing support and assistance to each other (Kibria 1995; Pham 1999; Thomas 1999; Toan 1960). Vietnamese family members are expected to maintain these values in order to create a happy and supportive family. For many Vietnamese, a family is regarded as such when most of its members live in harmony and solidarity.

This chapter examines the sharing of the values of harmony and solidarity in Vietnamese migrant families. In the first section, I explore what parents expect of their children in terms of supporting each other, getting along well with siblings and relatives, and why. The second part looks at parents' practices in sharing these values with children. Lastly, the focus is on children's views and practice about harmony and solidarity.

I argue in this chapter that living in the Australian context, parents from both refugee and skilled migrant groups consider the sharing of these values with children as a form of social capital. For most of them, harmony and solidarity are valuable resources that can strengthen relationships among family members, and help families to overcome difficulties when living in the diaspora. Therefore, they attempt to pass these values on to their children. Children from both refugee and skilled migrant backgrounds preserve most aspects of these values, because they find it beneficial to do so. However,

children of skilled migrants do not see advantages in enhancing relationships between them and their relatives. They tended to downplay this aspect of harmony and solidarity values.

## 5.2. Parents' expectations

Of the 20 first-generation parent participants in this study, at the time of interview three had only one child, nine had two children and the remaining eight had more than two children. While most refugee parents' relatives were living in Melbourne, almost all the other parent participants had extended families living in Vietnam. Regardless of whether their extended families were in Vietnam or Australia, almost all said that they expect to maintain harmony and solidarity between family members as a core value of their families. Most expect their children to get along well with siblings and extended kin, and to support and help each other. They understand that the strong bonds of family relationships bring benefits to their lives, helping them to overcome the difficulties of their past. For many, these values are worthwhile, and they seek to pass them on to the next generations living in Australia.

### 5.2.1. *Getting along well and supporting each other as siblings*

Participants from both the refugee and skilled migrant groups emphasised the importance of the value of '*nhường nhịn*' which is translated into English as 'keep siblings company', 'to be compatible' with siblings and 'to tolerate each other':

They [siblings] grow up under the same roof, so they should play together, keep their brother company. They should be close friends. (Hồng, 37, skilled migrant mother)

Vietnamese parents usually do want their children to have strong relationships with each other, I suppose. I have three children with distinctive characteristics but I think they should be compatible. I taught them that they should not quarrel with their brothers/sisters and should tolerate each other just because they are siblings. (Đại, 52, refugee father)

Now my sons have their own families and they did not live together any longer. I still do want them to get along well – even their wives as well. I do want my daughters-in-law to have strong relationships too. If so, we will have a tight family. (Mi, 63, refugee mother)

Many find happiness in noting harmony between their children. When their children were younger, they expected them to get along well and tolerate each other. Although their children have grown up and started families, the parents reported that they expect them to continue these values in their families, and hope that their grandchildren's generation will do the same. Eight parent participants in the study have grandchildren. Most said that they expect their daughters-in-law and sons-in-law to get along well with each other, because if they have close relationships, they could promote this notion to grandchildren.

Parent participants see supporting each other as an important aspect of harmony and solidarity that they expect their children to adopt. Vietnamese sayings such as '*'Chị ngã em nâng'*' (If the older sister falls down the younger one should lift her up) and '*'Anh em như thể tay chân'*' (love siblings as you would love yourself) were mentioned frequently in parents' interviews when they were asked about their expectations of relationships between siblings in families. This means that if one has problems, he/she should get

help and support from siblings so that they can solve the issues together. As 65-year-old refugee father, Thai, explained:

I do want them to love each other, help each other like the Vietnamese saying '*chị ngã em nâng* (if the older sister falls down the younger sister should lift her up).

A phrase used by Huyền, a 36-year-old skilled migrant mother, was '*anh em nhữngh tay chân*' (love siblings as you would love yourself):

It [harmony and solidarity between siblings] is very important in the family in general; the kids should definitely help each other like '*anh em nhữngh tay chân*' (love siblings as you would love yourself), I guess. If they face troubles in their life, I guess just only their brothers/sisters will be willing to help them, rather than other people outside the family.

For Huyền, the idea that 'just only brothers or sisters could help each other' is the reason she wants their children to get along well and support each other. Huyền also spoke about her brothers' assistance when she first came to Melbourne. Not only did they financially support her, but they provided emotional support during the time she left Vietnam and started her new life in Australia.

Another mother stated that the reasons for supporting each other are 'love' and 'responsibilities':

I think it [providing support to each other] is very important to their lives.

When they take care of siblings, they will know how to love and have responsibilities towards siblings as well as other people. (Hồng, 37, skilled migrant mother)

For Huyền and Hồng, providing support to siblings means fulfilling obligations and responsibilities that brothers and sisters have towards each other in families. Parent migrants understand that in the migration context, tight relationships between their children are vital.

The idea of supporting each other was expressed particularly by participants who have young children. For instance, they explained that they expect their children to share toys with each other, to help each other with schoolwork, and to take care of each other. Yến, a 37-year-old skilled migrant and mother of two daughters, said that ‘Reading books at bedtime, feeding milk, and helping her sisters to have a bath were the daily jobs that I requested my older one to do’. Yến also hoped that, through this, her daughters would learn about the need for strong relationships between siblings, which would be useful to them in the future.

A significant theme to emerge about the idea of siblings supporting each other was highlighted by refugee parents. Most left their countries in difficult conditions and started their new lives in a foreign country without money, qualifications and other resources. Perhaps this made mutual support between siblings particularly necessary, and something they do want to maintain. Long, 65, came to Melbourne in a boat as a refugee. In the stories she shared about the tough time her family had settling into Melbourne, it was clear that she has a strong sense of the need for close-knit relationships between her daughters. Her first daughter worked hard to earn money to pay tuition fees for her middle and youngest daughters. The daughters also helped each other find jobs, even after they were married and no longer lived together.

Despite living separately, many refugee participants request that their children continue to support each other in all aspects of life.

For almost all parent participants in this study, strong relationships between siblings are understood as a valuable source of assistance in their children's lives, and they want to share this value with their children.

#### *5.2.2. Getting along well with relatives and receiving support from them*

Along with the expectations of children about harmony and solidarity between siblings, most refugee and skilled migrant participants also reported that children should get along well and receive support from their relatives such as grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins in extended families. They believe that harmonious relationships within the extended family would help their children to deal more easily with issues in their lives. Hiếu, a 42-year-old skilled migrant father, expressed this view about a united family:

Living together in harmony and solidarity is a good way to maintain other values in your families. All issues will be solved easily if you have a united and collective family.

Some skilled migrant parents said that their children tend to be independent and feel unique, so this might work against the important roles of extended family members when living in Australia. Tiên, a 38-year-old skilled migrant mother, expressed this view:

Living here may lead them [her children] to be too independent, so they may tend to ignore the close relationships between family members. I am worried

about that. Closeness is an important value in our families. That is why I try my best to encourage them to enhance the relationships, day by day, month by month, and year by year.

For Tiên, closeness and dependent relationships between extended family members are important values that she expects their children to develop and maintain. She hopes that as long as their children work on keeping strong bonds, they will not become 'too independent'.

Another reason given by the parents was that uncles and aunts are their siblings, so helping their siblings' children is also supporting them as parents. Huyền (36, skilled migrant mother) wondered how it would be possible for her child to get on in life without such a bond:

Just because grandparents gave birth to their parents, uncles and aunts are their parents' siblings, so children should respect them and have close relationships with them. How can they live without the relationships?

Huyền was not the only participant who stressed the important roles of family members; all parents reported that relatives are significant people who can promote united families. Closeness and solidarity among extended family members are considered core characteristics of Vietnamese families. The participants value harmony and solidarity highly. Their views can be expressed well through two sayings: 'United we stand, divided we fall', and 'Blood is thicker than water'. Children should support their relatives, and get help from them if needed:

Grandparents can look after them and tell them Vietnamese fairy tales and other stuff relating to Vietnamese values, so why wouldn't you let your children to be taken care of by their grandparents? (Bèn, 39, skilled migrant father)

For Bèn, grandparents play an important role in taking care of his children and passing on Vietnamese values to them. He sees this as a valuable asset that he wants to preserve in his family.

Other parents who had been refugees explained that they came to Australia with their siblings and relatives. During the difficult period of resettlement, they had to help each other to start new lives in Australia. Long, 65 years old, arrived in Melbourne in 1981 with her husband, her three daughters and her two brothers. Lacking proficiency in English, she worked as a garment outworker for about 10 years before starting work as a vegetable picker on a farm. Although she and her husband had worked very hard in many unskilled jobs, her family could still not afford an apartment at that time. Thanks to financial support from her siblings, she managed to buy a new house. For Long, her brothers are like 'second parents' of her children:

They [her sisters and brothers] are my siblings. So, if I passed away, my children would get help from them as in a Vietnamese saying: '*sảy cha theo chú sảy mẹ bú gi'* (if your fathers passed away you would get help from your uncles; if your mother passed away when you were a baby, you should be breast-fed by your aunties).

The phrase '*sảy cha theo chú sảy mẹ bú gi*' reported by Long was also expressed by another refugee father as a source of emotional support:

Their uncles and aunts (his children's uncles and aunts) always motivated them to get good grades, to find good jobs and to achieve success. They always gave my children strong motivations to study and work. (Đại, 52, refugee father)

Nam, a 39-year-old skilled migrant father, has lived in Melbourne for 15 years, and expressed a similar sentiment. After graduating from a cookery course, he started his own business. He recalled that his relatives in Vietnam provided him with both emotional and financial support to run his business. He said that thanks to their help, he got through the difficult periods. For Nam, it is important that children understand this and respect their relatives:

There is a Vietnamese saying like '*uống nước nhớ nguồn*' (Gratitude is sign of noble souls). I usually explain to my children that I appreciate what my relatives have done to support me and I never forget them. I do want to share with my kids my stories in order to encourage them to know the resources of their family, as well as the importance of the closeness, solidarity and support. My kids should continue these values when they grow up.

It is evident that siblings and extended kin play a very important role in the participants' families in terms of providing support. When migrating and settling in Australia, the parent participants received emotional and material support from their siblings and relatives to help overcome the difficult readjustment period in a new environment. They believe that strong relationships between family members are a valuable resource that they want to pass on to their children. Many feel this will help their children overcome difficulties in their lives. In the following section, the interview data on parents' efforts to maintain these values in their families will be presented.

### **5.3. Parents' sharing strategies**

As well as affirming the importance of encouraging closeness and support within families, the parents discussed ways they try to achieve this. These include setting a good example for their children, creating an environment in which siblings take care of each other, and encouraging children to have a lot of contact with extended kin. Most parent participants reported that they try their best to share with their children aspects of harmony values relating to close relationships and support between family members. Setting a good example for children and encouraging them to keep in close contact with relatives are common ways for parents to maintain these values in their families. However, despite practising these values, they explained that it is not easy to keep doing so.

#### *5.3.1. Setting a good example for children*

The findings outlined above show that parents expect their children to get along well with siblings and relatives, and to support each other in their extended families. Parent participants spoke about setting an example for their children in order to encourage them to absorb these values. Huyền (36, skilled mother) of two children, migrated to Australia 14 years ago. Although all her siblings and relatives live in Vietnam, she said that she keeps in close contact with her brothers and sisters via Facebook, FaceTime and Viber. She sends gifts to her sisters and brothers for their birthdays, Tết festivals, and other traditional events. She said that she also makes an effort to include her children in these rituals:

I usually encouraged them to go to the shops with me to buy these gifts. I always told them that it was my love to my brothers and sisters. I wanted to set an example for my children.

Similarly, Ngoc, a 70-year-old refugee father of five children, said that he and his wife avoid having arguments in front of the children. He tries not to get angry with family members, because for him, if parents want children to get along well and to reach compromises, parents should be ‘a role model for children’. Several other parents likewise described how they believe that parents’ behaviour plays an important role in shaping children’s attitudes and behaviours relating to relationships between family members. Mi, a 63-year-old refugee mother, explained that: ‘when children were in their early age, they were just like a white paper, so what their parents do will influence their thinking and behaviours’.

Participants not only spoke of being a role model for children, but also reported that they always provided chances for their children to do things together when their children were very young.

### *5.3.2. Creating an environment for siblings to play, study, and take care of each other*

The majority of younger parent participants in the study shared stories about the ways they create opportunities that encourage their children to get along well with each other. Playing together, helping each other to study and sharing emotions were reported as good practices to improve their children’s relationships. Hồng (37, skilled mother) recalled:

When I got pregnant with our younger child, I bought a big doll and pretended that was a new baby and I was telling my older son about the new baby, a new family member, and encouraged him to play with the doll. Now they are best friends, they play together all the time and do things together like brushing teeth, having a bath, and so on...

Other parents also noted the benefits of doing things together and helping each other study when their children were very young. For instance Mi (63, refugee mother) explained that when she first came to Melbourne, she worked full time in a factory, and her three sons cooked together and helped each other with homework. Although her sons now have their own families, Mi's family still has dinner together once a week, when they come over to her place, prepare food and chat.

Another refugee father said that he creates opportunities for his children to go to religious services together, even though they now have their own families. Hải (68) said:

I encourage them to come to my place to have dinner every weekend, and then they usually go to the church nearby. All of them, my sons and daughters, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law and my grandchildren go together. They love gathering.

For these parents, setting a good example and creating chances for children to get together are helpful practices in maintaining close-knit and dependent relations between their offspring, which they expect them to continue in Australia.

### *5.3.3. Encouraging children to keep in close contact with extended kin*

Another practice mentioned frequently in the interviews when parents were talking about their extended families was ensuring that children stay in regular contact with their relatives. Keeping in close contact with extended family members is one of the principal ways. Most of the refugee parent participants who migrated to Australia decades ago have their extended families in Melbourne. They mentioned that they hold family reunions frequently, and encourage their children to attend. By contrast, in most cases, skilled migrant parent participants who recently came to live in Melbourne do not have many relatives in Australia. For the latter group, taking children back to Vietnam and chatting with their relatives through social media are common ways they maintain harmony and solidarity values in their families.

For almost all the refugees, the Tết holiday, Mid-Autumn festivals, Christmas, Easter and other family events such as weddings and anniversaries of deaths are considered to be key occasions that enhance family solidarity. These festivals and anniversaries are frequently celebrated with their entire extended families, providing an opportunity for family reunions now that they live in Melbourne. The gatherings were described as the best way to connect children with their grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins:

I usually arrange time for them to catch up with their relatives. My place has become a central area for family members. We enjoy weekends, festivals and other family events together. (Thái, 65, refugee father)

I have 10 siblings; seven are living here, one is in Vietnam, and two others are living in America. My parents, my uncles and aunties also live here. Tết festivals, death anniversaries, and others like Christmas and New Year we get

together, around 30 people. It is a really good opportunity for my kids to see and chat with their relatives, and the relationships between them are enhanced with time. (Đại, 52, refugee father)

Thái, Đại and other parent participants came to Melbourne as refugees after the Vietnam War between the 1970s and 1980s. In many cases their relatives migrated to Australia later under the Family Reunion Program. When family members arrived, they usually lived near each other. Most refugee participants live with their extended families in Melbourne or other states in Australia. Thus, they have chances to get together frequently. Many participants added that their children often drop by their relatives' places whenever they want to catch up and chat with grandparents, cousins and others. Ly, a 55-year-old refugee mother, said:

My daughter gets along very well with her uncles and aunts. She is very busy but whenever she has time, she drops by their places to catch up with them, sometimes just chatting. Every festival coming, like Tết and Mid-Autumn, she buys gifts for them. I think they have tight relationships.

While refugee participants reported the best way for children to retain harmony and solidarity values is to get together with their relatives living in Melbourne, most skilled migrant participants do not have relatives living in Australia. Their extended family members typically live overseas. Nearly all came to Melbourne on their own to study. After graduating, they settled in Australia and started families. For this group, social media is employed as an effective tool to communicate with extended families in Vietnam. Thus, they said that they encourage their children to keep in close contact with their relatives using these means:

We call my parents once and my mother-in-law twice per week. We use Skype so we can see each other easily. My kids are encouraged to chat and share emotions with their grandparents, uncles and cousins too. We stay here without relatives so I do want them to keep contact well with our extended family in Vietnam through these ways. I do want them to know about their background and have close relationships with our extended family members.

(Tiên, 38, skilled migrant mother)

Other participants said that taking children back to Vietnam frequently is a better way to promote relationships between their children and extended kin. For these parents, going back to Vietnam provides their children with opportunities to maintain family connections, and with collective family interests in particular. Tú, a 38-year-old skilled migrant father, came to Australia 15 years ago to study information technology, and was working in a bank in a technical role at the time of the interview. Every summer holiday, his family goes back to Vietnam for about one month. Another skilled migrant father, Bền (39), also reported that not only do they go back to Vietnam annually, but he also invites his parents to visit his family in Melbourne. For Tú and Bền, their children need to live in an extended family, because they want them to learn the values of family harmony and solidarity. The efforts parents' make demonstrate the importance to them of harmony and solidarity values. The tight relationships of united and collective families are passed on to the next generations in many different ways.

#### *5.3.4. 'It was not really easy'*

However, an important point that emerged from the interviews is that skilled migrant parents find it challenging to encourage their children to communicate with their

relatives overseas. Nearly all used statements such as, 'It was not really easy' and 'we are not really sure' in describing their feelings about their children's beliefs and behaviours towards this value.

For instance, although Tiêu (38, skilled migrant mother) referred to maintaining connections with family members through Skype and other social media in the above examples, she still finds it difficult to encourage her children to participate in conversations with grandparents and other relatives in Vietnam:

They [her children] just talked a little bit with their grandparents and their cousins. They did not want to share their emotions and routines with them through the conversations. I am not really sure about their feelings towards kinship. It's difficult because of geography distance, I guess.

Another father stressed that:

We did not have many chances to live close with extended families. We just see each other once or twice a year so my kids felt strange when they met their extended kin. I'm not really sure about the relationships between them. (Nam, 39, skilled migrant father)

For Nam and Tiêu, although they expect there to be strong bonds between their children and relatives, they find it challenge to promote these relationships.

It has been shown that parent participants from the refugee group have more opportunities to encourage their children to keep in close contact with extended families who live close to their children. In most cases in this group, the process of passing on these values to children is easier than in the skilled migrant parent group.

Because members of the extended families of skilled migrant parent participants live overseas, they have fewer chances to encourage their children to maintain these values in their families. However, parents from both groups believe that it is necessary to maintain relationships between their children and relatives, and they try their best to make sure this happens.

The results described above show that harmony and solidarity values are considered to be a form of social capital that brings benefits in terms of connecting family members, promoting tight and strong families, and providing support for each other when migrating to a new country. The parent participants believe that a united and collective family, where all members stay connected and support each other, would become a valuable resource for their children's lives. Thus, parents expect their children to understand and adopt those values. However, the children of migrants who were born and have grown up in Australia may have different perspectives. In the following section, children's thoughts about these values are presented.

## 5.4. Children's views and practice

### *5.4.1. Getting along well with and supporting each other among siblings*

Of the 18 children participants, only two do not have siblings. Regardless of whether they have siblings, the majority of child participants in the study share with their parents the same understanding about the importance of close relationships between siblings. Hoa, a 36-year-old daughter in a refugee family, recalled what her father shared with her about solidarity values, showing a keen sense of a 'united family':

When I was younger, when my brother and sisters were arguing, my dad gave us a bunch of chopsticks, ten different sticks, and he asked us to break the bunch. It was so hard to break the whole bunch so we could not break it. He then took out and broke one by one easily...He used this example to stress the importance of solidarity in families... He said to us that: united we stand, divided we fall. I realised that it was an important value in family that we should keep maintaining and passing on to the next generations.

Other participants from skilled migrant backgrounds also expressed the importance of tight families with strong relationships:

Everyone should stay together in harmony. This helps your family to be strong and never break. I'm happy to have them [her siblings] with me in my life and I don't want to lose [the relationships] in my family. (Thanh, 14, daughter of skilled migrants)

Many teenager participants said that their brothers and sisters are their best friends. They share everything together:

I love my sister. I am older than her so I guess I am already a role model for her. I did teach her many things, for example, reading, writing, and help her to identify the alphabet and numbers. (Lan, 14, daughter of skilled migrants)

Cường, an 18-year-old son of skilled migrants, explained the relationship between him and his sibling:

I think we are close. We tell each other what we cannot tell our parents. We can chat to each other and keep secrets. We study together; she helps me to address

the issues in some subjects like maths [...] Even though my sister is a lot older than me, four years, I look after my sister more than she does to me, I guess.

Hoa (36, daughter of refugees) had her own family at the time of interview, and was very happy to talk about her siblings and the tight relationships in her life:

I have three sisters and one older brother. My sisters and I, we are very close.

My youngest sister and I work in the same company, an insurance company.

We do almost everything together as much as we can. Whenever we have special plans, like mum's birthday or Father's Day, we buy gifts for our parents or prepare things together to celebrate. We are more than sisters, you know, we are friends as well. Sisters are like birth and friends are like choices, we are not only sisters but also friends.

Siblings grew up together, and studied and played together in their childhood. Many of them were happy to maintain strong relationships when they grew up and no longer lived together. Although several siblings have their own families, they stay connected and get together when they can.

However, some participants said that they did not really share stories and other things with their siblings when they lived in the same house. Hùng, a 37-year-old son of refugees, spoke of the age and gender gaps between his sister and him:

It is not quite right to say that we are not friendly. But I am much older than her, around 10 years older; we are not the same gender; I did not spend much time with her and my family under the same roof, so we do not have many chances to share emotions and other things in our lives.

When Hùng got married, he moved to another state. He explained that at that time his sister was still small. Hung values the strong relationships between siblings, but in his case, he thinks that the gaps of gender and age, and the fact that they have not spent much time together are the reasons he has not stayed close to his sisters.

The age gap was mentioned again by another participant:

I have a younger brother and younger sisters. You know, I did not really grow up with them so much. I guess we had an age gap. I was 13 when my brother was born so I was at home just some years after that. The stages that they need someone to confide in, I think, they probably confided more in my parents or their friends perhaps, not with me. (Thu, 31, daughter of refugees)

For a variety of reasons, not all children have maintained close relationships with their siblings. Nevertheless, most see maintaining closeness between brothers and sisters as an important value in their families, even if they have not managed to do so themselves.

The above results have shown that harmony and solidarity in terms of siblings getting along well and supporting each other are perceived as important values by almost all child participants from both refugee and skilled migrant families. The children embrace these values passed on from their parents as a form of capital. By practising these values in their lives, the children of migrants find it necessary and develop them in their lives. The following sections will present their perspectives on harmony and solidarity in terms of getting along well and receiving support from relatives.

#### *5.4.2. Getting along well, receiving support from and respecting relatives*

When it comes to relationships in extended families, the children interviewed have different views and practices regarding closeness with relatives. Although they understand that relatives are significant people in families, and their parents expect them to communicate well with them and respect them, children from refugee and skilled migrant families hold different beliefs around maintaining close relationships between themselves and their extended families.

The children from refugee backgrounds mostly believe that they should stay connected with their grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. In practice, they feel proud of their supportive families. For them they are meaningful relationships within which they can receive emotional support. They treasure these valuable resources in their lives. Ân, a 23-year-old son of refugees, strongly expressed his ideas on this topic:

We mostly value family first; we try our best to visit my grandparents, uncles and many family members as much as we can. Even though mum's side is in Sydney, we try to arrange a time for us to go and visit them. I enjoy it. That is the most important thing that I find I should keep doing.

Later in Ân's interview, he described the wonderful times he has with his grandparents, uncles and cousins in Sydney every Christmas and during other holidays. At the time of interview, Ân was an engineer in a car company, and had started his PhD course in engineering. He was busy with his study and work, but was still happy to visit his extended family frequently. Ân finds that the strong relationships with extended family members provide him with emotional support, necessary in his busy life.

For Vy, a 31-year-old daughter of refugees, her mother's experience as a refugee has strongly influenced her views and practices regarding relationships with her relatives:

My mum always told me '*sảy cha theo chú sảy mẹ bú gi'* (if your mother passed away when you were a baby, you should be breast-fed by your aunties) [...] My mum and my aunty came here together when they were 17 and 15 years old. They were past refugees [...] A lot of things happened to them from that time on...While my mum gave birth to my sister, my aunty had her first daughter. My mum did not have enough milk so my sister drank my aunty's milk. Now they are still very close. They are living in the same area, do things together so I feel like my aunty is my second mum.

The child participants from refugee backgrounds also shared stories about their extended families in Australia. They have grown up in communities where their relatives also live. Doing things together in their own communities has created chances for them to keep in close contact. The more they catch up with their relatives, the closer relationships they have.

Similarly, Tân, a 37-year-old son of refugees, described that he is very happy to attend family reunion events with the entire extended family. He further notes:

Every year, on death anniversaries, Tết festival and others, my mum and dad organise dinners, prepare traditional food like *Bún nước lèo*, and other Vietnamese things. We eat, clean up and then we just chat, sing karaoke, watch movies together...Those are good opportunities to just see and talk to each other and see how everything is going. All my cousins in my extended family get together, about 20 something people, yes, maybe more than that, around 30.

Tuấn, a 39-year-old with a refugee background, explained similar experiences of the relationships between him and his extended kin:

My family and my relatives left Vietnam together by boats. There are 26 people in my extended family. We get together every week at my aunt's place. My kids really like to go there to play with their cousins. They are best friends. They play soccer together even though they are in different age groups [...]. We are living in the same area. When we bought houses, we had already planned to buy houses located close together. My house and my uncle's place are very close. The front gate of my house is the back gate of my relatives' house. I can get in their houses whenever I want because I have their house keys and they have my house keys too.

For Tuấn, these relationships remain strong. Although his extended family does not live under the same roof as when they were in Vietnam, they live in the same area in a suburb in Melbourne where they share almost everything together. Tuấn's mother helps him to look after his children. He and his sister help each other by picking up children from school. Childcare, domestic chores and other emotional and material support were reported as benefits that Tuan and other children of refugee families receive through the strong bond in their extended families.

By contrast, child participants from skilled migrant parents group hold different views about relationships with extended families. Statements such as 'I don't know', 'I have no idea' and 'I am not really sure' were made by the participants when asked about their relatives.

Nearly all said that they only meet their grandparents, uncles and cousins once a year, and they do not really want to talk much to them through social media. Tri, a 16-year-old son of skilled migrants, came to Melbourne when he was 8 years old. His parents came to Australia to study and work, and brought him and his brother with them. He said that his parents keep in close contact with his grandparents, uncles and cousins in Vietnam through phone calls and via the internet, but he does not really want to participate in these kinds of communications. He described his feelings when he goes back to Vietnam to visit his relatives:

I just go back on the special occasions, like rarely. Recently it was 2014. It was strange; I have not talked to them since then. It was hard to talk to them. I used to play with my cousins but it was a kind of, they changed because they were growing up and they were busy, and – I am not really sure. (Tri, 16, son of skilled migrants)

The sense of a growing distance from extended family members in Vietnam was evident in Thanh's interview. In the interviews, Thanh (14, daughter of skilled migrants) highlighted that she was happy when she had the chance to live with her grandmother when the latter visited her family in Melbourne. During this time, her grandmother helped her to understand Vietnamese fairy tales, taught her Vietnamese lullabies, and guided her in cooking Vietnamese foods. However, in a later interview, she said that she does not stay close to relatives, noting the following:

When I was there, they [her uncles and cousins] were very busy, working and studying, so we did not spend much time together, although we did so when we were four and five in Vietnam.

For Thanh, harmony and solidarity values within her extended family were maintained only when her grandmother arrived in Melbourne and was living with her, providing her with emotional and material support along with a sense of closeness. The relationships with other kin have eroded, as living in Australia, she does not have the opportunity to enhance them.

Although the children of skilled migrants understand that relatives in their extended families are significant people, they are still not close to them. Although their parents have sought to pass on the values to them as a form of capital, they find it difficult to develop these values in practice. The geographic distances and the absence of relatives in their daily lives make it difficult for them to maintain close relationships. In addition, they do not find the same benefits in keeping tight relationships with their extended family members as do many children from refugee families. In Australia in most cases, the child participants with skilled migrant parents live in nuclear families. Taking care of each other, studying and doing things with siblings are the reasons they find it beneficial to stay in their lives, so most want to retain and develop these values as a form of capital. In relation to harmony and solidarity in extended families, despite their parents' efforts, many children of skilled migrant families do not find the need to enhance closeness to their extended families in Vietnam.

## 5.5. Discussion

Although ties to extended families in contemporary Vietnam tend to grow weaker ( Le 2012), research into Vietnamese migrant families in Australia, Norway and Canada has found that harmony and solidarity values among extended families continue to be

maintained carefully after Vietnamese refugees move to these countries (Chan & Dorais 1998; Thomas 1999; Tingvold et al. 2012b). Data from this study supports previous studies in showing that most aspects of harmony and solidarity in both refugee and skilled migrant families are typically retained and shared across generations because of the advantages of united and collective families when living in Australia. For refugees in this study, due to their special circumstance in which they had to flee their homeland and resettle in Australia in difficult conditions, the ties to extended family were necessary for their new lives. Further, as with many other ethnic groups in western society, closeness and solidarity among family members are considered by migrants as a form of social capital which can strengthen their network and resources when living in a foreign country (Zhou 2005).

Studies about Vietnamese migrant families point out that Vietnamese first-generation parents seek to pass on Vietnamese values to their children (Killian & Hegtvedt 2003; Tingvold et al. 2012a). They have been described as clinging to cultural values belonging to their country of origin; therefore, they tend to apply these values in bringing up their children (Nguyen & Williams 1989; Tingvold et al. 2012a). This was true of the parent participants in this study. Harmony and solidarity are considered vital values that parents expect their children to retain in Australia. Getting along well, providing support and keeping in close contact with siblings and relatives were reported as parents' expectations of children regardless of the length of time living in Australia, how old they are, their social class, and whether they have refugee or skilled migrant backgrounds. Although some participants reported difficulties in passing on these values to their children, it appears that the values of harmony and solidarity,

encompassing the ideas that ‘blood is thicker than water’ and ‘united we stand divided we fall’, have strongly persisted in parents’ views and practices after migration. The parent participants identified that strong relationships between extended family members are a valuable asset to their lives in the diaspora. Thus, they make an attempt to pass them on to their children as a form of social capital, with the hope that their children will be supported by these resources in overcoming difficulties in their future lives.

In relation to children’s attitudes towards their parents’ culture of origin, it is commonly asserted that second-generation children have better opportunities to adapt to the host culture, and tend to do so more rapidly than the first generation (Chen et al. 2014; Ho & Birman 2010; Hofstetter et al. 2009; Nguyen & Ho 1995; Rosenthal, Ranieri & Klimidis 1996). Accepting new cultural values has in general led them to be alienated from their ethnic heritage and culture (Mak & Chan 1995; Nguyen & Williams 1989; Rosenthal, Ranieri & Klimidis 1996). However, interview data from the current study shows that children of participants from both refugee and skilled migrant backgrounds believe that the Vietnamese family values associated with harmony and solidarity are essential, and they want to maintain them. Teenager participants had tight relationships with their siblings during childhood. Almost all adult child participants who have their own families continue to keep close contact, to get along well with their siblings and provide support when needed. For many of them, tight relationships among siblings are fundamental values passed on from their parents, and which they actively embrace. They find it important to continue practising

these values in their lives. It is likely that this form of social capital is developed by the next generations through their practice.

With regard to harmony and solidarity values among extended families, research on Vietnamese refugee families has found that relatives play important roles in families, and are involved in raising adolescent children (Tingvold et al. 2012a; Tingvold et al. 2012b). Children of refugees in these studies value the relationships between them and their relatives. By including children from skilled migrant families, the current study has elicited different findings from previous studies on children's attitudes towards extended family members. While almost all the child participants from refugee families find the need to retain relationships with extended family members, participants from skilled migrant families tend to be alienated from their uncles, aunts and cousins who do not live in Australia. They find that harmony and solidarity with extended family members are not beneficial, so they do not want to retain them in their lives. Although the skilled migrant parents share these values with their children, in practice, they tend not to fully maintain these values. This findings support to the view that extended families are particularly useful for refugees.

## 5.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented findings about harmony and solidarity values in families. My analysis focussed on participants' views and practices regarding relationships between siblings and those between relatives. I found that parent participants maintain these values and expect their children to get along well with their siblings and relatives, and to provide support to each other. The reasons for this

are that these values play a crucial role in maintaining dependent and collective relationships, which are seen as sources of power in Vietnamese migrant families. Thus, they attempt to pass on this form of social capital to their children. Parents' efforts are setting an example for their children, creating opportunities for children to help their siblings and contact their relatives frequently. With regard to children's attitudes and behaviours, almost all child participants from refugee backgrounds value the strong bond between them, and with siblings and relatives who live close to them; thus, they tend to maintain and develop those values as social capital in their daily lives. Children from skilled migrant backgrounds, however, retain tight relationships with their siblings, but tend to downplay the need for strong bonds with extended family members, which are not enhanced in their daily practices.

The findings also provide evidence to demonstrate that parents and children are active agents in the process of preserving harmony values. Living in the new context, the parent participants chose to share the values that provide benefits to their families. The children respondents embrace those values actively because of the advantages afforded by these values. In other words, the process of sharing cultural values in this study is not seen as a one way path of cultural transmission.

One effective way to maintain Vietnamese cultural values in migrant families is to retain the mother tongue. The following chapter will explore the maintenance of language in these families, which was reported by participants as a vehicle for cultural continuity that parents seek to maintain and pass on to their children.

## Chapter 6: Language maintenance in families

### 6.1. Introduction

Language maintenance has been considered an important value that migrant families seek to preserve in the migration context (e.g. Alba et al. 2002; Nesteruk 2010; Park & Sarkar 2007). Although the mother tongue was not mentioned as a Vietnamese family value that in Chapter 2, when talking about harmony and solidarity values with participants, they often referred to the importance of preserving the Vietnamese language as the best way of maintaining a strong bond with family members.

This chapter focuses on language maintenance within their families by first-generation parents and the children of migrants. I begin by presenting the material gleaned from interviews regarding parents' expectations of their children's language preservation, and the ways in which they preserve their mother tongue within their families. A discussion of the children's views and practices on this issue will follow.

Although the first-generation migrants come from two different groups –refugees or skilled migrants, left Vietnam at different times, and are from various age groups, they all expect their children to maintain the mother tongue. Preserving the language helps them to hold onto other cultural family values, to keep in close contact with their relatives, and to support children in studying and working. These advantages lead participants to try and maintain the language as a form of cultural capital in their families.

It has been shown that while parents from the refugee group tend to be strict about preserving the language, the skilled migrant group has developed more flexible ways to do so, and seek to pass values on to the next generation through connections with their homeland. Although it is difficult for children of migrants to be bilingual, almost all of them value the Vietnamese language, because it promotes close relationships in their families and supports them in studying and working. It is argued in this chapter that living in Australia, migrant families are provided with opportunities to maintain their mother tongue. This is because there are many ethnic groups in Australia, and there is a social and political environment that supports cultural diversity. The opportunity to study a foreign language subject in VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education), the high school leaving examinations, also assists in this process.

## 6.2. Parents' expectations

In the interviews with both refugee and skilled migrant participants, maintenance of the Vietnamese language was described as a key value they expect to pass on to their children. The following quote from a refugee who has been in Australia almost 40 years demonstrates the important role of language:

Living here may lead us to lose many things [cultural values], but the language cannot die out in my family. Do you know the famous saying of Phạm Quỳnh? [a leading Vietnamese scholar in culture and literature in the period of French colonisation] '*Tiếng Việt còn thì nước ta còn*' (Once Vietnamese language exists in our life we can defend our country from French troops). You know, it is so important being a Vietnamese. (Thái, 65, refugee father)

For Thái, the Vietnamese language is considered a symbol of national power that can help Vietnamese people overcome the assimilation policies imposed by the French government during the period of colonisation. After many years living in Australia, Thái thinks Vietnamese is an important cultural resource that strengthens his family and Vietnamese communities in the diaspora. Other participants also expressed strong emotions on this topic:

Speaking Vietnamese always brings me strong feelings. The words and the sentences in Vietnamese, for me, are so emotional. I cannot express myself like this when I speak English [...] I definitely asked my sons to speak Vietnamese at home. (Mi, 63, refugee mother)

Vietnamese is not only our mother tongue, but also culture. Language has a really close relationship with culture, so it is key to absorbing cultural values [in families]. (Trà, 34, skilled migrant mother)

Although Mi came as a refugee on a boat to live in Melbourne around 35 years ago, she still chooses not to speak much English. Trà did her Masters and PhD degrees in Australia, and can speak English fluently, but she also prefers to speak Vietnamese. For Mi and Trà, the Viet language is seen as part of their identity, and they attempt to preserve it by passing it on to future generations, even though they have been living in Australia for many years.

Another reason given by many participants for maintaining the language is to communicate well with extended family members. The following quote presents the view of a skilled migrant participant on the need to use Vietnamese:

I guess that it [speaking Vietnamese] is very important. Every time when we go back to Vietnam to visit our family, my kids can communicate well with their grandparents in Vietnamese. Speaking Vietnamese with family members can help them to promote the close relationships between them and others in our extended family. (Huyền, 36, skilled migrant mother)

A refugee father also considers speaking Vietnamese to be important. He shared a story about his relatives, who have not preserved the Vietnamese language while living overseas:

I do think that my children should learn and keep speaking Vietnamese so they can communicate with their relatives in Vietnamese. One of my aunts has got three daughters who left Vietnam after the Vietnam War. They are living in three non-English speaking countries. Her daughters do not encourage their children to maintain the Vietnamese language. So you know, her grandchildren cannot communicate and stay connected with extended family members because they do not speak English or Vietnamese. (Khuê, 62, refugee father)

As discussed in Chapter 5, a strong bond between family members is carefully preserved in many migrant families as a source of strength in overcoming difficulties in the migration context. For Khuê, preserving Vietnamese means enhancing the tight relationships between family members, and among the next generations who were born and are being raised in receiving countries. He believes that if the generation of grandchildren does not speak Vietnamese, they will not be able to communicate well within extended family members and maintain a strong bond with

their families. Khuê believes that keeping the Vietnamese language helps build bridges between family members.

In addition, the benefits of proficiency in Vietnamese was sometimes reported as being necessary living in culturally-diverse Australia. Many participants feel that because there are many ethnic groups in Australia, learning Vietnamese and other languages creates more opportunities for their children to find jobs and achieve success. The following quote describes the expectations of a first-generation father who had been living in Australia for 12 years, and worked as an English teacher and interpreter at the time of interview:

English is their first language because they [his children] were born and have grown up here. I do think they should learn more than one language, like Vietnamese, yes, definitely Viet language, and Italian, Japanese...etc. Because they are living in a country that has so many ethnic groups, they have more chances of finding a job. For example, if you work in a service sector of a bank and you know three languages, you can communicate with three groups of customers [...]. Learning a language is also a good way to learn culture. So, they will have opportunities to deeply understand Vietnamese culture if they keep using Viet language. (Hiếu, 42, skilled migrant father)

Language can be considered a form of cultural capital in the competitive workplace. Thus, for Hiếu and many other migrant parents, Vietnamese proficiency would be a great benefit to their children in their careers, especially within the Vietnamese community in Australia.

Although both refugee and skilled migrant participants expect their children to maintain the Vietnamese language because of the benefits this brings to their lives in Australia, they use different means to pass on these values to their children. The following section describes the differences between refugee and skilled migrant parents in their practices aimed at preserving their mother tongue.

### 6.3. Parents' sharing strategies

#### 6.3.1. *Refugee parents*

Despite the fact that many refugee participants have lived in Australia for almost 40 years, refugee participants in this study reported that they do not speak much English. They still speak Vietnamese at home and in public. Many of them said they do not need to worry about speaking English, because they work mainly with Vietnamese people in factories or on farms, go to Vietnamese doctors and lawyers, and shop at Vietnamese markets in Melbourne. Of the 10 refugee participants, only one male participant was working in a skilled job as a university lab research assistant. He arrived in Melbourne when he was 20 years old and did his bachelor's degree in chemistry. The other refugee participants in this study were working in unskilled jobs in factories and on farms. Most reported that there are many Vietnamese people at the factories and farms where they work, which is the reason they do not communicate in English at work. Further, all participants in the group live in Melbourne suburbs with big Vietnamese communities such as Footscray, Sunshine and Richmond. In these areas, there are many Vietnamese markets, restaurants, clinics and religious services; therefore, many refugees do not usually need to communicate in English in public. As a

result, they have high expectations of maintaining the Vietnamese language in their families, so that they can communicate well with their children and grandchildren.

*'No English at home'*. Almost all participants in this group explained that they do not speak English at home, and that they ask their children to speak Vietnamese at home.

The following quotes demonstrate the strict rules some have regarding speaking Vietnamese:

Our rule was no English at home. I forced them to speak Vietnamese with me. If they speak English with me I will not respond and will punish them. (Mi, 63, refugee mother)

When they were young, you know, they spoke English all day at school with their friends. But once they came home, only Vietnamese was allowed to be used. Now they got married but we still continue to apply this rule in my family.

(Hải, 68, refugee father)

I pushed them to learn Vietnamese as much as possible from their young age until now. I found it was hard. They were not allowed to speak English at home even speaking to their siblings. (Đại, 52, refugee father)

For many, setting the strict rule of speaking Vietnamese at home is an effective way to preserve the language. Although they admitted experiencing some difficulties in pushing their children to speak the Viet language at home, almost all reported that their children understand everything their parents say in Vietnamese, and speak Vietnamese fluently. The parents also explained that they are happy and proud of their children because they speak Vietnamese at home.

The refugee parents consider it to be very important to communicate in Vietnamese with their children, not only to help them to treasure their mother tongue, but also to encourage their children to be bilingual, enabling them to provide a bridge between their parents and the outside world. As 65-year-old refugee mother Long said, although she does not need to speak English at work and among the community where she lives, she still needs to communicate with banks, insurance companies and other services in English. She explained that her daughters assist her with paperwork, and act as her interpreters. It is clear that the children's bilingual status is beneficial to their refugee parents' lives. Refugee families need their children to be bilingual, which is why they insist that their children speak their mother tongue.

Many of the participants live in the same area of Melbourne as their kin. This creates more opportunities for their children to communicate with their extended family members in the Vietnamese language. For example, Thái, a 65-year-old refugee father, has his extended family of around 30 members also living in Melbourne. He reported that his children's Vietnamese has improved a lot by talking with their relatives in the mother tongue. He noted:

My home is a central place for my siblings, relatives, children and grandchildren to get together every weekend, and other times like Tết, Christmas and death anniversaries. My children can keep close relationships with their kin, and speak Vietnamese at the same time.

Mi, a 63-year-old refugee mother, said that although her sons have their own families, she still asks them to catch up every weekend with their uncles and aunts

for the purpose of maintaining close relationships and to practise speaking Vietnamese. She added:

We take turns to cook every weekend and have dinner together. It is a time for my sons to chat with their siblings and their relatives about their work, their lives and things had happened during the week. They keep using Vietnamese language when communicating with their relatives and me.

After Mi's children moved out to live independently, it was difficult to ask them to practise the Vietnamese language at home. Mi has sought other ways to encourage her son's families to continue speaking Vietnamese. Getting together at weekends and for other family events not only fosters closeness among family members, but also creates opportunities to practise the mother tongue. In this scenario, preserving the language plays a very important role in maintaining strong family ties.

Some participants mentioned religious communities as places where the maintenance of Vietnamese cultural values and language can be fostered. Those participants who are Buddhist or Christian reported that they have their own communities in Vietnamese churches or temples. For many of them, religious services provide effective opportunities for their children to improve the Viet language. A Catholic participant said the following about the advantages of going to Vietnamese churches:

My daughter can speak Vietnamese fluently. She can read and write well. She can sing Vietnamese songs as well because she attended church choir and Vietnamese Youth Community in the church since she was very young. We have a Vietnamese church in my suburb. Often, we have many things to do in the church like singing Vietnamese songs every Saturday night, celebrating New

Year's Eve or the Lunar New Year, and providing gifts for children in the Mid-Autumn festivals. (Ly, 55, refugee mother)

For Ly, going to a Vietnamese church is a good way to help her daughter keep in touch with the Vietnamese community. Being part of the Vietnamese community is seen as important in Ly's family in strengthening the relationships between them and other Vietnamese people in the country of migration. Ly's daughter has opportunities to absorb the Vietnamese culture and enhance the Vietnamese language through their religion. For many refugees like Ly, a solid community is regarded as a source of assistance when living in the diaspora.

Maintaining the use of the Viet language at home and getting children involved in community services are thought to be useful ways for refugees to encourage their children to speak the Vietnamese language.

#### *6.3.2. Skilled migrant parents*

Most skilled migrant participants do not have such strong rules aimed at preserving Vietnamese at home as the refugee group. Most said that they prefer to encourage their children to speak Viet at home. While many refugee participants do not speak much English, all skilled migrant participants speak English at work. The participants reported that they could speak English at home with their children, but that they prefer not to. They encourage their children to speak Vietnamese with them as much as possible. For example, Nam, a skilled migrant father of two daughters in primary school explained his method of maintaining the use of Vietnamese at home:

Whenever my kids speak English to me, I pretend not to understand the meanings of those sentences, so my kids have to try to express it in Vietnamese words. It is a really a good way for them to maintain Vietnamese vocabularies. I just encourage them rather than push them to do so. I think, if they do not like the language, they cannot speak it frequently even though I force them. (Nam, 39, skilled migrant father)

Another father also explained how he encourages his children to improve their Vietnamese language by using it at home. He feels it is important to create the right environment for the children to learn Vietnamese rather than placing pressure on them:

I just turn on the channels [Vietnamese channels] when we come home so they can listen to Vietnamese naturally. We have 15 different Vietnamese channels at home so we usually watch news, sports and cartoons. My children, my wife and I usually watch the TV programs together. (Hiếu, 42, skilled migrant father)

Hiếu is not the only participant who follows Vietnamese media; all the skilled migrant participants mentioned that they watch Vietnamese television channels at home. Many of them said that children's channels in Vietnamese are a valuable resource for their children to improve the Vietnamese language and learn about the culture. One participant described a program on television in Vietnamese that she follows and shares with her daughters:

At bed time, we watch *Quà tặng cuộc sống*(The gifts of life)on television together. I really like this program because it helps my daughters to enrich their knowledge about family relationships, the traditional manners and their

vocabularies. After watching, we usually discuss the stories in Vietnamese.

(Yen, 37, skilled migrant mother)

Media that deals with language acquisition provides an opportunity for parents to help children to learn Vietnamese. *Quà tặng cuộc sống* (The gifts of life) is a program produced by the National Vietnam Television that addresses topics such as good and bad manners within families and their communities in past and present Vietnamese society. This is helpful in terms of exposing children to Vietnamese language and morality, and Yen appreciates this program. She likes to watch such programs with her children in the hope that they can come to understand Vietnamese culture and improve their Vietnamese language in a natural way.

Similarly, Trà tries to improve her son's language skills by reading Vietnamese fairy tales:

I read Vietnamese fairy tales to him every night. I expect that he can understand the meanings behind the pronunciations of the language [in the books]. Once he understands it, he will love it, read it and express himself in Viet language. (Trà, 34, skilled migrant mother)

Another mother explained the benefits of Vietnamese lullabies in encouraging her children to learn Vietnamese:

I borrowed *Xuân Mai* discs from libraries and the other discs published by the Young Generation Company. Every morning I turn on the discs. They listen to and watch Vietnamese kids dancing and singing. They really like it. Now I use smart pens, which can read Vietnamese words for them just by touching the

word blackboard. It is very helpful to them I suppose. (Hồng, 37, skilled migrant mother)

*Xuân Mai* discs for children have been bestsellers in Vietnam in the 2000s. These discs consist of around 100 Vietnamese children's songs and lullabies performed by a famous 3-year-old girl named *Xuân Mai* and her friends. Many skilled parent participants who have young children also reported that they use this program to teach the Vietnamese language to their children. In so doing, Vietnamese is maintained naturally at home. The children of migrants are also kept up to date with what is happening in contemporary Vietnam through music.

Another way reported by many participants that can help improve language skills is taking children back to Vietnam. For many, this is wonderful opportunity for their children to speak Vietnamese:

Their Vietnamese was excellent after just only almost one month there [Vietnam]. (Huy, 40, skilled migrant father)

Another mother, Tiên, a 38-year-old skilled migrant mother, said that her children could speak the Viet language with the local accent after she took them back to Vietnam:

They had difficulties in pronouncing when they used Vietnamese words that have equal signs, mark for high rising tone... But the issues were sorted out properly after just a short time on holiday there [Vietnam]. (Tiên, 38, skilled migrant mother)

Communicating with extended families back home can help their children to improve their Vietnamese language skills. For many skilled migrants, their homeland and extended families in Vietnam remain a strong means of support for them in terms of maintaining Vietnamese cultural values.

In addition, almost all participants reported that they take their children to Vietnamese language schools in order to improve reading and writing skills. Of the 10 skilled migrant parent participants, seven parents had their children studying in primary and high schools at the time of interview. All seven participants reported that they send their children to Vietnamese language classes every weekend. Huy, a 40-year-old skilled migrant father, explained the benefits of sending children to Vietnamese lessons every week:

They go to Vietnamese school every Saturday morning. It is a chance for them to improve their reading and writing skills. Learning Vietnamese also can bring them a chance to get bonus points in the VCE subjects, so they can have more points to enter university.

VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education) is the credential awarded to secondary school students who successfully complete high school-level studies (year 11 and 12 or equivalent) in the state of Victoria. The Victoria government has a policy that gives students bonus points for foreign language study. Thus, the reasons for learning Vietnamese at school are not only to communicate with family members and to maintain other cultural values, but also to gain extra points in the VCE exam, which boosts children's opportunities for university study. However, some parent participants also reported that their children study many other subjects at school, so it

can be difficult for the children to learn the Vietnamese language as well. The participants also pointed out that growing up in Australia makes it difficult for children to preserve the Vietnamese language, because English becomes their first language.

It is apparent that the parenting styles of skilled migrant parents who left Vietnam recently and came to live in Australia by choice have more flexible parenting styles when it comes to promoting the Vietnamese language. As with other ways of preserving cultural values in families, they choose not to push their children to learn the Vietnamese language. By using media published in Vietnam and sending children back to Vietnam, the Vietnamese language is maintained in these families. Attending Vietnamese language schools is also seen by many Vietnamese skilled migrants as a good way to improve reading and writing skills.

In summary, parent participants from both refugee and skilled migrant backgrounds highly value the maintenance of the Vietnamese language maintenance in Australia. For refugee participants who do not speak much English, communicating with family members, promoting tight relationships in families, and building bridges for parents to the outside world are seen by these parents as the advantages of preserving the language and passing it on to their children using strict measures. Skilled migrants, however, feel that their children need to learn Vietnamese so that they might obtain success in studying and working through being bilingual. The ways they encourage their children to learn Vietnamese are linked to their homeland. Vietnamese language schools in Melbourne are seen as special places for future generations to learn Vietnamese. It is evident that although they use different means to maintain their mother tongue, the parent participants from both groups think of keeping the

Vietnamese language as a form cultural capital that can bring benefits to their children's lives. However, the children of migrants who have grown up in Australia and speak English as their first language may have different attitudes and behaviours regarding language maintenance. The following section discusses the interview findings relating to how children preserve the Vietnamese language.

#### 6.4. Children's views and practice

##### 6.4.1. *Children's views*

When the child participants were asked about the Vietnamese values that their parents share with them, almost all reported that the Vietnamese language is one of the most important things their parents expect them to continue during their lives.

Almost all the children from both refugee and skilled migrant backgrounds agree that they should keep using Vietnamese. During the interviews, the participants shared the reasons why they believe in the importance of preserving language. Uyên came to Australia with her parents when she was 10 years old. At the time of interview, she had graduated from university and had started working in a firm as an accountant. She explained that she uses English at work and Vietnamese at home. Although her parents can speak both English and Vietnamese, she chooses to speak Vietnamese at home with them:

I think because it [Vietnamese] is a part of who I am; I am Vietnamese so in the future when I have kids I'll teach them Vietnamese (Uyên, 22, daughter of skilled migrants)

For Uyên, the Vietnamese language is part of her identity, so she values it and wants to continue its use in her own family. Hùng, a 37-year-old son of refugees, also believes the Vietnamese language is an important part of his life in Australia:

Basically, language is very important, it identifies who you are. For me, my family kept using Vietnamese and I was raised in that environment. I continued to learn Vietnamese until high school. When I entered university, I worked part time as a translator. I also absorbed Australian culture, and I lived between the two cultures. It was not really easy, but I think I was lucky to have a chance to live between the two cultures. (Hùng, 37, son of refugees)

Hung was one of two child participants who asked to speak Vietnamese in their interviews. He and his parents came to Australia as refugees. At the time of interview, he was working in a hospital as a doctor. Like Uyên, he uses English at work but speaks Vietnamese at home. He married a Vietnamese woman and they have two daughters. Elsewhere in his interview, he said that he is really happy living with his mother-in-law, because she can help his daughters learn Vietnamese. Hùng considers both Vietnamese and English to be his languages, and he is happy to lead his life across the two cultures. Another reason to speak Vietnamese given by many participants is to be able to communicate with their parents and other members of their extended families. Children from refugee backgrounds said that they want to use Vietnamese because they have to communicate with their parents. Lộc is one of these:

You know, my Mum and Dad cannot speak English very well. They came here and only communicated with their Vietnamese friends who worked in factory industry. Mum was working in the garment industry for a long time, so no-one

really had to speak English, and she did not really have opportunities to speak English. After working she stayed at home....You know if I did not speak Vietnamese we could not have communication. (Lộc, 33, daughter of refugees)

As mentioned earlier, many refugee parents do not speak much English, so children from these families must use Vietnamese at home to communicate with their parents. In contrast, for children of skilled migrants, although their parents speak both English and Vietnamese, many of them find the need to learn Vietnamese to keep in close contact with their extended families. Lan, a daughter of skilled migrants who came to Australia when she was 4 years old, explained that she values Vietnamese and wants to keep using it so she can communicate with her grandparents:

I came here when I was 4 and I suddenly lost my Vietnamese – I couldn't speak Vietnamese anymore and then I started to go to Vietnamese school to be able to speak my language again; if not, I wouldn't be able to be in contact with my grandparents. (Lan, 14, daughter of skilled migrants)

Like many other teenagers from skilled migrant families, Lan explained that she feels a long way away from their relatives in Vietnam. However, she does want to enhance her Vietnamese language so that she can talk to her grandmother who comes to visit every year. She described the tight relationship between her and her grandmother, and looks forward to going back Vietnam to see her during the summer holidays. In this situation, language maintenance acts as a bridge across generations.

Both Lộc and Lan want to speak the Viet language because of the necessity to communicate with their family members who do not speak English. The data from interviews regarding the values of harmony and solidarity outlined in the previous

chapter demonstrate that child participants want to stay close with their family members. It appears that using the Vietnamese language creates more opportunities to build bridges to their family members, and contribute to the preservation of the values of harmony and solidarity.

It is likely that no matter whether children of migrants come from refugee or skilled migrant backgrounds, regardless of how old they are or how long they have been in Australia, most consider the Vietnamese language to be an important part of their lives in Australia, because it can help them stay close to their families. In Chapter 5, it was shown that many children of migrants consider harmony and solidarity values within the family to be important. For many children, the maintenance of language is seen as a means to promote tight family relationships. The following section describes how child participants learn and use the Vietnamese language in their daily lives.

#### *6.4.2. Children's practices*

Most of the children from refugee backgrounds said that they picked up Vietnamese mostly at home, because when they were young their parents pushed them to speak it. Many explained that their parents cannot speak English, so they tend to be fearful of their children speaking English both at school and at home. The following quote explains how Lộc learnt Vietnamese at home:

I remember that my parents did not allow me and my younger brother to speak English at home. If we spoke English at home, they punished and hit us. (Lộc, 33, daughter of refugees)

Lộc described the authoritarian parenting style her parents used. The age hierarchy was considered important in her family when she was young. Her parents thought they had the right to educate their children by punishing and hitting them. They applied this method of discipline to push their children to speak Vietnamese at home. For many refugees like Lộc's parents, who left Vietnam by necessity rather than by choice and resettled in Australia under difficult conditions, preserving the Vietnamese language was considered the best way to mould their children's attitudes and behaviours living in a new environment. Therefore, many of them push their children to keep speaking Vietnamese.

Another daughter explained her childhood with '*no English at home*':

Actually when I grew up we were not allowed to speak English at home. My Dad had a rule in the house about speaking Vietnamese only. I spoke with my sister in Vietnamese when we were young until maybe I was 8 years old. When I went to school every day, of course I spoke English. (Vy, 31, daughter of refugees)

Vy obeyed her parents and spoke Vietnamese at home before she started school. However, after going to primary school, she realised she had another choice. For many child participants from refugee families, this situation caused conflict between parents and children. The language difference and the importance of respecting the age hierarchy were seen as the main reasons for tensions in refugee parent-child relationships.

Almost all participants in this group reported that they can speak Vietnamese well, and communicate with their parents and relatives in Vietnamese. Some participants

explained that they still use Vietnamese at work. Phương, for example, was born in Australia to refugee parents. Like many children from refugee backgrounds, she explained that she was asked to speak Vietnamese at home but still wants to express herself in English. At the time of interview, she was studying towards a master's degree in community development and was working at a multicultural house. She speaks Vietnamese at work when working with the Vietnamese community:

My Vietnamese is getting better since I worked with Vietnamese community. I had to speak Vietnamese at work. When I said to them like '*thưa chú, thưa cô*'[hello uncles and aunts], it was really cool. I love that. (Phương, 24, daughter of refugees)

Phương sees learning the Vietnamese language at home as her obligation to her parents. The need to use the Viet language at work means that she has had more opportunities to practise and enjoy the language. Likewise, Vy, who experienced conflict with her parents relating to speaking English at home, and who has worked as a storyteller and done research in literature, explained that when she entered university and started work, she enjoyed Vietnamese literature, so she prefers to explore the language through reading Vietnamese literature:

The poetry in Vietnamese language is beautiful. I like the Vietnamese poet named *Xuân Diệu* and his poems about love, and I love poetry both in English and Vietnamese... Vietnamese have so many ways to express one thing. For example, '*xinh đẹ̣p*' [beautiful] in Vietnamese is described in so many words, from '*dẽ thương*' [lovely] to '*đẹp*' [stunning], to '*xinh*' [pretty, nice] and '*có duyên*' [graceful, charming]. Because there are so many aspects to describe

what a nice woman is in Vietnamese... The way that Vietnamese language describes a woman is so much deeper and so much more than attendant physical features. I learnt to express my feelings in Vietnamese. (Vy, 31, daughter of refugees 31)

Phương and Vy find the need to continue using the Viet language at work and in their lives in Australia.

However, other children said that although they value the language, if they don't need to use it on a daily basis, it is hard to maintain their skills in it:

We still keep speaking Vietnamese with our relatives but not much. When the first generation all pass away, I do not really think Vietnamese can stay. I do not know because we cannot really use it here. Everything is in English so you do not need to speak Vietnamese anywhere. I do not think I need to do this. (Hiệp, 18, daughter of refugees)

Along with other children from refugee backgrounds, Hiệp agrees there is a need to use Vietnamese to communicate with their relatives. Some participants noted, however, that once the first generation – who did not speak English – pass away, there will be no need to continue speaking Vietnamese.

When participants from skilled migrant backgrounds were asked how they learnt Vietnamese, most reported that they picked it up from their parents and from the Vietnamese media:

We have Vietnamese books; sometimes we turn on the Vietnamese channels. I like the channels, I like the movies and Vietnamese stuff, so I could read and start to progress my reading as well as my listening. (Lan, 14, daughter of skilled migrant)

I also watch Vietnamese television with my Dad on VTV3 [Vietnamese Television 3] and we watch shows for kids. There is a creative TV show that I like very much, called '*Bố ơi mình đi đâu thế*' [Where are we going daddy?]. My Dad likes to watch Vietnamese Idol or other programs and I watch with him. My mum often read fairy tales to me when I went to sleep. It is interesting. When I was younger, I liked people to read it to me because I didn't like to read it by myself. (Thanh, 14, daughter of skilled migrants)

For Lan and Thanh, Vietnamese media has created opportunities for them to absorb the language. Many children of skilled migrants noted that they enjoy the media because it broadens their Vietnamese knowledge. Some also reported that they picked up Vietnamese language from their grandparents and other relatives when they went back to Vietnam for holidays.

To improve reading and writing skills, the child participants noted that their parents sent them to Vietnamese schools every weekend, and they enjoyed. At the time of interview, almost all the child participants from skilled migrant backgrounds had attended Vietnamese schools to learn the language. The following quotes present the views of the participants who learnt the language in this way:

We go there every Saturday. In the class we have different chapters so we learn about a sort of tradition like Vietnamese stories like *Bánh Chung, Bánh Dày* [traditional cakes] – really basic traditional stories. I think lots of Vietnamese

families here, they tend to keep their kids in Vietnamese schools when the kids are little just to make sure that the tradition and language continue. (Hằng, 21, daughter of skilled migrants)

Of course, I keep using it [Vietnamese]. I did VCE Vietnamese this year. I keep speaking it to my parents and maybe I speak Vietnamese with my friends who I meet in the language school. [How was the Vietnamese class?]. A lot of fun there – they teach us culture, heritage and language. There are a lot of topics that we have learnt like: the bond of families and the role of parents and children, helping each other. (Cường, 18, son of skilled migrants)

Vietnamese schools not only teach students the language, but also about Vietnamese culture. Most participants enjoyed these lessons, and said that their reading and writing skills had improved.

However, some participants admitted they sometimes experience confusion when moving between two languages. Thanh, (14, daughter of skilled migrants) reported that she enjoys learning Vietnamese with her parents at home through the Vietnamese media, but later noted:

Sometimes I would ask my mum something in English and she answered me in Vietnamese and I mixed the two languages together...uh, I speak to her in Vietnamese and English in the same sentence when I don't know the words.

Similarly, although Lan thinks it is necessary to learn Vietnamese to communicate with her grandparents, she finds it difficult to practise two languages at the same time:

Children catch words from adults, so if you encourage the whole family to speak Vietnamese to each other they tend to follow the directions. I tended to do that. But it was trouble for us to try to learn another language because sometimes they get really confused (Lan, 14, daughter of skilled migrants)

Most child participants from skilled migrant backgrounds were teenagers. They can speak, read and write in Vietnamese because they have learnt the language at home and in Vietnamese schools. They also value it and try to keep using it as much as they can. Many of them would like to be bilingual. However, when the children of migrants grow older, finish high school or university and go to work, it can be challenging to keep using Vietnamese if it is not needed.

## 6.5. Discussion

In a quantitative study on the Vietnamese community in Australia, Ben-Mosche (2012) found that Vietnamese language skills are very high in this community, with 90% of respondents speaking Vietnamese ‘well’ and ‘very well’. For the participants in the current study, although the first-generation refugee parents have been living in Australia for almost 40 years, they continue to speak Vietnamese. Skilled migrant parents use English at work but they still speak the Viet language at home with their children. Most of the child participants continue to speak Vietnamese at home. Many of them can read and write Vietnamese well. It is possible that the Vietnamese language is maintained in many migrant families in Melbourne.

Studies on language maintenance in immigrant communities in Canada, the US and elsewhere have found that immigrant parents believe their children should maintain

the language of their heritage to keep their cultural identity and communicate with their relatives (Nesteruk 2010; Park & Sarkar 2007; Zhang 2012). Other research into Vietnamese immigrant communities also suggests that first-generation parents attempt to pass on the Viet language to their children in the hope that the next generations will not forget their roots, and will keep in close contact with family members (Nguyen, Chang & Loh 2014; Tingvold et al. 2012a). According to the findings discussed above, most parents of different ages from both the skilled migrant and refugee groups highlighted the important role of the Vietnamese language in preserving cultural values in their families. They seek to retain the language in their families for three reasons: as a capital resource, for communication with family members, and to be successful studying and working in Australia. It is likely that maintaining the Vietnamese language to help them achieve success in work is important to many Vietnamese migrants in Australia, a country of many ethnic groups. The ability to use an ethnic language at work in Australia may provide greater opportunities for migrants to maintain their heritage language. In other words, both parent and child participants in this study find that preserving their language as a form of cultural capital can support them in their extended families and in their working lives. Therefore, they make the effort to retain it.

Research into the maintenance of the Vietnamese language has found that home is an important place for Vietnamese immigrants to enhance their mother tongue, because of the need to speak it with parents and grandparents (Peter 1996). Other research on Vietnamese communities in Norway and America has found that religious activities also play an important role in maintaining Vietnamese values and the Vietnamese

language (Bankston & Zhou 1996; Tingvold et al. 2012a). The current study confirms that parents from both refugee and skilled migrant backgrounds think that requesting their children to speak Vietnamese at home is an effective means to encourage their children to learn and keep practising the language. Further, refugee participants also reported that the Vietnamese communities in churches in Melbourne provide good opportunities for their children to absorb the Viet language through attending events and singing in Vietnamese choruses. It is evident that refugee parents think that attending religious services of the Vietnamese community and speaking Vietnamese at home constitute positive efforts to maintain the language. The skilled migrant parents in this study noted that Vietnamese media and Vietnamese schools are natural means to pass on the heritage language to their children. In addition, Australian education policies that encourage diversity in languages through VCE bonus marks provide further opportunities for Vietnamese living in Melbourne to maintain their language.

The efforts made by the two groups of parent participants to preserve the language also demonstrate the different dispositions between refugees and skilled migrants, who were born and raised at different historical and social moments in Vietnam. While refugees maintained the language by being strict about its use, skilled migrants have developed more flexible ways to encourage their children to absorb the language. The different dispositions of refugees and skilled migrants have led to distinct practices in preserving their mother tongue.

In relation to the loss of the language by second- and third-generation immigrant families, Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009) found that although Chinese parents in the USA try hard to preserve their mother tongue, children do not see learning the

language as relevant to their lives there. Alba et al. (2002) also found that due to the dominance of English in the host country, the next generations of Chinese, Cuban and Mexican immigrant families in the USA tend to assimilate the English language and lose their mother tongue. In this study, child participants who come from refugee and skilled migrant families keep speaking the Viet language at home with their parents, grandparents and relatives. Most of them have attended Vietnamese schools to improve their reading and writing skills. Several child participants who are now adults use the Vietnamese language at work. Due to the benefits of preserving the language, children participants in this study value, practise and continue to use the Viet language as a form of capital in their lives.

## 6.6. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the interview data on preserving the mother tongue in Vietnamese migrant families in Melbourne, Australia. It was found that first-generation parents expect their children to maintain the Vietnamese language because of its benefits in communicating with relatives and in achieving success in study and at work. These maintenance of the language is seen as a form of cultural capital by parents. Likewise, once the children in this study recognise the value in maintaining the language, they tend to retain it in their own lives.

The material presented in Chapters 5 and 6 suggests that parents from both skilled migrants and those from a refugee background value harmony, solidarity and language maintenance as a form of capital that they seek to pass on to their children. Language maintenance is seen as an instrument to support values that could bring advantages

for their children's lives in Australia. Once children from these backgrounds have understood the need to retain these values, they have actively embraced and developed them. The values of filial piety, however, may not fit into their lives in Australia so well. This issue is addressed in Chapter 7.

## Chapter 7: Sharing and modifying filial piety values

### 7.1. Introduction

This chapter presents interview findings relating to filial piety values. Chapters 5 and 6 revealed that harmony, solidarity and the Vietnamese language are preserved and shared between parents and children. First-generation parents living in Australia attempt to share these values with their children, who agree that they are beneficial, and embrace them as forms of capital. Strong relationships between siblings and relatives are seen as worthy of support, as they help migrants overcome difficulties in the new country.

As discussed in Chapter 2, filial piety, defined as the values of obeying and expressing gratitude to parents by taking care of them, is a central concept in Confucianism. It is a hierarchical practice that is passed down through the generations, and it shapes relationships between parents and children in many Vietnamese families(Dao 1938; Le 2012; Pham 1999).

The first section of this chapter examines parents' views and practices relating to such aspects of filial piety as receiving material and emotional support from children, being taken care of by children, and children's obedience. The focus of attention in this section is the difference between refugee and skilled migrant parents with regard to the requirement to be obedient. Children's attitudes towards these values are then addressed. I argue that first-generation parents have modified values relating to filial piety, and do not necessarily want their children to practise those aspects of filial piety

that do not fit with their new lives in Australia. Children who have been born and raised in Australia do not value obedience, and this creates conflicts and pressure in their lives.

## 7.2. Parent's expectations and sharing strategies

First-generation parent participants in this study have lived in Australia for between eight and 35 years. They believe in the concept of filial piety, but in a modified form that focuses on emotional support. Almost all participant parents, whether from refugee or skilled migrant backgrounds, reported that they do not need financial support and care from their children. Parent participants from refugee backgrounds expect their children to obey them, while skilled migrants do not necessarily expect this.

### *7.2.1. 'Respecting, showing love and continuing to visit me are enough': emotional support*

Almost all parent participants expect their children to love them, and want to ensure that their children keep in close contact with them, even when they have their own families to look after. Rather than providing material support, they expect their children to give them emotional support. For Huyền, her children's love is very valuable:

Respecting, showing love and continuing to visit me are enough. If I am sick, even if they live separately and far away from my house they should make phone calls to talk with me; just chatting, this can make me feel better. It is much more important than taking medicine. (Huyền, 36, skilled migrant mother)

When asked about his expectations of children regarding filial piety values, Thái, a refugee father of four children, emphasised the importance of receiving emotional support from children. At the time of interview, all his children had moved out and he lived with his wife:

Although we have good services for elderly here and I do not need to get help from my children when I am not well, I just want them to share emotion and keep visiting me. When they come to see me I feel like getting better and I do not need medicine treatment any more. (Thái, 65, refugee father)

No matter how far away their children live, parents expect them to stay connected. This is the most important aspect of parent-child relationships that Huyễn, Thai and other participants want to preserve and share with their children. Thus, the value of filial piety has been maintained, but has been modified to mean emotional support only. As with the values of harmony and solidarity discussed in Chapter 5, these Vietnamese parents living in Australia expect their children to stay connected, and want to pass on this value to their children. However, when it comes to material support, almost all participants reported that they do not expect their children to show their gratitude in this way.

#### *7.2.2. Getting financial support: 'I do not need...'*

As discussed in Chapter 2, in many Vietnamese families, children are expected to express filial piety by providing financial support to their parents, and by taking care of them when they get older or sick. However, many parents in the study used to work

full time, or are retired. They are financially stable, and are not in need of financial assistance from their children:

I do not need them to express gratitude to me by giving me money because I can set up everything by myself. I have worked for many years so I have my superannuation, several hundred thousand dollars. I have my own house and car so if I want to go on holiday I can go whenever on my own without their financial support. (Hải, 68, refugee father)

Hải used to be in the South Vietnamese army in Vietnam. He escaped from a re-education camp and left Vietnam with his wife and three children after the Vietnam War. When he first came to Australia, he had to take manual jobs because he lacked English proficiency and other necessary skills. He is retired after many years working in a factory, and feels financially secure. The refugee participants in this study worked full-time for many years in Australia, and their superannuation can support them in their old age.

Many of the participants who came to Australia as skilled migrants are well-educated, and earn good incomes working as lecturers, interpreters or accountants. Like the retirees, they do not expect to receive financial support from their children in their old age. Hong, a 37-year-old mother of two young sons, thought that her generation should show gratitude to parents by providing financial support, because in the Vietnamese cultural context, parents depend on their children. However, she does not expect her children to do the same for her:

I have to take care of my mum in Vietnam. This is my obligation and my mum needs that, I guess. But I don't think I need my children to provide me money when I get older. I spend an amount of money to raise my kids, but I also have savings for myself so I could do everything I want when I got older. I will do everything by myself.

Hải and Hồng were typical of the parents in this study. Although the refugees with manual jobs had lower incomes than the skilled migrants with professional jobs, neither group expects to maintain the filial piety value of receiving financial support from children. While they expect to help their parents financially, they do not expect this from their children.

#### *7.2.3. Being taken care of: 'I do not think I need...'*

Taking care of parents when they are older or sick is a central aspect of filial piety. In Vietnam, elderly parents usually live with their children (sons and daughters-in-law), and expect their children to help them when necessary (Pham 1999; Tran 1991). Despite the influences of economic reform and modernisation, children still play a central role in taking care of their parents in their old age in contemporary Vietnam (Barbieri 2009; Bélanger 2009). It is uncommon for elderly people to live alone without their children's support, or in a nursing facility. However, regardless of background, the parent participants in this study do not expect their children to live with them and take care of them. Khuê, for example, feels confident to live on his own:

I think we are Vietnamese so we always want to stay with children when we are older but I should not do so. I do not want to annoy my children. A nursing home is a good idea when I need help. (Khuê, 62, refugee father)

A mother described her views regarding the value of filial piety relating to receiving help from her children:

When I cannot do everything by myself any longer, I will go to a nursing home because I do not want to be a burden to my children. They have their own families; they have to work very hard and they are very busy so I do not want to annoy them. Here, the retirement services are very professional in taking care of elderly so it is better for us. In Vietnam, it is terrible if children bring their parents to aged care services. This is seen as an extreme violation of children's moral standards, but here is Australia, you know. (Mi, 63, refugee mother)

Khuê and Mi have been living in Melbourne for almost 40 years. Their children have started their own families and moved out. They accept the fact that their children have their own lives and live independently. Khuê and Mi see advantages to aged care services and aged-care policies in Australia, so they are confident about the rest of their lives. In this instance, filial piety values have been influenced by economic conditions and the Australian cultural orientation.

Another skilled migrant, Trà has been living in Australia almost 10 years. She has the same opinions as refugee parents regarding living with children. She finds the idea of not living with her children acceptable:

I don't think I can stay with them forever. Whenever they feel like moving out, we are happy about that because they are mature enough and have their own lives. We have our own lives too. (Trà, 34, skilled migrant mother)

Trà came to Australia on her own to study. After graduating, she took a job in New Zealand as a research assistant. After two years living there, she started a family and got a job in Melbourne as a lecturer. For many global citizens like Trà, living in the same house as their adult children and being dependent on them is not their choice.

While both past refugees and skilled migrants feel that adult children should look after their parents, they have taken on the Australian cultural norm of not necessarily expecting their children to take care of them. They accept that their children may not remain living with them, and that they may need to move to a nursing home. In the Australian context, where older people are supported by pensions, superannuation policies and retirement services, they do not see the need to retain these aspects of filial piety values.

#### *7.2.4. Obedience to parents*

##### *Refugee parents*

As mentioned earlier, obedience is considered the most important aspect of filial piety values in many refugee Vietnamese families. Statements such as 'age hierarchy' and 'parents have higher status' were uttered frequently in the interviews. For refugee parents, children should 'respect', 'follow', 'obey' and 'not talk back' to parents. ĐẠI (52 years old), has been living in Melbourne for almost 30 years, and retains the traditional idea regarding the hierarchy of parent-child relationships:

In our culture, it is terrible if we base on fairness. I cannot get used to that. I can't allow my kids to do so. They should definitely obey and respect us [his decisions]. In the future when I am turning to 90 years old and my son is a 60-year-old, he should continue to follow me and obey me just because I am his father. Otherwise, we cannot keep the hierarchy and the order in our family.

For ĐẠI, it is not acceptable for his children to talk back to him or not follow his directives. Respecting the age hierarchy by obeying parents is an important aspect of family values that he wants to pass on to his children. At another point, he explained that he had asked his sons to follow almost all his decisions, including those relating to their choice of subjects at university.

LONG, a 65-year-old refugee mother, has five daughters. All her daughters have finished their university studies, and work as lawyers, doctors and accountants. She is proud of her children's success, and had the following recollection:

We restarted our life here in a very hard condition. We did not have enough money. We had to live in a small apartment that the government provided us for a long time. We had to work so hard to survive. I pushed them to study hard because it was the best way to escape those situations. They had to listen to me and try their best in school.

Many participants reported encouraging their children to study hard and get a good education. Almost all refugee parents think it is their right to make their children obey their directions.

Many parents said that they expect their children to do well in their studies and reach high academic goals. Most refugee parents escaped from Vietnam in very difficult conditions, and hope their children will have brighter futures; they project their dreams onto their offspring:

My main purpose to escape from Vietnam at that time was looking for a better future for my kids. I fought for them but I did not need them to give me money back; just did expect them to study well and go to university. Now all my children have got bachelors' degrees and have good jobs. I feel very happy.

(Thái, 65, refugee father)

Mi, (63, refugee mother) also expressed her happiness with her children's success in education:

We came here with nothing. I worked in restaurants, in factories and so many others to have money for them to go to school and everything. I do not think I need them to repay me though. Just getting high grades, graduating university and success. Those are my expectations of them. When they graduated at university, I was at their graduation ceremonies. I was crying a lot, because of happiness.

Three of Mi's sons are successful in their careers. The oldest son is a lawyer, the middle son is a doctor and the youngest is a bank manager. She is happy that her sons are well-educated and successful. She feels that she was right in pushing her children to study hard. For refugee parents, educational success is very important. These refugee

parents recognise the benefits of education as a form of capital, and push their children to obtain success in this regard.

In addition, a number of refugee participants reported that they seek appropriate marriage partners for their children and make decisions in this regard. Many expect their children to marry Vietnamese people. Hai (68, a refugee father of five children) is an example of a parent with this attitude:

I did expect them to get married to Vietnamese. I prepared my own plans and tried my best to create more opportunities to them to make friends and have dating relationships with Vietnamese. When they were very young, I took them to the Vietnamese clubs and the youth group in Vietnamese churches where there were many Vietnamese boys and girls. Now all my children have married Vietnamese.

One mother stated:

It will be easy for us to keep Vietnamese values in the family if we have a Vietnamese daughter-in-law. They [her sons] were not allowed to have non-Vietnamese girlfriends. I took them back to Vietnam to find wives. I chose my daughter-in-law on my own. (Mai, 60, refugee mother)

Mai and her family came to Melbourne as refugees. She works as a picker on a mushroom farm, where most harvesters are Vietnamese. She lives in Springvale, where there are Vietnamese shops, market, restaurants and other services. Mai does not need to speak English at work or in public. She also requested her children to communicate with her in Vietnamese at home. She further explained that her first son

agreed with her about the Vietnamese girl she had chosen as his wife, but her second son did not follow her direction regarding a suitable marriage partner.

As discussed in Chapter 6, many refugee participants do not speak English, even though they have been living in Australia for around 40 years. When they were asked about the reasons why they want their children to marry Vietnamese partners, most explained that they want to communicate with their daughters/sons-in-law in Vietnamese, and they expect them to understand Vietnamese family values. Thus, they have tried hard to make their children follow their advice in choosing partners. However, other parents from this group have found it difficult to force their children to marry Vietnamese. Of 10 refugee parent participants, four have non-Vietnamese daughters/sons-in-law. These participants feel they should be happy with that, because they are living in a multicultural society, and it is not easy to force their children to marry Vietnamese partners.

#### *Skilled migrant parents*

While nearly all refugee participants explained that they strictly enforce obedience in their families, many of the parents who migrated to Australia recently as skilled migrants reported that they are more relaxed about this. Yến, a 37-year-old skilled migrant mother, is one of these:

I am not a person who is always right and make right decisions, so how can I force my kids to follow me in everything? If I want them to respect me and my decisions, I should respect them first. I try to give them advice rather than force them to follow me.

Like Yên, most skilled migrant parents reported that they know their children have learned about equality and independence at school, and that they should learn ways to respect their children's opinions:

Respect means respect for each other, I suppose. Parents should respect their children's decisions, and children have to do so. It is not respect for only one side. (Hồng, 37, skilled migrant mother)

These participants also said that they provide opportunities for their children to speak out about their wishes, so that they can discuss them together. Parent-child relationships in such families are less hierarchical.

Many participants expressed high expectations regarding their children's educational achievements. Bền, a 39-year-old skilled migrant father of three children, had the following to say:

My children's happiness and success are my hope. To study well and find good jobs in a comparative environment like Australia are their obligations. This makes me happy. It is enough for me.

Another mother feels that educational success for her children would make up for difficulties encountered living in Australia:

My kids are growing up and tend to be very independent. I am gonna be lonely when living here [Australia], but if they achieve in their careers, it would be great to me. It would make me happy. (Tiên, 38, skilled migrant mother)

Parents also reported that they expect their children to attain academic goals, but in practice, they made comments such as: 'I did not force them to study' and 'It is better to encourage our kids to choose subjects that they feel most comfortable with':

Children cannot obtain success without passion. I do not care about the ranks of schools. I am fine if schools have a safe environment. I do not require them to learn much except for learning the Vietnamese language [...] After finishing high school they would choose their favourite careers by themselves or they might go to work first. If they think it is necessary to study at university they will do so; if not, that would be fine for us. (Hồng, 37, skilled migrant mother)

It is evident that children's success in education is a form of obligation towards their parents. They do not necessarily push their children to follow their wishes, though they hope their children embrace educational achievement as a form of cultural capital. In this regard, the traditional idea of filial piety values has been modified in Australia.

The following sections present children's perspectives on filial piety values.

### 7.3. Children's views and practices

#### 7.3.1. *Providing financial support and taking care of parents: 'It is my obligation'*

Regardless of whether they have refugee or skilled migrant backgrounds, the child participants in this study recognise the sacrifices their parents have made. Although they understand that their parents do not necessarily want to be taken care of or supported financially, most believe they are obliged to respect, look after, and provide financially for their parents if they need it.

Almost all the children from refugee backgrounds understand that their parents left Vietnam under difficult conditions to create the better future for them. Tân, 37 years old, arrived in Melbourne with his parents on a boat when he was five years old. His parents had to work hard to support his family:

I appreciate what they have done for me – how much they have done for me. They worked a lot of jobs, supported my sister and myself for school and for university.

Tân's parents were outworkers who sewed garments from home in the early days of their lives in Australia. They also took other manual jobs. Tân was typical of adult child participants from refugee backgrounds in this study. Most expressed their gratitude for their parent's sacrifices, and understand that their parents have paid a high price in fleeing from their homeland and resettling in Australia. Most said that although their parents do not need them to take care of them or provide for them financially, they are happy to do so if their parents need it. As Tân said:

I am not living with them now, but one day if they need me I am happy to look after them. I might live with them when they get older because I do not think I can send them to community services... taking care of them is my obligation, I guess.

Many other children from refugee backgrounds would not choose aged care services for their parents. They prefer to look after their parents themselves:

I myself cannot bring my parents and my mother-in-law to the services [for elderly] when they need help. It is difficult for me to do so. I do not know why,

but I cannot do so. I should take care of them; they need to be taken care by their children rather than the aged care services. (Hùng, 37, son of refugee)

The children from skilled migrant families feel the same way:

My mum thinks that in her old age she might go back to Vietnam. She might spend some months here and some months in Vietnam. She will go back in winter and come here but it might be not in services for elderly people. She should probably live with me. Yes... I think I have responsibilities to take care of her – it is my obligation. (Hằng, 21, daughter of skilled migrants)

I want to move out when I can. Nothing wrong with that, it is natural to be able to live independently. But if they [his parents] want, I can send them money, visit them often and help them to take care of themselves. (Cường, 18, son of skilled migrants)

The examples above show that contrary to parents' reported expectations, almost all children from both refugee and skilled migrant families agree that they are responsible for taking care of their parents at home and supporting them financially if necessary. While these Australian-born children of migrants tend to be independent and have moved out of home, they still think of this aspect of filial piety as their obligation to their parents. The fact that their dispositions were shaped growing up in Vietnamese migrant families may have influenced their attitudes and behaviours in this regard.

### *7.3.2. Emotional support*

Along with taking care of them, showing love and keeping in contact are seen as important obligations by the children in this study. Most children from both refugee

and skilled migrant backgrounds reported that they feel they should express their deep gratitude (*trả ơn*) to their parents by visiting them frequently and taking care of them if needed:

With your parents, you should be able to assign time to be with them. The fact is that you have a really busy life and you can't always be there, but you need to arrange times to visit them frequently. (Thanh, 14, daughter of skilled migrants)

Thanh's views were echoed by Lộc, a 33-year-old daughter of refugees, who is married and lives with her husband. She said that when she decided to buy a new house, she chose to live in the same area as her mother. She phones her mother every day and has lunch or dinner with her two or three times per week:

My mum is living alone so I do not want to feel guilty. I do not know why but I want to look after her. It is really important. I do think that Vietnamese culture is very close. I wanted to move out when I was younger, but I still wanted to live in a place that was close to my mum when I got married.

Hoa, a 36-year-old daughter of refugees, has her own family. She lives in a different state from her parents, but wants to keep in close contact with them:

I know that financially they are okay, and I also know that they want to go to nursing homes or other services for the elderly when they need help. But I still worry that I don't live close to them. When I want to see them I have to fly at least four hours to go to their house [...] As they get older I'd like them to live closer and I might move back to live with them.

Although they do not live with their parents, Hoa and Lộc maintain strong relationships with them. The provision of emotional support is seen as an important obligation by the children of migrants, and they maintain this filial piety value. As shown in Chapter 5, a united family is considered a source of power in children's lives.

Another way that child participants express deep gratitude to their parents is through achieving success in their study and work. This matches their parents' expectations as described above. Hùng see this as an important filial piety value:

I understand that they sacrificed everything for us. They left Vietnam by boat to seek a better future for us. They also created chances for us, and they made sacrifices so that we could have a good education. They never speak out about these things, but my motivations are their sacrifices. I tried my best to study hard. I need to show filial piety to them in this way. (Hùng, 37, son of refugee)

Hùng is a doctor in a well-known hospital in Melbourne. He studied hard at university and sees his successes as valuable gifts of filial piety to his parents. Hiệp, an 18-year-old daughter of refugees, aspires to attend the highest-ranked university in Melbourne. She said she was making an effort to gain a high score in the VCE exam in order to enter this university:

Many Vietnamese parents leave their dreams in their kids. They might think they never had the opportunities and their kid did so they want their child to do this stuff. My mum, she wanted me to be a doctor but she was a refugee – she left that dream in her kids. I do not want to make her disappointed. (Hiệp, 18 daughter of refugee)

These children's compliance with the expectation of educational success can be seen as a form of filial piety. They have embraced their parents' expectations about education as a form of cultural capital, and show their gratitude to their parents in this way.

### *7.3.3. Obedience: 'I have learnt that but that is not what I want for my daughters and sons'*

Obedience is understood as an important norm in families that is valued by many refugee parent participants. When the children of this group were asked about this aspect of filial piety, nearly all said that their parents had taught them the concept of obedience, and that this plays an important role in shaping children's behaviours and the hierarchy of parent-child relationships. The following quotations demonstrate participants' views on this topic:

The idea of this [obedience] is to know your place. They [parents] are older than you are so you can't say something to them if you don't agree with them.  
You cannot speak out. (Phuong, 24, daughter of refugees)

They [her parents] are older than you so it means that they know more than you and you should follow everything through. (Vy, 31, daughter of refugees)

Most of the child participants from refugee families made comments such as: 'I was really a good child'. Nearly all said that they had followed their parents' directions. They had asked their parents for permission to go out with friends, and consulted them when choosing school subjects and about financial matters. They further

explained that it feels to them as if they had obeyed their parents for a long time.

Many complained that their parents were very strict when they were young:

My mum was very violent. She punished us if we disobeyed her. We did not talk back. It was really bad. I think culturally, it has shifted where my mum comes from. We came from a culture of silence. I have learnt that but that is not what I want for my daughters and my sons. (Vy, 31, daughter of refugee)

Vy recalled how her mother treated her and her sisters during their childhood. She understands that in the Vietnamese culture, parents have the right to punish children. Following parents' orders was seen as a moral obligation. However, Vy and other adult child participants from refugee backgrounds agreed that they do not want to continue this obligation in their own families. The main reasons given for this were: 'It is unfair', 'it is difficult to keep up here', and 'it is confusing'. There was tension and conflict in these families when children did not see the need to continue this norm of filial piety. This aspect of filial piety values has been rejected by the next generation.

Many child participants from skilled migrant families have a different experience of obedience values. The relationships between parents and children in these families appear to be more egalitarian, because their parents have not put so much pressure on them to obey. Many of them value the idea of respecting parents and being obedient. Respect is understood as a 'natural' value that is necessary between family members. This group of participants emphasised the necessity to show 'respect to each other'. Tri, a 16-year-old son of skilled migrants who came to Australia with his parents about eight years ago, had this to say:

Everyone is equal with different experience so I do not want to obey people who are just older than me. If my dad makes decisions for me but it does not make sense, I disagree.

Others explained that they do not like asking their parents for advice, preferring to work things out themselves:

I respect my parents, but if they asked me to do what I didn't like I would ask them why they did it that way ... ask the reasons behind their decisions and they often have good reasons behind this stuff, and I respected that. If they made bad decisions I would talk to them, explain what I wanted and what I didn't want. (Uyên, 22, daughter of skilled migrants)

Uyên arrived in Melbourne with her parents about 10 years ago for her father to study towards his PhD in information technology. Her parents are well educated and came to Australia as skilled migrants. Uyên did not mention conflict in her relationships with her parents. She sees obedience as an old value that has not been passed onto her by her parents, and she does not want to practise it.

The similar beliefs towards obedience values of children from refugee and skilled migrant backgrounds show that despite refugee parents' efforts to maintain this value in their families, children born or raised in the Australian context do not wish to retain it, because it is considered unsuitable to their lives in Australia.

## 7.4. Discussion

Filial piety for many families in Vietnam involves parents and adult children living in the same house and honouring parents' expectations that children will take care of them and provide financial support (Dao 1938; Le 2012; Pham 1999). In contemporary Vietnam, Friedman et al. (2003) found that three-quarters of elderly Vietnamese live with an adult child, mainly with married sons. Daughters who have become transnational wives are expected to send money back to their aging parents in Vietnam (Thai 2012). The findings of this study, however, suggest that after Vietnamese parents have migrated to Australia, filial piety values are modified in many migrant families. In particular, the expectations of financial support and being taken care of have been modified due to the economic conditions and cultural orientation of the country of residence. Superannuation, pensions and aged-care services in Australia provide Vietnamese migrant parents with some financial security in their old age. Their children who were born and raised in Australia tend to live independently, and their parents accept this, feeling confident enough to modify their expectations of these filial piety values. It appears that these values are not seen as cultural capital, and they do not feel the need to retain and develop them in the Australian context.

Previous research has provided compelling evidence that while immigrant parents try to retain the tradition of obedience that existed in their culture of origin, second-generation Vietnamese children do not wish to do the same (Nguyen & Williams 1989; Rosenthal, Ranieri & Klimidis 1996). The findings of the current study are in line with this evidence, demonstrating that refugee parents attempt to maintain the value of obedience. Most refugee participants try to maintain the age hierarchy between them

and their children by requesting their children obey them. Most push their children to study hard to achieve higher levels in their education, and want their children to marry Vietnamese people, as they wish to continue communicating in the Vietnamese language. These beliefs have led these parents to be strict with their children. A possible reason for this is that the filial piety values relating to obedience in Vietnamese families have remained very traditional over the last three decades, being little affected by industrialisation and modernisation (Le 2012; Pham 1999). The dispositions of refugees have been shaped in the context of 'old' Vietnam, when obedience and the age hierarchy in families were cultural norms. Almost all the refugees retain these in their families in Australia. Further, resettlement in Australia has led them to hold onto the 'old' values of wanting their children to be close, and generally managing their children behaviours. The refugee participants came to Australia when they were aged between 20 and 30, generally without qualifications or skill sets for professional jobs. Most did not enter the education system in Australia, and remained working in unskilled jobs. Although some refugee participants may have previously held high positions in the South Vietnamese army or government, they have had to accept manual or unskilled jobs in factories or on vegetable farms in Australia, because they lack English proficiency and other work experience. Thus, the social class of refugees might influence their attitudes towards the maintenance of obedience values in their families. As Gillies (2006) and Stack (1974) argue, working-class parents tend to be dependent on their families and local networks, leading them to expect their children to follow their wishes.

The findings of this study demonstrate that children's views and practices regarding filial piety values have been influenced by the habitus they have acquired in their Vietnamese migrant families, but have been somewhat modified in the Australian context. Habitus is defined as a product of history that can persist across contexts (Bourdieu 1977; Webb 2002). Bottomley (1992) and Wu (2011) note that habitus can be acquired early in life through family practices. This study shows that although refugee parents said they do not expect their children to provide for them financially and take care of them, many children feel an obligation to offer financial assistance and to care for their parents, and do not want to send them to aged care services. It is likely that the children have developed these filial piety values through family practices, and because they understand the hardships their parents endured as refugees. Further, despite parents' efforts, many children from refugee families do not want to impose the value of obedience on their own children. It appears that the dispositions of children who have been raised in the Australian context have been developed and influenced by Australian mainstream culture, in which egalitarianism is seen as a central value (Donal 1995; Finch & Finch 1993). This has influenced their views and practices regarding obedience and age hierarchies.

## 7.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, the sharing of filial piety values across generations in Vietnamese migrant families in Australia has been examined. Aspects of filial piety, such as emotional support, remain strong values across generations, with both parents and child participants identifying their belief in the value of strong relationships between

parents and children. Parents expect their children to retain these values in their lives, and the children have embraced and developed them as a form of cultural capital.

Both refugee and skilled migrant parents have modified the filial piety values of taking care of parents and offering financial support. Parents find it unnecessary to maintain these aspects of family values when living in Australia, an environment in which they feel confident to live independently without material support from their children.

However, children who have been born and raised in Australia have different views regarding material support and obedience, with most saying they would provide material support to their parents if they were in need.

In addition, many of them do not want to continue respecting the values of obedience and age hierarchy in their own lives. It appears that those aspects of filial piety values that do not develop cultural capital tend to be modified in Vietnamese migrant families. The habitus of migrants and children influences their attitudes and behaviours regarding filial piety values.

Chapter 8 will present the interview data on gender hierarchy in families.

## Chapter 8: Sharing and modifying gender hierarchy values

### 8.1. Introduction

Historically, gender ideology and relations in Vietnamese families have been strongly influenced by both the ‘rice culture’ and Confucianism. On the one hand, the Vietnamese culture emerges from an agrarian economy in which mothers and wives are key providers in family life, due to their skills in horticulture, animal husbandry and financial management (Dao 1938; Kibria 1995; Tran 1999; Tran 1998a). On the other hand, in Confucian thought, which was imported to Vietnam from China, fathers and husbands are seen as pillars of the home (Pham 1999; Tran 1991), and as the primary breadwinners and decision-makers of households. Mothers and daughters are subject to paternal authority, and it is thought that they should concentrate on domestic labour. Confucianism is also responsible for the widespread preference for sons over daughters, because they are obligated to support parents socially and economically in their old age (Chuang 2013; Tran 1999; Vu 2007).

These gender hierarchy values are the focus of Chapter 8. This chapter presents the views and practices of parents regarding the status of men as fathers and husbands, and women as mothers and wives. Responsibilities such as making decisions, doing domestic chores and taking care of children will be explored, as will this group’s beliefs and practices about the roles of sons and daughters in families. The children’s views will then be presented.

The findings indicate that skilled migrants aspire to the egalitarian gender ethos typical of Australian society. They decline to share with their children patriarchal norms such as the attribution of more value to sons and the importance for daughters of the four virtues of *công, dzung, ngôn, hạnh*. Although refugee parent participants expect to alter their ideologies of gender hierarchy, and find it unnecessary to insist that sons continue the family line, they still expect their daughters to be good women by practising the four virtues. It is likely that independent lifestyles in Australia and changes in family ritual practices will result in alterations in the attitudes of the next generation of sons regarding their roles. Neither the daughters of refugee families nor those of skilled migrants want to practise the four virtues in their own lives

## 8.2. Parent's views and practices

### 8.2.1. *Modifying the gender hierarchy of husbands and wives*

According to Confucian thought, the main tasks for men in Vietnamese families are to make money and make decisions. However, many participants, both from refugee and skilled migrant backgrounds, challenged this value, emphasising that men and women should be equal in these regards. Hồng, (37) has been living in Melbourne for almost 10 years, and works as a university lecturer. She believes it is important for women, as well as men, to make money. She is not entirely dependent on her husband's money:

We have our own bank accounts. We share responsibility in terms of sending money to my family or his family... I do not manage my husband's money. (Hồng, 37, skilled migrant mother)

Hồng and other skilled mother participants are in paid work. Most participants do not value men's contributions to the family more than women's, espousing a more egalitarian approach. Hồng's opinions were echoed by Ly, who came to Melbourne as a refugee and works as a vegetable picker on a farm:

The breadwinner role in Vietnam means that because men make money for families, so he is the head of the home. Here, he [her husband] goes to work and I work also. I have my own bank account so it is equal. (Ly, 55, refugee mother)

Traditionally, making money is seen as a way to be a breadwinner of the house. When refugee participants were still in Vietnam, it was normal for husbands to support the family, and they were considered to have a higher status than women because of this role. However, when refugee women settled in Australia, where women have more equal opportunities to earn money, their views changed. For these women migrants, the ability to earn money makes them feel equal to or even superior to men.

When father participants were asked about decision-making in their families, they reported that they make decisions together with their wives. They also claimed that they discuss matters on an equal level:

We make the decisions together even if my wife makes decisions much more than me. I cannot make decisions without my wife's opinions. If she agrees I will make it, otherwise I won't be able to make it. (Đại, 52, refugee father)

Both of us work full-time. I earn as much money as my wife. I do not make decisions on my own like buying a new car, a new house and choosing schools

for my kids. We usually discuss these things together. (Huy, 40, skilled migrant father)

At the time of interview, almost all the refugee women were working part-time or full-time, and earning at similar levels to their husbands. At an earlier stage of their resettlement in Australia, many of them were outworkers who sewed garments from home. Later, many refugee participants took manual jobs on factories and farms. Although they had to work hard, many earned incomes as high as those of their husbands. Most skilled migrant women are well educated, and work as lecturers, teachers or accountants. These careers not only provide them with opportunities to adapt to Australian society, but also offer the chance to earn incomes similar to those of their husbands. It is likely that working full-time has contributed to their ability to lead active and independent lives in Australia.

When participants aired their views about the roles of men and women in doing housework and looking after children, although most understood that the gender hierarchy in traditional Vietnamese families means that domestic chores are considered to be women's jobs, they suggested that this gender hierarchy ideology is 'old fashioned', 'unfair', and 'unequal'. They reported that they 'do not want to' and 'cannot' follow these values, because their lives in Australia are no longer compatible with these traditional values.

Participating in the workforce is considered one of the main reasons why refugee participants' views on the gender hierarchy in relation to domestic chores are changing. For example, Hải was a pilot in the southern Vietnamese Army, and left Vietnam shortly

after the Vietnam War with his family. Lacking English proficiency and other skills, Hải and his wife took on a variety of manual jobs for many years. He is now retired:

I was a powerful man in my family [in Vietnam]. I am an oldest son so I mainly held onto patriarchal rules. I made decisions for all family matters. My wife and my kids had to follow the decisions. In my eyes at that time, my wife was just second-class in the family....But you know, when we came here, I went to work and my wife did so as well. I made money and she earned money also. We had to share domestic stuff in our family, and look after children together.(Hải, 68, refugee father)

A refugee mother explained the reasons why she thinks the traditional roles of men and women regarding housework need to change:

Here in Australia, both men and women must go to work and work very hard, so it is usual if husbands cook, clean and hang out the clothes. I used to work full-time in factories, and had three small kids at that time. How could I survive if my husband did not take care of them and did housework? He had to do so; he did not have many other choices. (Mi, 63, refugee mother)

Like many other refugee participants, Mi and Hải left Vietnam between 30 and 40 years ago. When they left, it was common for men to serve in the army or to work full-time, while many women stayed at home and did domestic chores. Vietnamese men were not expected to share domestic tasks (Khuat 1991). However, after resettlement in Australia, both husbands and wives had to work hard to support their families. For many refugee

husbands and wives, this led to a modification of the gender hierarchy ideology regarding domestic tasks such as housework and taking care of children.

Nearly all skilled migrant participants agreed that men and women should share domestic duties equally. Many also said that there should not be jobs exclusive to men or women in families. A number of female participants said that they do not believe there is any such thing as men's and women's jobs. Hng, (37, skilled migrant), explained the divisions of domestic labour in her family:

We do not identify what are the husband's jobs and wife's jobs. If my husband has more free time, he will do housework and take care of my kids. He cooks meals, washes dishes, hangs clothes, feeds my kids. When my kids were very young I had only one duty – that was breast- feeding. [laughing] (Hng, 37, skilled migrant mother)

Like many other skilled migrant women participants, Hng believes that there is nothing odd about men taking on domestic chores and childcare. They said, however, that the gender roles within their families were different when they were in Vietnam. Many wife participants pointed out the differences in their husband's behaviours in Australia. Tin, 38 years old, was a primary school teacher in Vietnam. After moving to Melbourne with her university lecturer husband, she studied accounting and then worked for a company as an accountant. She said that working eight hours a day in Vietnam and then having to do housework was stressful. She also said that because they lived with her mother-in-law, her husband did not do any housework. She is happy that this has changed in Australia:

He is still not really good at cooking so I mainly do it but he washes dishes, hangs clothes, sweeps the floor, and throws the rubbish to the bin. Last time when we were in Vietnam he did not do anything like that for me. (Tiên, 38, skilled migrant mother)

Yen, who was a lecturer in Vietnam and has lived in Australia for eight years, is happy with the change in her husband since coming to Australia:

If I come home late, he will cook. Since we have lived here, we changed roles in doing housework. I do not think I could do so when we lived in Vietnam because my mother-in-law got angry when she saw my husband cooking, and my neighbours made comments on his behaviours and so on. (Yến, 37, skilled migrant mother)

For Yến and Tiên, the absence of their mothers-in-law in Australia is the main reason their husbands now help with domestic chores. As discussed in Chapter 2, in contemporary Vietnam, traditional patriarchal norms persist in many families, with women working full-time and then doing the second shift at home. When it was possible for older generations to be more involved in their children's lives, these unwritten rules made it difficult for husbands to help their wives with housework.

Other reasons given were that when skilled migrants lived in Vietnam, they could get help from their parents or domestic maids with housework and looking after children. In Vietnam, it is usual for parents to help their married sons and daughters with housework and childcare, even if they do not live together (Le 2012). Hiring house cleaners and domestic helpers is common in big cities (Johansson 2004). Thus, many husbands were

not expected to help with domestic chores (Nguyen 2014b). In Australia, skilled migrants live on their own, and it is not easy to hire domestic help. As a result, they have to do this work themselves while working full-time. Many skilled migrant fathers said that this situation made it necessary for them to share these duties with their wives.

Huy, a father of three children, started a family in Vietnam. He and his wife came to Melbourne to study 10 years ago. After graduating, they remained in Australia. Huy explained that when his wife gave birth to their oldest daughter in Vietnam, they received help from his parents who lived nearby in Hanoi. He did not need to do much housework or childcare. However, since living in Australia, he does many domestic chores:

I am like a washing, cooking, and cleaning machine [laughing]. What can I do when my wife works full-time and sometimes comes home late? If I was in Vietnam we could have my parents or a domestic helper, but here, I have no more choices [laughing]. (Huy, 40, skilled migrant father)

Although Huy does not necessarily enjoy household labour, the circumstances of his new life in Australia have led him to modify his ideas regarding men's and women's tasks in the home.

It is evident that, even having lived in Australia for varying amounts of time, and being in different age groups and social classes, the views about the roles of men/husbands in decision-making and labour participation have been modified in both refugee and skilled migrant families after arriving in Australia. The skills and work opportunities to which they have access in Australia, along with the absence of mothers-in-law, extended family

members and domestic helpers, have led to the modification of gender hierarchy ideologies by many parent migrants. The following section will present their views and practices related to gender hierarchies for sons and daughters in their families.

### *8.2.2. Modifying the gender hierarchy for sons and daughters*

#### *Views about the roles of sons and daughters*

Of the 20 parents in the study, 15 have both sons and daughters, and three have daughters only. Historically, Vietnamese families have placed a high value on sons as the upholders of traditional rituals and as key supporters of aging parents. Sons (particularly oldest sons) are expected to take the lead in worshipping ancestors, and for living with, providing financial support for, and taking care of aged parents. Many parent participants in this study – both earlier and later arrivals – have not upheld these values in Australia. Hiếu is the oldest son in his family and has two sons himself.

He recalled:

When my wife gave birth to my first son, they [his parents] were so happy and thought that he will keep our family name. To be honest, I do not think having sons to pass the family name down is important. I just want them to be good at study and have a happy and successful life. What happens if you have a son to keep the family line but he is a bad man, or does the wrong things? I think in this case, having a good girl is much better than that. (Hiếu, 42, skilled migrant father)

Hiếu would rather have a ‘good girl’ than a son who is a ‘bad man’, but believes his parents would have preferred a son nonetheless. He does not share this view. Similarly,

Tiên, 38, a skilled mother of two sons, said that giving birth to a son was very important to her parents-in-law, and improved her position within the family. Tiên gave birth to her first son when she was in Vietnam:

They [her parents-in-law] were very happy when I gave birth to my first son. I felt like they behaved well towards me. I became an important woman in their family at that time. My husband is the oldest son, so it is very important for them to have a male grandchild. However, I myself feel relaxed about the gender of my kids. Both sons and daughters are very nice to me.

Tiên achieved a high status in the eyes of her family-in-law by having a son. She further noted that she did not expect to live with her sons in the same household or to be taken care of by them when she gets older. Tiên is not alone in her experience. All mothers in this group reported that while their husband's families wanted sons, they themselves do not care about the gender of their children.

Refugee participants also expressed their views and practices regarding the roles of sons in families. After migrating to Australia, most refugee parents did not consider it necessary to have sons. As discussed in Chapter 7, they do not expect to live with married sons, to be taken care of by them, or to receive financial support from their children. Traditionally, married sons and their wives are required to live with, take care of and support their parents financially. However, children in Vietnamese Australian families tend to move out and live independently after getting married, and this is the case for almost all refugee parents in this study. They have not chosen to live with their children.

The other reason given by many participants for downplaying the important role of sons was that they do not see the worship of ancestor rituals as the only way to remember parents and ancestors. As discussed earlier, in Vietnam – particularly northern Vietnam – the worship of ancestors is an important family ritual, with the obligation to uphold it belonging to sons (oldest sons where possible). When daughters marry, they become part of their husbands' families. Most households have an altar at which they practise this ritual. Nam, a 40-year-old skilled migrant father of two daughters, explained his attitude towards the role of sons:

If I lived in Vietnam, I would think about having sons and I would distinguish between sons and daughters. It is not really easy to forget the roles of sons when you live in Vietnamese society. [Because] when daughters get married, they move to live with their husband's families, and worship their husband's ancestors so they will not be able to worship their ancestors. (Nam, 40, skilled migrant father)

However, Nam and many other parent participants reported that after moving to Australia, it is difficult for them to practise this ritual every new moon and full moon of the lunar calendar. It is harder for them to follow this calendar, as it is not used in Australia society. Further, it is unusual to have a big altar in their houses, as the burning incense can set off fire alarms. They explained that there are other ways to remember deceased family members and parents. Tiên, who came from northern Vietnam, has two sons herself, and her husband is an oldest son in her family-in-law:

My parents-in-law always hope that we will keep the worship of ancestors when living here. I think that keeping the worship of ancestors is a good thing,

but we should have many other ways to do so. I do not think it is a good idea if we have a very big altar in our home. It is a bit unusual and inconvenient for us. I think we should worship them [ancestors], pray to them, but it is better to do it at temples where the souls of the people have a very nice and warm place to stay. The monks of the temples will burn incense, pray to them and take care of their souls every day. (Tiên, 38, skilled migrant mother)

Yến, a mother of two daughters, also came from northern Vietnam. She explained that the lunar calendar is not used in Australia, so it is not easy to remember to pray at full moon and new moon: She added the following comments:

If I passed away I would not want my kid to worship me at home [laughing]. They should do it at temples or just put flowers in my grave whenever they remembered me. I do think that children should remember parents who passed away, but it is not necessary to hold a big party for the death anniversaries to remember their parents. (Yến, 37, skilled migrant mother)

Yen lived with her husband's family when she was in Vietnam. She said that she helped her mother-in-law to uphold family rituals such as praying at altars and holding death anniversaries. However, after arriving in Australia, she does not continue to practice these rituals because of her busy life. Neither does she expect her children to do so.

Not all participants agreed with this, however. Some refugee parents described their family's altar and said that they pray every new moon and full moon, and mark death anniversaries when family reunions are held. However, they do not think their sons will continue the ritual:

I have an altar in my family. I want to pass on this ritual to my sons but I don't think I can do it because I am not sure about their attitudes to worshipping ancestors. It is quite difficult for me to convince them to keep holding the ritual. As with many Vietnamese children here, I don't think my sons would have an altar in his own house to worship me when I pass away. They might have another way to remember us. (Đại, 52, refugee father)

Many participants from refugee backgrounds observed that their sons are not interested in this ritual, so they are not sure about its continuity in their families when they pass away. These rituals are being rejected, along with the role of sons in doing this duty.

#### *Sharing gendered expectations with children*

Interestingly, many parents from refugee and skilled migrant backgrounds said they have taught their sons how to be good husbands by doing housework and taking care of children. Mi, (63, refugee mother of three sons), described how she treated her three sons when they were younger:

Cooking, cleaning and being a good husband is what I told them [her sons]. I had taught them about doing housework when they were very young. I taught them how to wash dishes, help me to cook and clean. I required them to prepare food when I went to work. I think it is necessary for them when they have their own families. As they help their wives to do housework, cook and clean, it might maintain the relationships between husbands and wives.

Another skilled migrant mother had a similar opinion:

I do want them [her sons] to be similar to their dad, not their uncle. I mean my brother is 40 years old now but he still lives with my mum [in Vietnam]. He does not do any housework because my mum never taught him and asked him to do those things. It is really bad. My husband is totally different from my brother. He can do almost all housework. He cooks very well... I wish my sons could learn that from their dad. Now I can see they are learning from him.

(Hồng, 37, skilled migrant mother)

Teaching sons to do housework is still unusual in Vietnam. However, the examples above show that Vietnamese migrant mothers do not value the traditional roles of men in families highly, and try to teach their sons how to cook and clean in the hope that this will help change the gender roles.

When participants were asked about the values they want to pass on to their daughters in terms of gender hierarchy, there were different responses from the two groups of parent participants. Many refugee parents explained that maintaining the four virtues (*công, dzung, ngôn, hạnh*) is important for the reputation of Vietnamese women, and they expect their daughters to follow them:

Now they [her daughters] have their own families. When they were young, I taught them about *công dzung ngôn hạnh*, how to speak gently, cook well and be a good wife. (Thái, 65, refugee father)

Another refugee father added:

For my son it did not matter, but my daughters were not allowed to come home late. I did not want my daughters to move out to live with partners, just after marriage only. (Hải, 68, refugee father)

Another mother expressed a similar view:

When I was single [in Vietnam], I definitely had to follow *công, dzung, ngôn, hạnh*. It was not allowed for a girl to get pregnant before marriage. One of my friends did that and they [people living in her village] shaved her head and they kicked her out of my village.... I don't have daughters but I want my daughters-in-law to follow the four virtues. (Mai, 60, refugee mother)

As mentioned in the previous chapter on filial piety, Mai took her son back to Vietnam to choose his wife. She chose her daughter-in-law herself. She said elsewhere in the interview that she is very happy because her daughter-in-law followed her advice about being faithful and remaining a virgin before marriage. Mai is typical of other refugee mothers in this study. They were raised in the 'old' Vietnamese society 30 or 40 years ago, when the four virtues of Vietnamese women were still seen as important. It is evident that many refugee mothers brought with them to Australia the values of Vietnamese society at the time they left the country. After almost 40 years living in Australia, many refugee mothers still find the need to impose these values on their daughters and daughters-in-law.

However, many skilled migrants do not wish to pass on these values to their daughters. They explained that there is no point in practising these values. Two skilled migrant mothers of teenage daughters expressed their views on this issue:

It's too traditional and difficult to practise in modern life. I am sure my daughter does not agree with that [*công dzung ngôn hạnh*]. I do not think I need to pass on the norms to her. (Huyền, 36, skilled migrant mother)

I am not sure about that [teaching four virtues to daughter]. Actually, I do not think a good woman should be good at housework or cooking so I do not want to encourage my daughters to be good at cooking. She can see her dad does housework every day, just normal in my family. (Yến, 37, skilled migrant mother)

For Yến, the responsibility for cooking and other domestic chores does not belong only to women, so she does not find the need to teach her daughters the *công, dzung, ngôn, hạnh* virtues regarding housework. Huyền and Yến grew up in contemporary Vietnam, where the four virtues of *công, dzung, ngôn, hạnh* have been modified (Ngo 2004). They probably did not practise them when they were young. Migrating to Australia, they do not see advantages for their daughters of following the four virtues. They have discarded this value, and do not want to pass it on to their children.

From the examples above, it can be seen that the traditional views regarding the more important roles of sons in Vietnamese migrant families have been modified by first-generation parents. These parents aspire to financial independence, and are aware of other sources of support such as the pensions and aged care services. Therefore, the need to have their sons living with them and to get support from them is unlikely to remain. Sons' responsibilities in terms of maintaining the family line by worshipping ancestors have been challenged, as migrant parents find it difficult to continue this ritual in Australia.

Skilled migrants and refugees expressed different views on the treatment of daughters and sons. While younger parents feel it is not necessary to pass on the four virtues to their daughters, these values have been held onto tightly by many refugee parents. It is likely that the views and practices of skilled migrants regarding the four virtues had already been modified when they were still in Vietnam. Migrating to Australia by choice and working in professional jobs has provided them with opportunities for agency, and skilled migrant mothers do not see the necessity of maintaining the four virtues that would lead them to be submissive women. In contrast, although refugee parents try to teach their sons to do housework and childcare in order to modify gender roles in families, they still want to maintain the four virtues. It appears that the refugee parents brought with them the ideology of submissive, obedient daughters that existed when they left Vietnam. Having resettled in Australia, they have fewer opportunities to adapt well to Australian society because they lack English proficiency and other skills, so many of them tend to try to ensure the continuity of the practice of the old values by expecting their daughters to obey them and to uphold the four virtues.

The views of children on this issue are presented in the following section.

### 8.3. Children's views and practices

#### 8.3.1. *Gender hierarchy of husbands and wives*

Like their parents, the majority of child participants from both refugee and skilled migrant families have challenged the traditional roles of men as breadwinners and women as housewives. For example, Phuong, a 24-year-old Vietnamese Australian

woman from a refugee family, does not accept the expectations on women of doing housework:

It is stupid because she has to be very good at cooking and cleaning. She has to study really well. It is a lot.

Phương feels it is unfair to expect women to be good at both paid work and housework. At the time of the interview, she was studying towards a master's degree, and worked part-time in a community centre. She explained that her mum expects her to be good at cooking, but she does not want to learn.

Other adult children of refugees mentioned that they observed the gender hierarchy in their parents' behaviour when they were first in Australia, but this has changed over time:

When I was younger, I heard from my parents that wives should listen to husbands – that kind of thing... What I saw in my family was dad went to work and mum stayed at home and looked after us. However, when I get older, not so much anymore. I think they changed it through the years. They also share role responsibilities. (Hoa, 36, daughter of refugee)

The children of refugees have observed that the gender hierarchy has changed over time in Australia. These ideas closely reflect the views and practices of refugee parents outlined above.

Interestingly, many children from skilled migrant families reported that their mothers tend to make more decisions than their fathers do. Thanh, for example, does not experience the traditional roles of men and women in her family, because her parents do not practise them, and have not taught her to do so:

My mum is usually the boss and she makes most of the decisions in my family.... My dad usually washes dishes while my mum sweeps the floor. He does domestic stuff like put out the garbage bin, washes the car and whatever.

(Thanh, 14, daughter of skilled migrant)

Another girl added:

At the time we were in Vietnam, I think my dad had to take care of the money, accounting and all the stuff and buying a house, but all those jobs are done by my mum since we have lived here. She takes care of all the accounting jobs and management jobs. (Lan, 14, daughter of skilled migrant)

Lan's family has their own business, with her mother working full-time and her father taking care of the business. Lan said that her mother is a very active woman, and spends a lot of time helping her husband run the business. From Lan's perspective now, gender roles have changed, with women's decision-making powers being equal or superior to those of men.

### *8.3.2. The roles of sons and daughters in families*

*'The son is nothing else significant'*

The majority of child participants from both groups agreed that having sons is less important in Australia. Supporting the parents' attitudes regarding the less important role of sons, they think the main reason for this is that that sons and daughters tend to move out now to live independently.

Thu was born in Australia to a refugee family. She is now the mother of two sons and two daughters:

In Vietnamese culture, it is a lot more important that you have to have sons, at least one son to carry on the family name. They have to carry on family name and pass it on to the next generations. But I don't feel like that is important for my children. I did not worry about what gender they were... The son is nothing else significant (Thu, 31, daughter of refugee)

Thu is aware of Vietnamese family values in terms of keeping the family name, because she has been raised in a refugee family that has been living in Australia for almost 40 years. She married a Vietnamese man from a refugee family, and he is the oldest son in his family. However, Thu places no special value on sons, because she does not think the roles of her sons and daughters are different in terms of providing support and living with them in the future. Her view is typical of the children from both refugee and skilled migrant families who were born and raised in Australia.

Many sons in this study do not feel the need to be 'role models' by living with their parents. Hùng, a 37-year-old oldest son in a refugee family, does not live with his parents, but with his mother-in-law:

I have been living with my mother-in-law since I married. My parents did not care and of course, I did not care much about that. She [his mother in law] did not want to live alone, so my wife and I decided to live there.

It is unusual in Vietnamese families for oldest sons to live in the mother-in-law's house, because their own parents are expected to be their first priority. However, for many

children of both refugees and skilled migrants, this is not a consideration. In addition, as discussed in the previous chapter, many sons reported that they will be happy to take care of their parents if they are in need. Their parents, however, find this unnecessary, because in Australia they have other means of obtaining a secure life.

Another point that emerged from the interviews with sons is that they are not sure about their role in upholding family rituals such as worshipping ancestors. Many sons from refugee families had observed this ritual in their families but have not necessarily taken part in it. Some said that they would ask their parents for help if they were required to practise this ritual, while others said that it would be unlikely they would continue the practice after their parents pass away. It is likely that their parents have not taught them how to perform this ritual, because they do not see the advantages of retaining it. They find other ways to practise rather than doing it at home. As Tiên said in her interview, she has transferred the responsibility for ancestor worship to monks.

Similarly, Yến expects her children to remember their parents by putting flowers on their graves rather than holding big events for death anniversaries. The values relating to the role of sons in upholding family rituals are altering across generations.

#### *'Cooking, cleaning and being good husbands'*

In relation to children's views about the role of men and women in their migrant families, a sub-theme that emerged concerns the views and practices of children about being good husbands and wives. While many participant sons reported that their parents have taught them to do housework and that they have adopted these values in order to be good husbands, daughters from refugee families do not want to adopt the four virtues practised by their mothers.

Of the 18 child participants, eight are sons. Three sons who have their own families said helping with housework is one of their duties. Many learnt this from their mothers:

When I was younger, I helped my mum a lot in the kitchen at the time of death anniversaries or New Year. I prepared the food. I cut the cucumbers or laid up the hot pot [*lẩu*]. I did that, and from that I learnt how to cook, so now I cook at home – my wife does not cook much.... I guess I learnt all the techniques from my mum. Cooking, cleaning and being good husbands. My mum taught me but I make it better. (Tân, 37, son of refugees)

Hùng, (37, son of refugees) said:

I don't cook, because I don't know how to cook and I am too lazy to cook [laughing] But I take care of my kids. When they were babies I held them in my arms, and fed them [bottle feeding], and I changed their nappies. It was my job.

Many sons commented on the efforts made by their parents to encourage them to do as much housework as women. Second-generation children have adopted their parents' ideas, which do not identify jobs specific to men and women. The traditional gender hierarchy has been challenged and modified by this younger generation.

*'How many virtues that I kept I am not sure'*

Further, almost all child participants from skilled migrant backgrounds noted that their parents do not treat them and their siblings differently, and they are not sure what the four virtues (*công, dzung, ngôn, hanh*) mean. Some have never heard of these values. Almost all daughters from refugee families, however, take the four virtues seriously.

Lộc spoke of her parents' strict teaching in this regard:

They taught me the four virtues and the three obediences: Obey your father, obey your husband and obey your son. It is funny. They always required me to stay at home, sleep at home. I am a Vietnamese girl so I should stay in the family. I couldn't do that...They were afraid of when their daughters had boyfriends – that if they went out with boyfriends, they would get pregnant. My mum always told me about not having sex before marriage... While my mum required me to stay at home, my brother could go out and do everything with his girlfriend. For him, they did not mind so much because he could not get pregnant. (Lộc, 33, daughter of refugees)

Vy shared similar memories:

When I was growing up, they taught me a lot about the relations between men and women. They told me that men and women should not touch each other [*nam nǚ thụ thụ bất thân*]. I am a girl so I should speak gently. But how many virtues that I kept I am not sure [laughing]. (Vy, 31, daughter of refugees)

Another daughter told a story about her Vietnamese ex-boyfriend. The four virtues led to the break-up of their relationship:

His mum was looking for someone who was calm, timid and graceful and soft to be her daughter-in-law. I was not that, so I found that I could never be her perfect daughter-in-law. (Hoa, 36, daughter of refugees)

Lộc, Vy, Hoa and other daughters from refugee backgrounds were raised in families where their parents valued the *công, dzung, ngôn, hạnh*, and expected to pass it on to their daughters. However, they themselves are not certain that they would practise

these values in their lives. For many, remaining virgins before marriage, being graceful, and being good at cooking and housework were not their definitions of what constitutes a good woman. In other words, these values are not seen as suitable to their lives in Australia, where they have been taught to be unique and independent, and that they are free to spend time with their partners.

In summary, migrants' views towards the patriarchal relationships of traditional Vietnamese families appear to have shifted. Men and sons are no longer seen as the pillars of the family, and women are now more equal decision-makers. Parents now want to pass on these ideas by teaching their sons to help with housework and childcare. The children's views reflect this shift in the views of their parents. However, refugee parents still value the idea of submissive daughters and daughters-in-law, and seek to convey this to their daughters. Vietnamese Australian daughters, however, resist these values.

#### 8.4. Discussion

Earlier studies about other immigrant communities point out that the status of men within families changes after migration because many face challenges finding jobs. However, women's status increases with the opportunities they have to take on work outside the home (Chuang 2013; DeBiaggi 2002; Gill & Matthews 1995). The current study shows that Vietnamese refugees' views and practices regarding gender hierarchy in their families have been modified. In Australia, they aspire towards more egalitarian gender relations. In the new context, participating in work and making money appear

to be the reasons why there are changes in women's positions in many Vietnamese refugee families.

It was no surprise that skilled migrant participants in this study described their liberal views and practices regarding gender relations in their families. As discussed earlier, certain modernising processes in contemporary Vietnam have challenged gender ideology in many Vietnamese families (Luong 2003). Most skilled migrants in this study lived in Vietnam at that time. Most are young and well educated. It is likely that many of them already held liberal views regarding the positions of men and women in families before settling in Australia. This finding shows the complexity of the experience of Vietnamese migrants who are not involved in the acculturative process directly when living in the new context. In this sense, acculturation does not help us to make sense of the complex processes on modifying gender hierarchy values in the skilled migrant participants of this study.

The findings also suggest that living in Australia without their mothers-in-law in the household, together with the difficulty in obtaining domestic help, have meant that many skilled migrant men and women have to do domestic chores themselves while working full-time. This has led many skilled migrant men in this study to modify their views about women's jobs at home, and they now help their wives with domestic chores. They were not doing this when living in Vietnam.

The study shows that while migrant parents from both backgrounds expect their sons to be good husbands in helping with cooking and cleaning, they tend not to expect their sons to support them; nor do they expect them to maintain family rituals. It appears that doing domestic chores is seen by parent participants as an effective way

for their sons to modify the ideology of men and women's jobs at home. This value can be seen as a form of cultural capital that could help develop happy families. Having sons to support parents and continue ancestor worship is not necessary in their new lives in Australia, so most do not see the need to pass these values on to their children. Previous literature has described the traditional expectations of Vietnamese sons and provided compelling evidence that sons are still preferred in contemporary Vietnamese families (Belanger 2002; Guilmoto 2012; Nguyen 2011). In the Vietnamese context, pension policies and other aged care services did not adequately support the elderly, making many older Vietnamese parents dependent on their children. Thus, sons play a significant role in supporting their parents in many families in contemporary Vietnam. Living in Australia, however, because parents and sons tend to live separately and do not need to provide financial support, looking after parents is not considered an important role for sons in their families.

In addition, the worship of ancestors is seen as an important ritual in Vietnam that is the responsibility of sons, and it is normal to have an altar to practise the rituals of ancestor worship. After migration, however, the parents in this study do not often practise the worship of ancestors in their homes, and find different ways of practising it, such as in temples or cemeteries. Thus, parents do not expect their sons to continue the ritual in their own families. In other words, these norms are not seen as a form of cultural capital in their lives in Australia.

The findings reveal that sons and daughters continue to be treated differently in many refugee families. Other research on Vietnamese refugee families in the early stage of resettlement in the US and Australia has argued that the submissive characteristics of

Vietnamese women within families continued to be demonstrated, even though there is equality with their husbands in that they are able to work and earn money (Bui & Morash 1999; Kibria 1990; Nguyen & Ho 1995; Thomas 1999). Kibria (1995) found that although Vietnamese refugee women in the US exercise greater control in their families in the new country, they do not use these powers to challenge the gender relations in their families; their husbands still have a higher status. This means that the ideology of submissive obedient women persists in Vietnamese refugee families after migration. This was true of the findings in this study relating to sharing the four virtues with daughters. Refugee parent participants reported that they aspire to pass on their expectations regarding the four virtues to their daughters. While they do not judge their sons' behaviour in dating relationships, they are not happy with their daughters going out with boyfriends, because they are worried they will get pregnant before marriage. A possible reason for this is that the refugee participants brought with them the four virtues that were practised at the time they left Vietnam, and they hold onto these tightly after many years of living in Australia. Because they lack English proficiency and work experience, the refugees have fewer opportunities to adapt well to mainstream society, and this influences how values are passed down to their daughters. However, the daughters born and raised in Australia do not wish to take on these values.

## 8.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, modifications of gender hierarchy across generations of Vietnamese migrant families have been explored. It is noted that men, women and teenage/adult children believe in egalitarian gender relations. Patrilineal traditions favouring sons

have also been challenged following migration to Australia. The breadwinner role of men is being shared by women, and sons are not assuming full responsibility for continuing the family line. The findings also suggest that parent migrants have modified their views towards gender hierarchy, and are teaching their sons to help with housework and childcare.

Sons' responsibilities for taking care of parents and continuing family rituals are not seen as necessary. In other words, these values are not seen as a form of cultural capital for migrant families. The different attitudes regarding the treatment of sons and daughters in refugee families reflects dispositions that were developed in Vietnam in a previous era, and are also influenced by past experiences as refugees.

The next chapter addresses the historical and social environment that has shaped the refugee habitus. The different attitudes towards homeland of refugee and skilled migrant participants will also be explored.

## Chapter 9: The links with homeland

### 9.1. Introduction

It has been demonstrated in the preceding chapters that family values relating to harmony, language maintenance, filial piety and gender hierarchy are preserved and modified in both parent and child generations. It has been shown that overall, parents seek to pass on to their children the cultural values which are seen as developing capital. They do not want to share with their children values that are unsuitable in the Australian context. The findings have also revealed different views and practices among refugee and skilled migrant parents towards maintaining cultural values in their families. In this chapter, I aim to present evidence to demonstrate that because of how close their links with their homeland are, refugee and skilled migrant parents have various strategies of sharing cultural values in their families when living in the diaspora.

The experiences of Vietnamese migrants and the children of migrants covered in this chapter relate to links with their homeland, and are broken down into three sub-themes: feelings towards Vietnam, visiting Vietnam and using Vietnamese media. I did not ask participants about these issues, but they emerged when refugees were recalling the time they left Vietnam on boats, and their feelings towards the Vietnam of the past, when the country was deeply influenced by political issues. While talking about Vietnamese cultural values, skilled migrant participants referred to their homeland as the source of their cultural values.

It was observed that refugee parents do not feel close links with Vietnam; hence they share family values in the diaspora in other ways. However, younger parents who arrived in Australia more recently stressed their strong links with Vietnam, and see this as a tool to help their children retain Vietnamese cultural values. First-generation parents from the two groups have different backgrounds, which influence the ways they share family values with their children. However, neither the children of skilled migrants nor those of refugees are influenced by their parents' views about Vietnam.

## 9.2. Refugee parents

### *9.2.1. Feelings towards Vietnam: 'It was sad and unhappy memories'*

Almost all refugee participants have a strong sense of belonging to Vietnam. Many of them explained that Vietnam is their background. Their emotional attachment to Vietnam was clear as they described their childhood and youth living there. Most participants said that they want their children to understand their Vietnamese background.

However, many refugee participants used to work as soldiers or on the staff of the Saigon regime. They left Vietnam after the fall of this regime. Many spoke negatively about Vietnam. They had bad memories of the re-education camps, the communists, and of their dangerous journeys to Australia. Hải, a 68-year-old refugee father, who used to work as a pilot in Saigon army, recalled his time in Vietnam after the end of the war:

They [the communist party] took over the South. The living standard was so low. I was required to go to the re-education camp and work in the new

economic zone. My kids were not allowed to go to school... It was a terrible period. I could not stand them. I decided to escape from them; otherwise we could not survive.

These feelings were shared by another refugee participant:

Vietnam for me is sad and unhappy memories. Nothing to remember. I was really lucky and happy when I could manage to escape from there. (Ngọc, 70, refugee father)

Many described traumatic and painful experiences they had when fleeing their homeland by boat. Dangerous journeys were frequently mentioned, and some told sad stories of family members and relatives who had not survived:

We went by boat and it took us 14 days to get to Malaysia. It was terrible. Pirates attacked us seven times in total. They took our compass, cut the anchor line so we floated at the sea. (Hải, 68, refugee father)

So many bodies at sea on the way to leave Vietnam. I saw people on other boats who cried for help but I could not help them. Women were raped and many of them were killed by pirates. Even over 30 years have gone by, I still can see their haunting faces and hear their voices on my brain. (Mi, 63, refugee mother)

For Hải and Mi, these sad memories have haunted them for many years. They demonstrated emotional attachment and traumatic memories. However, when asked about sharing these memories with their children, almost all reported that they 'do not want to share' and 'just want to keep by myself'.

Hải said:

I can't forget the sad memories that I experienced like the ways they treated me and the hard time in the re-education camps [...] but I don't want my children to hold this feeling. I think we should forgive them.

Hải was not the only refugee father to express negative feelings about the Vietnamese government. All refugee parent participants described the same feelings, but almost all do not want their children to be hostile towards the Vietnamese government.

An interesting sub-theme that emerged around the refugee participants' feelings towards Vietnam is their fondness towards society in South Vietnam before 1975, when it was a wealthy country with rich cultural practices:

It was a wonderful time. We studied at school for free, we had free milk at schools, and we mainly travelled by cars and motorbikes. We used to have good incomes and freedom there. (Trung, 54, refugee father)

Trung escaped from Vietnam after finishing high school. Having arrived in Melbourne, lacking English language and other skills, Trung has had a variety of low-paid jobs and has a stable income. He said he is happy with his new life in Australia, but still mourns the life he had in Vietnam before he had to leave. Mai, a 60-year-old refugee mother, also reported that life in southern Vietnam had been good:

We used to live in a society with good moral standards; we valued them and kept them carefully. We were living in a village where everybody knows each other so if someone in one family breaks the values like disobedience to parents... the others will know and make comments on that [...] I think we used to have strong fences of moral norms in every single family, as well as in our

village. I think it has been changing so much now in Vietnam; I don't think they can preserve those moral and cultural values as much as we did in the past.

(Mai, 60, refugee mother)

Mai and Trung expressed deep regret about the changes that have occurred in Vietnam. Both travel to Vietnam sometimes as tourists. They tended to compare their past lives in southern Vietnam with the contemporary Vietnam that they observe when they go back. In their view, Vietnam society today is not any better than it was in the past. They feel that Vietnamese cultural values have declined in modern society. Thus, most refugee parents try to carefully preserve the family values they brought with them when they first migrated. They think this is the best way to keep Vietnamese cultural values intact in the diaspora.

#### *9.2.2. Visiting Vietnam*

In the Vietnamese language, the word 'về' means to 'go back home'. However, when talking about Vietnam, no refugee participants used the word 'về' (go back home) to describe their trips back to Vietnam, though many skilled migrant participants did. They used the statement 'travel to Vietnam' (*đi Vietnam*). In this sense, Vietnam is not their home any longer. They have made Australia home.

Most also reported that they do not often travel to Vietnam. Thái (65, refugee father), who has been living in Melbourne almost for 30 years, does not see the need to visit Vietnam often:

It is not very often, just once every seven or nine years. Because, you know, my family and almost all my relatives are living here, so I sometimes travel to Vietnam as a tourist.

Other refugees said that since leaving Vietnam to travel to Australia, they have only visited Vietnam once or twice on Asian tours that travel from the north to the south of Vietnam, and that also visit other Asian countries such as Korea and Japan. They usually take their children with them on these trips. They do not need to visit Vietnam as often as skilled migrants do, because many do not have extended families living there. Ngoc, a 70-year-old-refugee father, is an example of this:

My sisters, brother and their families are living here. Do you know *Phở Näm Sao* restaurant? [Yes, of course, it is a very famous Phở restaurant in Melbourne]. It is my nephew's restaurant.... All my relatives are living around Melbourne. I just travel to Vietnam as a tourist. Last year my wife and I travelled from the south to the north in one month.

After settling in Australia, the Family Reunion Program instigated by the Australian government created opportunities for refugees to sponsor family members to relocate to Australia. Therefore, many do not need to travel back to Vietnam to see their relatives. The links with Vietnam are not maintained through visiting the country.

Sometimes participants are not happy with how the war is memorialised by the Vietnamese government, and this creates a sense of distance:

It has been changing very much since I escaped from there. Everything is better but I felt like not happy when there is still a gap between us [Vietnamese

government and refugees]. During the tour, the tour guide brought us to the museum of the Vietnam War in *Quảng Trị* province. I just saw the ways they displayed the war memories. It was all about the sacrifice of communist soldiers, not us – the other side of the war. I was a soldier in the war. This is unfair, you know' (Hải, 68, refugee father)

*Quảng Trị* province is located in northern central Vietnam. In the Vietnam War, a border was established here to divide Vietnam into two parts – North and South. Hai visited this province, and felt sad that his experiences of war were not reflected in public memory. This causes a growing distance between him and Vietnam, because he feels that the South Vietnamese army is not portrayed as worthy of being remembered.

Many refugee participants, said they do not want to be hostile towards the communist government, and believe the differences should be forgiven and forgotten, but many feel unhappy when they visit museums where the war is memorialised. Several participants complained that every year on 30 April, they are reminded about their sad past, because this is the day Saigon regime fell. In Vietnam, however, the government continues to celebrate this day of victory. 'It is bad', 'it is unfair', and 'how can we stand it' were statements made frequently by refugee participants when discussing this issue. Thus, refugee participants do not feel close links with Vietnam, and maintain a distance from their country of birth, which is deeply influenced by past political issues.

#### *9.2.3. Using Vietnamese media*

Another form of connection with Vietnam that emerged in the interviews is keeping up to date with Vietnamese news via media. Nowadays, many Vietnamese television

programs made in Vietnam are broadcast in many countries. Vietnamese people living abroad can also easily find Vietnamese newspapers, books and other information via the internet. However, many refugee participants do not like Vietnamese media, and tend not to access it:

We don't like it [Vietnamese news]. I don't follow it. The programs do not suit us. Things that happen in Vietnam just belong to the communist government.  
(Trung, 54, refugee father)

Trung is not the only participant who does not want to receive Vietnamese news via television programs, radio and newspapers. All refugee participants said that they do not watch Vietnamese channels or read Vietnamese newspapers published in Vietnam. Most access Vietnamese media produced in Melbourne, including radio programs, newspapers such as *Viet Luận* (The Vietnamese Herald) and *Tivi Tuần san* (Vietnamese Daily News), and other Vietnamese programs produced in the US. From the early stages of resettlement in the West, Vietnamese people living overseas have produced their own broadcast media and print. These media are important resources in the diaspora.

Connections with Vietnam via media seem to be an effective way to keep in touch with contemporary Vietnam as well as changes in Vietnamese society and culture.

However, many refugee participants who do not respect the Vietnamese government, and do not choose to follow media produced in Vietnam. In this regard, their connections with modern Vietnam are not maintained. Therefore, the values most refugees preserve in the diaspora are those brought with them when they left Vietnam. These values are seen as different from those of contemporary Vietnam, which are now influenced by the capitalist market, modernisation and urbanisation.

However, Vietnamese migrant participants who left Vietnam recently feel strong connections with Vietnam.

### 9.3. Skilled migrant parents

#### *9.3.1. Feelings towards Vietnam: 'My home is also there'*

When the skilled participants talked about Vietnam, almost all exhibited strong positive feelings towards Vietnam and close links with it. Trà, a 34-year-old skilled migrant mother, described her feelings:

Although the living standard there [Vietnam] is still low now, many people are still poor, and the environmental pollution is bad, from the bottom of my heart, Vietnam is my homeland and my roots. My kids should understand that and have their behaviours towards there.

For most skilled migrants like Trà, strong links with Vietnam were expressed. Vietnam is their home. They also want their children to stay closely connected with Vietnam. Most participants choose to study, work and settle in Australia, but they also recognise Vietnam as their country of origin, to which they can go back whenever they want.

Some skilled migrants expressed deep emotions about such festivals as the *Tết* (Lunar New Year) and other traditional festivals, as they are opportunities for family reunions. Statements frequently made include, 'My extended family is there', 'my home is there', and 'we need to go back there to refresh our life'. In other words, for many, Australia is their home and Vietnam is another home: 'Home here and home there'. Many visit Vietnam every year, and speak fondly of their homeland.

### **9.3.2. Visiting Vietnam**

As well as having different feelings towards Vietnam, refugee and skilled migrant participants have different links with the country. While refugee participants said they just ‘travel to’ Vietnam (*đi Vietnam*) as tourists, skilled migrants tended to use the phrase *về Vietnam* (go back to Vietnam) when talking about their trips there.

Almost all skilled migrant participants initially came to Australia for study. After finishing their courses, they worked and settled in Australia. Most have lived in Australia for between eight and 15 years. When asked about visiting Vietnam, most said they go back every year. Yến feels these trips are good for her children:

We go back to Vietnam quite often, every year I think. Last year we went back twice. In September this year, we’re going back again. Going back to Vietnam, I think we take a chance to relax and refresh ourselves after a busy time in Australia. My kids have chances to see and live closely with their grandparents and relatives. They can improve Vietnamese language as well. My little daughter can speak Vietnamese very fluently after only one month in Vietnam  
(Yến, 37 mother, skilled migrant)

Hiếu, who has lived in Melbourne for 12 years and works as an English teacher in a TAFE, also goes to Vietnam during summer school holidays every year. He takes his children back to Hanoi to enjoy Lunar New Year with his extended family. He further explained:

The real traditional environment of *Tết* (the Lunar New Year) is only to be had in Vietnam where I have my parents and relatives, I suppose. That’s why we go

back every Tết to enjoy it. My kids can say New Year greetings to their grandparents directly. We can go to the Tết market to prepare for Tết carefully. It is cosy and comfortable on New Year's Eve there. On the first day of New Year, my kids can get the lucky money in red envelopes from relatives. It is really good for them to practise traditional rituals there. (Hiếu, 42, skilled migrant father)

As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, the benefits of going back to Vietnam are not only to maintain relationships between children and their extended family members and improve Vietnamese language, but also to provide their children with a 'real' environment in which to practise family values. Many participants also said that the distance between Melbourne and Vietnam is not great, and airfares are affordable. Thus, most skilled migrants want to take their children back to Vietnam as often as possible.

Sometimes they decide to go back to Vietnam to work for extended periods. Hồng is a mother of two young sons – one in kindergarten and the other in primary school. She works as a university lecturer in Melbourne. At the time of interview, she had decided to return to Vietnam to teach for over two years in a university in Hồ Chí Minh City. She said that the main reason for her decision is to provide her kids with an opportunity to live in Vietnam for an extended period:

It is necessary because I should provide them with a chance even though I am not really sure they want to be a Vietnamese or not. You know, they are ABC [Australian born child] but I believe that going back to live there will help them to absorb Vietnamese values in their young age. (Hồng, 37, skilled migrant mother)

They derive strength and energy from visiting Vietnam and their families there.

They also want to enhance links between their children, Vietnam and extended families there.

### *9.3.3. Using Vietnamese media*

As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, social media is thought to be an effective tool for skilled migrants to keep in touch with relatives in Vietnam and to maintain their mother tongue. Skilled migrants stressed that they also want to keep up to date with Vietnamese information through social media. Many said they watch Vietnamese television channels and read Vietnamese news online every day. Most have signed up for long-term Vietnamese TV channel plans:

I follow VTV4 [a channel for Vietnamese overseas produced by National Vietnamese Television] every day. It helps me to update with Vietnam news; it also helps me to shorten the distance from here to there. (Huy, 40, skilled migrant father)

I read Vietnamese express every day; my two sons are encouraged to read. It is a good way to improve their Vietnamese reading. (Hiếu, 42, skilled migrant father)

For Huy and Hiếu, accessing Vietnamese media from Vietnam not only helps them keep in touch with their homeland, but also supports their children in maintaining Vietnamese values and language. The programs on Vietnamese channels are also thought to help maintain Vietnamese family values. The strong links between skilled migrant participants and Vietnam through using Vietnamese media influence the ways they share cultural values with their children.

In summary, three aspects of links with Vietnam were described when participants were speaking about their country of origin: their feelings towards Vietnam and connections with Vietnam through accessing relevant media and visiting the country. Differences were noted between the two groups in relation to these aspects. Skilled migrants tend to feel very close to Vietnam, visit the country frequently, and follow Vietnamese media to keep up to date with Vietnamese news, as well as to shorten the geographical distance between Vietnam and Australia. By contrast, refugee participants expressed their sense of distance from Vietnam, find Vietnamese media published in Vietnam strange, and do not visit the country frequently.

Each group offers different reasons for their links – or lack thereof – with Vietnam. The refugee group left Vietnam by necessity. After many years living in Australia, many of them still harbour negative feelings about the Vietnamese government. This group has also taken the opportunity to sponsor their relatives to relocate in Australia. Thus, their links with Vietnam are weak. In contrast, the skilled migrants came to Australia by choice, and are in Australia without their extended families, so they maintain strong links to Vietnam by visiting and using Vietnamese media. These differences may shape the various ways migrants share Vietnamese cultural values with the next generation. Their children may therefore be influenced by their parents' views about Vietnam. The following section will present the views and practices of migrant children regarding these issues.

## 9.4. Children's attitudes towards Vietnam

Of the 18 child participants, six were born in Australia and 12 arrived in Australia with their parents when aged between five and 13. Interestingly, despite parents having different attitudes towards Vietnam, both groups of child participants believe it is important to know something about Vietnam, as it is their parents' homeland, and they feel they should visit to see where their ancestors come from. Most child participants have visited Vietnam at least twice, and the children with skilled migrant backgrounds go back to Vietnam often.

### *9.4.1. Children from refugee backgrounds*

As discussed earlier in this chapter, refugee parent participants expressed mostly negative feelings towards Vietnam and the current Vietnamese government, and do not feel closely connected with their country of birth. By contrast, the children from refugee families expressed different feelings to those of their parents.

When describing their trips in Vietnam, several spoke warmly of Vietnam. Lộc was born in Australia and had visited Vietnam many times:

I love Vietnam. When I got there, when I got off the airport in Saigon, it was so crazy that I felt like I went back home. This is home. Vietnam is my mother's land and for me, it is a special connection. (Lộc, 33, daughter of refugees)

Similarly, Hoa came to Australia with her parents when she was five:

My dad took me to many places and told me that was where I was born and gave me the whole tour of our history, like that was the place he met my mum

[....]. I love it. Before I went, I did not know much about Vietnam but when I went there, I loved it. I have a real association with my background. (Hoa, 36, daughter of refugees)

For adult children of refugees like Lộc and Hoa, their special connection with Vietnam is realised when they visit the country. They also reported that even though their parents do not want to share with them sad stories about the war, re-education camps and the past government, they gain some understanding of their parents' experiences. Hoa later shared stories about her father who served in the southern Vietnam army, but she noted she did not learn about the Vietnam War from him:

I am sure he had seen a lot of troubles, a lot of tragedies in the past, but he didn't share anything with me. He kept to himself, I think. It was when I was 13 or 14 years old, I realised that he couldn't see clearly because he got [a piece of] shrapnel in his eyes. It might come from an exploding bomb [in the war]. I had no idea [about that] all that time. He didn't share a lot; he didn't share things he had seen in the war.

Like Hoa, many other children from refugee backgrounds reported that they source Vietnamese information from Vietnamese media published in Australia and America. Some participants said that they work in the Vietnamese community so they can learn more about Vietnamese history and culture. Lộc (33, daughter of refugees) has finished her PhD project on Vietnamese women migrants. At the time of interview, she was also working on another project about the Vietnamese community. She mentioned that she has intensive knowledge about the situation in southern Vietnam after the Vietnam War for many people like her parents. She understands the gap

between Vietnam and the Vietnamese refugee community. She spoke about the different flags of the Vietnamese community in Australia and Vietnam:

You know, with the Vietnamese group here, the flag is yellow, the one that belongs to the former South Vietnam. I was raised on that flag. Seven years ago, when I went back to Vietnam for the first time I saw the flag was a star in Vietnam. I also know that it is the international flag, you know.

The South Vietnamese government's flag was mentioned frequently in interviews with refugee parent participants when they were talking about the Saigon regime. For them, their country's flag is the yellow one. Since resettling in Melbourne, they have maintained this yellow flag, and hang it in community places such as temples, churches, markets and restaurants. They have rejected Vietnam's current star flag. However, Lộc and other children from refugee families do not think much about the issues. Many of them mentioned that they do not want to maintain the idea 'the two flags' or 'the north and the south governments' any longer. Tuấn was born in Vietnam, and arrived in Melbourne with his parents when he was 13 years old:

The war has been finished already almost for 40 years. I don't know why they [refugee people] continue to keep holding the ideas [negative feelings about Vietnam]. They celebrate the flag of the South Vietnam government here. They should forget the past and look at the future. We should do things towards Vietnam in order to have a better country. For me, it does not matter when you come from the north and I come from the south. We are Vietnamese and practise the same values in our families. (Tuấn, 39, son of refugees)

Sometimes, adult children from this group noted that they plan to go back to Vietnam to work and run businesses there. Hung, a doctor in a hospital in Melbourne, described the charity work he does in Vietnam with his friends, who are also second-generation Australian Vietnamese:

Our charity team was established in 2000 in Melbourne, when I was a student. It was quite a small team. We raised money for Vietnamese children in remote areas; we also went there to teach them in short courses. We usually send money to Vietnam through temples or churches. Do you remember the flood damage that happened in Hue [a city in the middle of Vietnam] in 1999? [Yes, I do] After that, we went there to help people to recover from the disaster.(Hùng, 37, son of refugees)

Many children from refugee backgrounds do not wish to continue thinking about Vietnam's turbulent political history. They see themselves as Australians with Vietnamese roots, and find it necessary to maintain connections with Vietnam because it is their parents' homeland. They are less influenced by the political allegiances or rifts that have characterised their parents' experience.

However, not all the child participants reported positive feelings about Vietnam. Some children from refugee backgrounds have only travelled to Vietnam on Asian tours, as some parent participants reported on earlier had done. For these people, statements such as 'it was different', 'it is a totally different country and 'it was very strange' were made when they were talking about their feelings when they visit Vietnam. Although they understand that Vietnam is their parents' homeland, this participant group does not have strong links with Vietnam.

The attitudes towards Vietnam of children from skilled migrant backgrounds may be different from those from refugee backgrounds. The next section will explore this issue.

#### *9.4.2. Children of skilled migrants*

Many participants noted that they like going back to Vietnam frequently, and described happy times in Vietnam with their relatives and extended families. Their connections with Vietnam and their extended families have been maintained through visits to Vietnam:

It was a really good feeling and really happy there because I have my family around. They picked us up at the airport at night; everyone [in family] came just for picking me up at the airport. I love to go back to Vietnam to see them

(Thanh, 14, daughter of skilled migrants)

Many other participants reported that their parents share stories about Vietnam with them daily, and provide them with opportunities to improve their understanding through exposing them to Vietnamese media and books. Many of them said they watch and enjoy Vietnamese Television Programs with their parents. Connections with Vietnam remain quite strong in their families.

Some spoke warmly of Vietnam, and noted that they feel the need to visit and help Vietnamese people to improve their living standards. Lan said that her dream is to become a doctor and do charity work in Vietnam:

Vietnam is beautiful, isn't it? I'm thinking that after I become a doctor I can go back to Vietnam and help people and children. Because many children there are homeless, they need help, and I want to help them, and probably with my

mum along. I think it is a good thing to do for my mother's homeland. (Lan, 14, daughter of skilled migrants)

In addition, while some children of skilled migrants like to go back for the Tết holiday and to see their extended families, others expressed that despite frequent visits to Vietnam with their parents, they are still not happy when they are there:

We went back to Vietnam quite often, but I don't really have many other choices because my parents asked me to do so. (Cường, 18, son of skilled migrants)

Just travelling from my mum's side to my dad's side to see our relatives – a bit exhausted. I don't know... because everything there seemed to be strange. (Bình, 14, son skilled migrants)

For Cường and Bình, going back to Vietnam does not help them maintain relationships with their relatives. Ties with Vietnam tend to be looser in subsequent generations. Even though their parents attempt to enhance the links, the children still have little contact with their families in Vietnam. As discussed in Chapter 5, teenage participants do not want to talk with their relatives in Vietnam by phone or other chat mediums, even though their parents ask them to do so as a means to maintain relationships. Some teenage participants also said that the idea of visiting Vietnam to see relatives does not attract them.

## 9.5. Discussion

Research on the relationship between Vietnamese living in the diaspora with their country of origin shows that connections with the homeland are weak (Ben-Mosche

2012; Ben-Moshe, Pyke & Kirpitchenko 2016; Carruthers 2008; Diane 2001; Thomas 1997). In the current study, this is true of participants who are past refugees. Political issues relating to the Vietnam War led them to flee their homeland and resettle in Australia. On the way to Australia, many experienced deeply traumatic incidents. Sad memories about the Vietnam War and its consequences influence their dispositions, as do their negative feelings about Vietnam and the current government that took over the former regime. Further, the resettlement of their extended families in Australia under the Family Reunion Program has provided refugees with opportunities to sponsor their extended family members to relocate to Australia, where they live near their families. It appears that the feeling of distance leads them to preserve and share cultural values that existed at the time they left.

However, the findings in this chapter also demonstrate strong links between overseas Vietnamese and their homeland. Skilled migrants who came to Australia by choice tend to keep in touch with Vietnamese society, and are inclined to keep up to date with social changes in contemporary Vietnam. This strong connection influences the ways skilled migrants preserve and modify Vietnamese cultural values in their lives in Australia. This migrant group applies flexible strategies in sharing cultural values with their children, and the cultural values shared are those of contemporary Vietnam.

In her book, *After the odyssey: A study of Greek Australians*, Bottomley (1979) noted that the values immigrants brought with them at the time of departure persist long after migration, though values in the homeland change over time. When Bottomley was conducting research, social media and other technological advances had not been developed, so immigrants did not have so many opportunities to be updated on issues

in their homeland. This meant that immigrants preserved outmoded cultural values. The current study shows that, although refugee participants live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century during an information technology revolution and with more affordable air travel, they still do not strive to maintain links with their homeland; this is for political reasons. Thus, like many Greek Australians in the last three decades, Vietnamese refugees tend to carefully preserve aspects of the cultural values they brought with them when they left Vietnam around 40 years ago.

Children of migrants are usually influenced by their parents' experiences (Bankston & Zhou 1994). Studies on second-generation Vietnamese have found that the children of refugees are affected by refugee experiences, so it is difficult for them to have positive feelings about their parents' homeland, and the relationships between them and the country of origin are distant (Bankston & Zhou 1994; Ben-Mosche 2012). Other recent studies have pointed out that although many second-generation migrants tend to return to Vietnam to find skilled jobs, they still face challenges and difficulties in their lives in Vietnam (Carruthers 2002; Nguyen-Akbar 2014). The data from this study, however, shows that many children of refugee families tend to gloss over the past political issues that influenced their parents' views, and respect their parents' homeland. Many obtain background knowledge about Vietnam through study and work relating to the country. It seems the next generation of children from refugee families wishes to enhance links with Vietnam, and tend to not to allow themselves to be affected by past political issues.

## 9.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, the interview data about links with the homeland have been presented. Refugee parent participants reported weak links with Vietnam in three regards: sad memories and feelings about Vietnam, not visiting Vietnam frequently, and rejecting Vietnamese media. Skilled migrant parents, however, have closer connections with Vietnam, and think of it as their home. They consider that maintaining links with Vietnam helps them to uphold Vietnamese values when living overseas. In the migrant context, the two groups of first-generation participants and their children have different connections with their country of origin, which has resulted in different ways of sharing Vietnamese cultural values in the diaspora. It has been shown that the refugee group, whose dispositions have been affected by political issues and traumatic experiences, had their own ways of maintaining values that existed in Vietnam at the time they left. Skilled migrants are more closely connected with the cultural values of their country of birth. The ways they share family values with their children are impacted by these different situations. It was also argued in this chapter that the children of refugees and skilled migrants are not influenced by their parents' views and practices in relation to connections with Vietnam. They find their own ways to retain links with Vietnam.

## Chapter 10: Conclusion

### 10.1. Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore Vietnamese cultural values within Vietnamese families after their migration to Australia. The focus was on the processes of sharing cultural values between first-generation parents and children. The study examined the views and practices regarding family values of refugee and skilled migrant parents and the children from these backgrounds. In so doing, information was gained about the processes by which first-generation migrant families and their children maintain and share those cultural values that they perceive as beneficial to their lives in Australia, while modifying or downplaying other aspects of these values. This study focused on two sets of research questions related to each generation. First, which cultural values do first generation parents want to share with their children? Why do they want to share these values and not others? How does this sharing take place? Second, what are the views and practices of the children of Vietnamese migrants regarding these values?

In this chapter, the study's findings in response to these questions are summarised. The theoretical argument developed in this study is also restated. It begins by focusing on parents' and children's experiences of the ways in which cultural values that develop capital are maintained and shared, while those cultural values that have less capital are modified or discarded. Attention is then drawn to the process of sharing cultural values across generations, which is influenced by parents' and children's habitus. Suggestions for future research are also made.

## 10.2. Cultural values that develop capital are maintained and shared across generations

The study adopted Bourdieu's notion of capital as a prism through which to view the experiences of Vietnamese migrants and their children in relation to maintaining cultural values. Bourdieu (1986) understands forms of capital fundamentally as modes of power that he says can be invested in, converted and reproduced. As stated earlier, cultural capital in the embodied state of such entities as values, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes can be accumulated, possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society. While Bourdieu spoke of capital and cultural capital as forms of power and privilege owned by the dominant classes in general societal contexts, in migration studies, the concept of cultural capital has been approached by Bourdieusian scholars as a collection of resources (or 'treasure chest') that migrants bring with them when establishing themselves in a new land. According to this line of thinking, such resources for migrants have the potential to be accumulated, exchanged, converted, valued and also devalued in their new lives (Coe & Shani 2015; Erel 2010; Wu 2011; Yosso 2005).

In this study, some aspects of Vietnamese cultural values that refugee and skilled migrant parents have brought with them to Australia are seen by participants as positive forms of capital that support their new lives in this country. More specifically, the values of harmony, solidarity, emotional support and the Vietnamese language in migrant families are widely shared and retained across generations. Almost all 20 first-generation parents interviewed – regardless of length of time living in Australia, how

they arrived here, age or social class – reported making significant efforts to retain these values.

For refugee participants, the values of harmony and solidarity among siblings and extended family members are retained strongly, and filial piety values relating to emotional support between children and parents are highly valued in their families.

The advantages of united families, including tight relationships among family members, were identified as very significant in their new lives. It is probable that these strong family bonds contribute to helping them overcome past difficulties. Refugees are known to suffer poverty and loss of social status in the new society. Close family bonds often serve as a buffer against feelings of loneliness, alienation and discrimination (Malkki 1995; Rumbaut & Ima 1988). The findings in this thesis show that the special circumstances of refugee participants, including fleeing from their homeland and traumatic experiences, have significantly influenced their outlooks.

Many of them reported major challenges in the early years of resettlement, such as lacking English proficiency and other skills that enable access to the labour market. The limited resources of refugees in the new land may encourage family members to assist each other to survive during a difficult time. Thus, the refugee parents feel that receiving emotional support from their children and harmony and solidarity values are valuable resources that they want to maintain and share with their children when living in Australia.

Like the refugees, the skilled migrant participants understand the power of harmony and solidarity values, and consider it important to be provided with emotional support from their children. As discussed, when migrating to a new land, migrants typically face

challenges in communicating with new people using a new language, and negotiate a new cultural environment with a sense of uncertainty (Kibria 1995; Suárez-Orozco, Todorova & Louie 2002). In the current study, although almost all the skilled migrants are well-educated, migrated to Australia by choice, and have not experienced the same traumatic incidents as refugees, they still face difficulties in the process of relocating to Australia. Many commented on the importance of emotional and material support from their siblings and relatives in Vietnam in establishing their lives in the new context. They respect and value their relationships with extended family members. Further, they feel that tight relationships between parents and children, and among siblings in immediate families, are valuable resources that can support their lives in the new country. As many parents said, love from their children supports them in overcoming health and other issues in their lives. They believe in the value of emotional support in assisting their children across the various stages of life, and in enabling them to be part of a happy family. Thus, they would like their children to retain these values as cultural resources. In summary, both first-generation refugees and skilled migrants understand the values of harmony and solidarity, and the emotional support aspect of filial piety, as positive capital.

Another example of a cultural value that develops capital is the maintenance of Vietnamese language among refugee and skilled migrant parents. In refugee families, the mother tongue is preserved diligently because of the strong need for children to be able to communicate with their parents who lack English proficiency. In addition, the refugee parents have required their children to be bilingual to help them in their daily lives as non-English speakers in an English-speaking country. In acting as

interpreters, the children play a very important role in connecting their parents with the outside world.

For skilled migrant parent participants who are bilingual, there is ready identification of the benefits of maintaining the Vietnamese language. This is partly because it can serve as a bridge between their children and extended family members who mostly do not speak English well. Another perceived benefit concerns government policy around supporting diverse languages. As stated earlier, the Vietnamese community is the sixth-largest ethnic group, accounting for 1% of the Australian population (ABS 2016). According to government policy, therefore, if their children take the Vietnamese language as a VCE subject, they receive bonus marks that assist them in accessing universities. Participants also reported that by preserving the Vietnamese language, their children have more opportunities to access the labour market. In summary, the benefits of maintaining the mother tongue cause both refugee and skilled migrant parents to value the Vietnamese language and to want to pass it down to the next generation.

With regard to the children of migrants cohort, this study shows that nearly all children from both refugee and skilled migrant backgrounds actively embrace the values passed on by their parents of emotional support, harmony and solidarity, and the Vietnamese language. The children find it necessary to practise these values in their lives, and to develop them as a form of capital. Almost all 18 children from both backgrounds feel they should provide emotional support to their parents. A possible reason for this is that they understand the sacrifices made by their refugee parents in escaping from Vietnam in dangerous conditions, and their skilled migrant parents in studying and

working hard to provide a better future for children. The children also understand their parents' expectations about maintaining tight parent-child relationships. They show gratitude to their parents by visiting them frequently, showing love, and striving to be successful in education to make their parents happy. These values are identified as important in the children's lives.

Additionally, although some adult participants spoke of the lack of connection between them and their siblings, almost all said that they value strong relationships with their sisters and brothers. Most get along very well with their siblings, and are very willing to support each other in studying and working. It is possible that tight relationships are developed naturally when children grow up under the same roof, playing, working and doing things together. With their strong bonds, they are able to support each other to deal with issues in their lives. Thus, almost all consider harmony and solidarity in their immediate families to be a valuable resource.

Furthermore, the children of refugees recognise the need to preserve the values of harmony and solidarity in extended families. The primary reason given is that relationships among extended family members in refugee families are enhanced through their daily practices. Their grandparents, uncles, and cousins who live close by in Australia can provide them with direct emotional and material support that benefits them in their daily lives. Therefore, they tend to retain these values.

With regard to maintenance of the Vietnamese language, although the child participants sometimes find it difficult to be bilingual, most value the Vietnamese language, and are happy to learn and retain it. The benefits of preserving the Viet language are that they can communicate with their family members who lack English

proficiency, and can use the language in studying and working. If it is likely that if the children of migrants find it necessary to use the language in their daily lives, they will retain it.

It has been demonstrated that the cultural values relating to emotional support to parents, harmony and solidarity values between family members, and language maintenance are thought to be a ‘treasure chest’ that is necessary and helpful for both Vietnamese migrant parents and the children of migrants in Australia. These values are helpful, have positive social outcomes and develop capital that should be preserved. This suggests that the cultural values that parents maintain and share with their children, and which the children actively embrace, are considered as a new form of migrant cultural capital, as discussed by Erel (2010).

It is evident that Vietnamese refugees, skilled migrants, and the children of migrants in this study are generally confident about overcoming the difficulties of preserving their heritage culture in a new context. The findings add to the growing body of research aimed at understanding the process of negotiating cultural clashes in immigrant families. Previous studies of other ethnic groups in western countries have pointed out that migrants tend to struggle with the process of preserving their cultural heritage in host countries (Chaichian 1997; Choi et al. 2013). The conventional approach to studying intergenerational relations is thus to look at the differences between the cultural values of first-generation parents’ homelands and the host culture in which their children are born and raised (e.g. Chen et al. 2014; Dhruvarajan 1993; Ho & Birman 2010; Hofstetter et al. 2009; Rosenthal, Ranieri & Klimidis 1996). Other research on Vietnamese refugee communities in the early stages of resettlement has

emphasised family tensions and conflict in parent-child relationships in terms of cultural differences (Caplan, Whitmore & Choy 1989; Nguyen & Williams 1989; Rosenthal, Ranieri & Klimidis 1996). While in the present study, there was a small amount of evidence of tensions around these issues, an overall consensus of views among parents and children was noted regarding the maintenance of strong bonds within families. A similar consensus was found regarding the maintenance of the Vietnamese language, especially as a way of ensuring these relationships. In other areas however, such as the maintenance of the age hierarchy and the four virtues, the picture was one of less unity and agreement.

### 10.3. Cultural values that do not develop capital are modified and downplayed across generations

A component of Bourdieu's theory of capital (1986) is that it can be 'invested in' by owners. The evidence obtained in this thesis is that Vietnamese migrants and children tend to be inclined to devalue those aspects of culture that do not fit with or bring benefit to their lives in the Australian context. In other words, 'owners' in this study do not want to share with their children the cultural values that are perceived as generating less cultural capital, and the children do not want to embrace and develop values that are not beneficial to their lives.

Although most parent participants from both refugee and skilled migrant backgrounds understand filial piety values relating to the obligations of children to financially support and care for their parents, they find it unnecessary to practise these values in Australia, and do not consider passing them on to their children. There were several reasons given for this modification. One was that the Australian social security system

provides more options for independent living in later life with pension policies, superannuation, aged care and health care services. Therefore, the parents reported being confident about their capacity to support themselves in old age while living in Australia. Further, their adult children tend to move out to live separately, challenging the traditional ideology of Vietnamese parents in this study of living with children in the same house so that any necessary assistance is close at hand. In this sense, these aspects of filial piety values tend to be modified and downplayed by the first-generation parents, because such values are perceived as having less cultural capital, and are not so relevant to their lives in Australia. In contemporary Vietnam, these aspects of filial piety values persist in many families because of the lack of pension policies and social security for aging parents, which leads them to be dependent on their children for assistance (Barbieri 2009; Bélanger 2009; Le 2012).

Another example of a cultural value that does not develop capital and is thus downplayed concerns attitudes towards the gender hierarchy. As discussed, the parent participants in this study from both refugee and skilled migrant groups have modified their conventional views and practices towards the gender hierarchy in families, especially those related to making money and decisions, and doing domestic chores. The reason for this is that after migrating to Australia, Vietnamese women become active in the workforce, and have the potential to earn as much money as men. The absence of mothers-in-law and domestic help in skilled migrant households leads husbands and wives to modify their views towards these aspects of the gender hierarchy. Further, parent participants from both backgrounds do not automatically consider it to be the responsibility of sons to uphold family rituals and take care of

aging parents. They do not want to pass on to their sons the gender hierarchy ideology that supports the idea of men as principal breadwinners, because they do not find the need to live with and to be cared for by their sons. They also find it confusing to try to regularly practise ancestor worship at home in Australia, where the lunar calendar is not used. Many find other ways to worship ancestors, such as in temples or at cemeteries. It appears that these values are not seen as beneficial so they are not shared with the next generations in these families.

Despite their parents' efforts, child participants from both refugee and skilled migrant families tend to resist values not perceived as beneficial or suitable to their lives in Australia. For example, not all children of migrants see the focus on harmony and solidarity within extended families as very important, regardless of the efforts of skilled migrant parents to instil these values. The children of skilled migrant families prefer not to join conversations with relatives in Vietnam through social media, and also feel 'strange' when visiting them during summer holidays. It is possible that as their relatives live overseas, tight relationships between them are not enhanced by daily practice. They do not perceive the advantages of maintaining strong bonds within extended families, and therefore underplay these values.

In addition, the children from both refugee and skilled migrant families do not wish to continue affording higher status to men/husbands/sons. They do not see the need of maintaining the gender hierarchy. For many, cooking, cleaning and taking care of children are not seen as only women's tasks. Almost all the children do not feel the need to maintain the idea that the roles of sons are more important. This could be explained by the fact that they observe greater gender equality in growing up in Australia.

Other aspects of cultural values that are rejected by child participants are obedience and the four virtues. Despite refugee parents' efforts to maintain obedience and the age hierarchy in parent-child relationships, the children of refugees do not want to perpetuate these values. Although they seek to show their gratitude to their parents by achieving success in education according to their parents' expectations, they reject values relating to obedience. In addition, the daughters of refugees do not want to embrace the four virtues that make them submissive women. They are not certain about practising these values in their own lives in Australia. These issues can be explained by the fact that they have grown up in a host country, where values often identified as central to family life include individualism and egalitarianism (Donal, 1995; Finch & Finch, 1993). Vietnamese Australian children tend to be independent and think of themselves as unique. Therefore, they do not aim to maintain the cultural values relating to obedience and the four virtues. This set of values is not seen as an important source of capital in their lives in Australia.

The modifications of these aspects of Vietnamese cultural values by migrant parents and children in this study add more evidence to demonstrate that cultural values are dynamic and subject to change. As Samovar (2013) and Haviland et al. (2011) note, changes of culture occur in response to a range of forces such as technological innovation, population growth and population movement. As stated earlier, cultural values in Vietnamese families have changed over time because of political developments, social policies, urbanisation and modernisation. This study shows that these aspects of Vietnamese cultural values in families have been modified and downplayed by Vietnamese migrants in order to fit into the new context in Australia.

#### **10.4. The habitus of migrant parents and children influences the process of sharing cultural values**

As mentioned earlier, habitus is defined as the embodied disposition of individuals that can remain across contexts, allowing people to respond to cultural rules and contexts in a variety of ways. Bourdieu (1989, p. 43) notes that, ‘when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself “as a fish in water”, it doesn’t not feel the weight of the water and takes the world about itself for granted’. In this study, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus provides a way to understand the actions of Vietnamese migrant parents in sharing cultural values in families. The habitus of first-generation parents in this study was developed when they were in Vietnam, and stays with them in the new ‘social world’ in Australia. Living in Australia, their habitus has to respond to the new social context, which includes changes of family life resulting from children being more independent, living separately, and adopting more equal parent-child relationships. More specifically, the evidence provided in this study shows that although refugee and skilled migrant parent participants left Vietnam at different times, they have brought cultural values such as filial piety, harmony, solidarity, the Vietnamese language and gender hierarchy values to their new social world. They are confident in identifying which values they should share and which they should not share with their children in the ‘new water’ of Australia.

It is evident that parents in Vietnamese Australian families make an effort to share cultural values. Encouraging the development of strong bonds by using Vietnamese media, sending children to Vietnamese language schools, engagement in Vietnamese communities and sending children to Vietnam are seen by parents as effective ways to

pass on to the next generation Vietnamese family values related to harmony, solidarity, the Vietnamese language and the four virtues. These findings support those of research studies about first-generation Vietnamese refugees in Norway, Canada and the USA (Bankston & Zhou 1994; Caplan, Whitmore & Choy 1989; Chan & Dorais 1998; Tingvold et al. 2012a). Thus, the data from this analysis adds further empirical knowledge to the growing body of literature that demonstrates that when first-generation Vietnamese parents migrate in a new land, they attempt to perpetuate their heritage culture. It appears that the Vietnamese habitus of the refugee and skilled migrant parents influences their efforts to pass on Vietnamese cultural values to the next generation. Although the parents were born and raised in a different social and cultural atmosphere in Vietnam, both refugee and skilled migrant parents have maintained core values that were influenced by the 'rice culture' and the teachings of Buddhism and Confucianism. This results in distinctive characteristics, values and identity. Moving to live in Australia at different times and for different reasons, the dispositions of both refugee and skilled migrants are such that they seek to pass Vietnamese values on to their children.

However, the different habitus of refugee and skilled migrants also influences the ways in which they share cultural values in their families in Australia. It was found in this study that refugee participants tend to carefully preserve 'old' cultural values such as obedience and the four virtues, and enforce these strictly with their children. By contrast, skilled migrant parents have more flexible views and practices towards preserving Vietnamese cultural values in their families when living in Australia. Most do

not aim to retain the norms of obedience and the four virtues. Almost all create an environment in which their children can be naturally socialised to acquire cultural values.

There are several reasons for these differences. One is that the habitus of refugee parents was acquired from their lives in Vietnam over 50 years ago. The Vietnamese habitus of refugees was shaped in ‘old Vietnam’, a country that had been affected very little by industrialisation and modernisation. At that time, the old values relating to the four virtues of women and obedience persisted strongly in many Vietnamese families (Le 2012; Pham 1999). Further, the refugees’ habitus was developed in particular situations after fleeing their country. Many were forced to leave Vietnam after the war, and lost their positions, their homeland, and experienced poverty. On the way to Australia many refugees had traumatic experiences at sea, such as attacks by pirates, and their family members went missing or died. The refugees began their lives in Australia under tough conditions, because they lacked English language skills, qualifications and knowledge about their new country. In this regard, Loizos (2000) and Malkki (1995) argue that refugees who experience losses of status and property tend to attempt to preserve their culture of origin as a way of supporting themselves in a new land.

Another reason for the differences is that past political issues continue to influence the attitudes of refugees towards their homeland. There is a growing distance between them and contemporary Vietnamese society. Most do not visit Vietnam often, and do not find the need to keep up to date with what is happening in Vietnam. As discussed in Chapter 9, for many of them, ‘things that happen in Vietnam just belong to the communist government’. As a result, many refugee participants feel alienated from

the social and cultural changes in modern Vietnam, and therefore tend to preserve old cultural values in the diaspora.

Almost all refugee participants in this study are working class. Although some of them used to work for the Saigon regime in Vietnam, they have had to take manual jobs after arriving to Australia, because they lack English proficiency, work experience and qualifications. Most refugee participants work as pickers on farms, as unskilled workers in factories, or as out-workers sewing garments from home. After many years living in Australia, many still do not speak English well, and tend to live in their own communities where there are Vietnamese markets, clinics, doctors and lawyers. This aligns with the findings of studies by Stack (1974) and Gillies (2006), who argue that working-class families tend to depend on families and local networks to survive, and are strict with their children, while middle-class migrants employ reasoned strategies in raising their children.

It appears that refugees' habitus was developed and reshaped through these particular experiences. Thus, their dispositions towards their culture of origin tend to be both nostalgic and critical. The findings in this thesis show that most refugees want to maintain the value of obedience that reflects the age hierarchy and parental authority. While many expect to modify the gender hierarchy and filial piety values, they continue to treat sons and daughters differently by retaining the four virtues for women. For many, these old Vietnamese values are seen as valuable resources they brought with them from the Vietnam of the past. After many years living in Australia, they still cling to these cultural values. In sharing these values with their children, they tend to be strict, to want to keep their children close, to insist that their children speak

Vietnamese, and to require them to obey their wishes regarding education and marriage. The refugee habitus thus influences the cultural preservation process in refugee families.

In contrast, the habitus of skilled migrants was developed in a 'modern' Vietnam. Most were born and raised after the Vietnam War. They gained their values and dispositions at a time when many traditional values had been influenced and modified by modern society and the economic reforms in 1986. The filial piety value of obedience and the gender hierarchy with regard to the four virtues, for example, have been modified in many families in contemporary Vietnam (Le 2012; Ngo 2004). Further, most skilled migrants are well-educated, have a mastery of English and migrate by choice. Many work in Australia as lecturers, interpreters and financial managers, and have opportunities to adapt well to Australian society. Further, they have stronger connections with their homeland, which allows them to keep up to date with contemporary Vietnam. Thus, the skilled migrants tend not to try to pass on to their children outdated values such as obedience and the four virtues. They also apply more flexible means of sharing Vietnamese cultural values with the next generation.

In addition, the different habitus of first-generation parents and Vietnamese Australian children influence the process of sharing and embracing cultural values across generations. Bourdieu's notion of habitus helps in developing an understanding of Vietnamese Australian children's attitudes and behaviours in this study. As mentioned earlier, the habitus of individuals can be shaped in families, and handed down from parents to children (Bottomley 1992; Wu 2011). Dispositions can also be obtained from the social environment. The children of the migrant participants in this study were born

and/or raised in Australia. It is therefore likely that they gain their values and dispositions from Australian society, but their habitus is also shaped by the socialisation process in their families. The difference between the culture in their Vietnamese families and Australian culture influences the extent to which they embrace or reject Vietnamese cultural values. The findings in this thesis show that although almost all children actively embrace the values their parents share with them in their families, such as harmony, solidarity and providing emotional support to parents, many resist or reject other values of their parents if they do not fit their Australian habitus. These include in particular obedience and the four virtues for women.

Children's habitus influences their actions in preserving some aspects of Vietnamese cultural values, even though their parents do not expect this of them. The interview data shows that although both refugee and skilled migrant parents do not expect their children to look after them and provide for them financially, many children still want to take care of their parents when they get older, and feel obliged to show gratitude to their parents in this way. This can possibly be explained by the fact that the Vietnamese Australian children have grown up in environments where parents have devoted themselves to their families. Children observe their parents' sacrifices and the Vietnamese family values that their parents have practised. Thus, their dispositions have been developed in Vietnamese families where cultural values have been absorbed unconsciously. They have adopted these values that have become part of their habitus; thus, they tend to feel certain obligations towards their parents, even if their parents are not in need.

In summary, Bourdieu's concept of habitus provides a useful means to gain a deeper understanding of the process of sharing cultural values in Vietnamese migrant families. It helps us to understand why Vietnamese cultural values are shared differently in refugee and skilled migrant families. It also enables an understanding of why the views of parents and children differ, as do their practices in relation to some Vietnamese cultural values. In other words, the varying habitus of refugees, skilled migrant parents and children influences the process of sharing cultural values across generations in Vietnamese migrant families.

### 10.5. Recommendations for further research

The findings from the current investigation point the way to further research opportunities. While this study has explored the process of sharing cultural values between first-generation migrants and their children, it would be useful to conduct research on the process of sharing between second-generation parents from refugee backgrounds who were raised in Australia and their children – the third generation. This would shed light on changes and continuities in the cultural trail. Such research could also explore the perspectives of the third generation towards values such as language maintenance and strong relationships between siblings and relatives.

Second-generation children from skilled migrant backgrounds could also be studied. I have interviewed the children of skilled migrant parents in this study. At the time of interview, most were teenagers still living with their parents. While the interview data for this group reflects their perspectives and attitudes towards values in families, an investigation of their cultural views and practices once they have their own families may

add to the literature. Such research might gain insight into whether the values adopted from their skilled migrant parents continue to be practised in their own families.

This study investigates the views and practices of skilled migrant and refugee parents regarding sharing cultural values in their families. The data shows that the two groups exhibit different ways of sharing cultural values because of differences in social class, time of departure from Vietnam and habitus. However, it would also be useful to further explore the refugee group, which had a different experience of resettlement in Australia. While many refugees faced challenges in the early years in Australia because of lacking English proficiency, other qualifications and experience, others may have attended university and achieved success in education. The different experience of these refugees could influence the strategies they adopt to preserve and modify Vietnamese cultural values in their families.

## 10.6. Conclusion

This study has observed the cultural values in families that Vietnamese migrants and children want to preserve and modify in their lives after migrating in Australia, as well as why and how these values are shared or downplayed across generations. It has been demonstrated that those Vietnamese cultural values in families that develop capital – such as harmony and solidarity, emotional support, and language maintenance – are retained, while other cultural values that have less capital – such as the gender hierarchy and the filial piety value of obedience – are rejected across generations. The findings of this study show that parents and children are active agents in the process of sharing cultural values, and their habitus influences the ways they preserve and modify their

culture. Living in a new context, they are confident in identifying which values are beneficial and which are unsuitable. The flow of Vietnamese cultural values has been preserved, ‘accumulated, exchanged, converted, valued, and devalued’ across generations in the migration context in Australia. The values that Vietnamese migrants and children preserve are considered as valuable resources that enhance their capacity for prosperity and fulfilling lives in the new homeland.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Demographic of first-generation parent participants

#	Name	Age	Mother/ Father	Background	Profession	Year of arrival in Australia	Number of children
1	Bền	39	Father	Skilled migrant	Researcher	2004	2
2	Tú	38	Father	Skilled migrant	Computer Engineer	2000	1
3	Nam	39	Father	Skilled migrant	Financial Manager	1998	2
4	Hiếu	42	Father	Skilled migrant	English Teacher	2002	2
5	Huy	40	Father	Skilled migrant	Engineer	2004	3
6	Yến	37	Mother	Skilled migrant	Researcher	2007	2
7	Tiên	38	Mother	Skilled migrant	Accountant	2004	2
8	Hồng	37	Mother	Skilled migrant	Lecturer	2004	2
9	Huyền	36	Mother	Skilled migrant	Accountant	2001	2
10	Trà	34	Mother	Skilled migrant	Lecturer	2005	1
11	Mi	63	Mother	Refugee	Hairdresser	1979	3
12	Thái	65	Father	Refugee	Vegetable Picker	1987	4
13	Ngọc	70	Father	Refugee	Factory Worker	1981	5
14	Đại	52	Father	Refugee	Research Assistant	1984	3
15	Khuê	62	Father	Refugee	Mushroom	1983	2

					Picker		
16	Trung	54	Father	Refugee	Forklift Driver	1982	3
17	Hải	68	Father	Refugee	Factory Worker	1979	5
18	Mai	60	Mother	Refugee	Mushroom Picker	1983	2
19	Ly	55	Mother	Refugee	Vegetable Picker	1986	1
20	Long	65	Mother	Refugee	Garment Outworker	1981	5

## Appendix 2: Demographic of children participants

#	Name	Age	Gender	Background	Age on Arrival in Australia	Married Status
1	Hằng	21	Female	Skilled migrant	10	Single
2	Cường	18	Male	Skilled migrant	8	Single
3	Thanh	14	Female	Skilled migrant	5	Single
4	Tri	16	Male	Skilled migrant	8	Single
5	Bảo	14	Male	Skilled migrant	6	Single
6	Lan	14	Female	Skilled migrant	4	Single
7	Bình	13	Male	Skilled migrant	4	Single
8	Uyên	22	Female	Skilled migrant	12	Single
9	Tân	37	Male	Refugee	5	Married
10	Thu	31	Female	Refugee	Australia born	Married
11	Hiệp	18	Female	Refugee	Australia born	Single
12	Vy	31	Female	Refugee	Australia born	Single
13	Tuấn	39	Male	Refugee	13	Married
14	Phương	24	Female	Refugee	Australia born	Single
15	Hoa	36	Female	Refugee	5	Married
16	Lộc	33	Female	Refugee	Australia born	Married
17	Hùng	37	Male	Refugee	12	Married
18	Ân	24	Male	Refugee	Australia born	Single

### Appendix 3: Ethics approval

To: A/Prof. Karen Farquharson, FHAD

**SHR Project 2014/327 Sharing culture values between first and second generation within Vietnamese immigrant families in Melbourne**

A/Prof. Karen Farquharson, Giang Thi Thanh Tran (Student), Dr Deborah Dempsey - FHAD

Approved duration: 20-01-2015 to 20-12-2016

I refer to the ethical review of the above project protocol by Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC). Your responses to the review, as emailed on 19 and 23 December 2014 with attachments, were put to the Committee delegate for consideration.

I am pleased to advise that, as submitted to date, ethics clearance has been given for the above project to proceed in line with standard on-going ethics clearance conditions outlined below. In issuing this clearance, the understanding is that research or funding agreements entered into to cover the research are in accord with the research protocol submitted for ethical review.

- All human research activity undertaken under Swinburne auspices must conform to Swinburne and external regulatory standards, including the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and with respect to secure data use, retention and disposal.
- The named Swinburne Chief Investigator/Supervisor remains responsible for any personnel appointed to or associated with the project being made aware of ethics clearance conditions, including research and consent procedures or instruments approved. Any change in chief investigator/supervisor requires timely notification and SUHREC endorsement.
- The above project has been approved as submitted for ethical review by or on behalf of SUHREC. Amendments to approved procedures or instruments ordinarily require prior ethical appraisal/clearance. SUHREC must be notified immediately or as soon as possible thereafter of (a) any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants and any redress measures; (b) proposed changes in protocols; and (c) unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
- At a minimum, an annual report on the progress of the project is required as well as at the conclusion (or abandonment) of the project. Information on project monitoring, self-audits and progress reports can be found at:  
<http://www.research.swinburne.edu.au/ethics/human/monitoringReportingChanges/>

- A duly authorised external or internal audit of the project may be undertaken at any time.

Please contact the Research Ethics Office if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance, citing the project number. Please retain a copy of this email as part of project record-keeping.

Best wishes for the project.

Yours sincerely.

Astrid Nordmann

Secretary, SUHREC

## Appendix 4: Consent forms

### Swinburne University of Technology

#### Consent Form

#### Sharing culture values between first and second generation within Vietnamese immigrant families in Melbourne

##### Principal Investigator(s):

**Supervisors:** **A/Prof. Karen Farquharson**- Associate Dean, Research and Engagement, Faculty of Health, Arts and Design

**Dr.Deborah Dempsey** - Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Faculty of Health, Arts and Design

**Investigator:** Giang Thi Thanh Tran – PhD student, Faculty of Health, Arts and Design

##### 1. Agreement

*I (name of participant) . . . . .*

*have read and understood the information provided in the form of disclosure. I have been provided a copy of the project information statement and this consent form and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.*

##### 2. Please circle your response to the following:

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| ▪ I agree to be interviewed by the researcher                                     | <b>Yes</b> |
| No  |            |
| ▪ I agree to allow the interview to be recorded by electronic device              | <b>Yes</b> |
| No  |            |
| ▪ I agree to allow the information I provide to be used in a research publication | <b>Yes</b> |
| No  |            |
| ▪ I agree to make myself available for further information if required            | <b>No</b>  |
| Yes   |            |

##### 3. I acknowledge that:

- (a) my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation. In the event that I decided to withdraw from the participation, I am informed that the information I provided will be immediately destroyed and will not be used for this research;

- (b) the project is for the purpose of research and not for profit;
- (c) my personal information will be collected and retained for the purpose of carrying out this project;
- (d) my anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained.

By signing this document I agree to participate in this project.

**Name of Participant:** .....

**Signature & Date:** .....

### **Swinburne University of Technology**

#### **Consent Form for Participants less than 18 years of age**

#### **Sharing culture values between first and second generation within Vietnamese immigrant families in Melbourne**

#### **Principal Investigator(s):**

**Supervisors:** **A/Prof. Karen Farquharson**- Associate Dean, Research and Engagement, Faculty of Health, Arts and Design

**Dr. Deborah Dempsey** - Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Faculty of Health, Arts and Design

**Investigator:** **Giang Thi Thanh Tran** – PhD student, Faculty of Health, Arts and Design

**1. I (name of participant) . . . . .**

*have read and understood the information provided in the form of disclosure. I have been provided a copy of the project information statement and this consent form and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.*

2. Please circle your response to the following:

- I agree to be interviewed by the researcher Yes  
**No**
- I agree to allow the interview to be recorded by electronic device Yes  
**No**
- I agree to allow the information I provide to be used in a research publication  
**YesNo**
- I agree to make myself available for further information if required  
**Yes** No

3. I acknowledge that:

- (a) my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation. In the event that I decided to withdraw from the participation, I am informed that the information I provided will be immediately destroyed and will not be used for this research;
- (b) the project is for the purpose of research and not for profit;
- (d) my personal information will be collected and retained for the purpose of carrying out this project;
- (d) my anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained.

By signing this document I agree to participate in this project.

**Name of Participant:** .....

**Signature & Date:** .....

Please have a parent or guardian complete this form.

I, .....the parent/guardian of .....here by give my consent to [researcher's name] for interview as part of data collection.

Signature of Parent/ Guardian.....

Date: .....

Print Name .....

Address .....

Telephone .....

Email .....

## Appendix 5: Project statement

### Plain Language Statement

#### **Sharing cultural values between first and second generations of Vietnamese immigrant families in Melbourne**

My name is Giang Tran, and I am currently a PhD student in sociology at Swinburne University of Technology. I would like to invite you to take part in this research study that I am conducting for my PhD thesis. The thesis is supervised by A/Prof Karen Farquharson and Dr Deborah Dempsey.

The aim of this research is to explore how Vietnamese cultural values are shared in Vietnamese immigrant families in Melbourne. My central interest lies in understanding how the first generation shares cultural values with the next, and what are the perceptions and behaviours of the second generation in preserving these values. I would like to hear from you about the Vietnamese cultural values in your family that are being shared between generations. I am also interested in the ways in which those values have been maintained in your family.

Should you agree to participate, an interview will be organised with you at a convenient location. The interview might last about an hour. All the questions will be open-ended and you may choose not to answer some or wish to talk further about specific questions. The interview will be recorded. If you wish, I can contact you after the interview so you can read the transcript or listen to the recording and make any changes before it is used in our research. I will not include your name or anything that might show who you are in any published material or in any discussions about the research findings. Published material will include a PhD thesis from our university and an academic paper.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. This means that even if you change your mind in the middle of the interview or after it, we can stop it at any time. Before we start the interview, I will ask you to sign a form to give your permission to record your voice.

This research is a valuable opportunity for you to share your experience, and I do not believe there is any risk to you in taking part in this research. However, if you were refugees, some questions about the ways you escaped from Vietnam may remind you of traumatic experiences in the past. If you have experienced great difficulty in looking after your parents, a question that asks about expectations towards traditional types of elderly care might make you uncomfortable or provoke negative feelings. If you experience any distress, you are welcome to contact the Swinburne Psychology Clinic.

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact anyone named below:

Giang Thi Thanh Tran:

A/Prof. Karen Farquharson:

or Dr. Deborah Dempsey:

This project has been approved by or on behalf of Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) in line with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this project, you can contact:

Research Ethics Officer, Swinburne Research (H68),  
Swinburne University of Technology, P O Box 218, HAWTHORN VIC 3122.  
Tel (03) 9214 5218 or +61 3 9214 5218 or [resethics@swin.edu.au](mailto:resethics@swin.edu.au)

In the unlikely event that you experience any negative effects from your participation, please contact the research or Swinburne Psychology Clinic listed below. This is a low cost service.

Swinburne Psychology Clinic  
Email: [psychclinic@swin.edu.au](mailto:psychclinic@swin.edu.au)  
Ph: 92148653      Visit: Level 4, George Swinburne Building

## Appendix 6: Email advertisement

Dear ....

My name is Giang Tran, and I am a PhD student in sociology at Swinburne University. I am originally from Vietnam and am studying Vietnamese cultural values in immigrant families in Melbourne for my PhD thesis. I am interested in stories of sharing cultural values between first and second generations in your families. If you are parents or children/adult children in Vietnamese immigrant families, I would like to interview you for my research project. The interview should take around one hour. Participating in this study would provide you with the opportunity to reflect upon your identity and experiences.

If you know anyone who might be interested in participating in this research, please feel free to forward this email.

Thank you very much. Look forward for your reply.

Bests Regards,

Giang

## Appendix 7: Interview schedule

### For first-generation participants

#### Part 1: Breaking the ice

- . How did you come to Melbourne?
- . How often do you go back to Vietnam?
- . Please tell me about your family? (Who lives with you; how many children do you have?)
- . When I say ‘Vietnamese family values’, what comes to mind for you?

#### Part 2: Vietnamese cultural values in your family

##### Filial piety values, parent-child relationships:

- . What do you think about filial piety values when living in Australia?
- . What do you expect of your children in terms of aspects of filial piety such as obedience, the obligation to provide material and emotional support, and care for parents? Why is that important/not important for you?
- . Do you expect to share these values with your children?(In what ways?)

##### Harmony between family members:

- . What do you think about harmony values when living in Australia?
- . What do you expect of the relationships between your children and other family members, such as with their siblings and their relatives? Why is that important/not important for you?
- . What have you done to encourage your children to retain these values? (Encourage your children to get along well with relatives, speaking Vietnamese at home and with your relatives?)

##### Maintaining Vietnamese:

What do you think about maintaining Vietnamese language when living in Australia?

What have you done to encourage your children to retain the language?

### **Gender hierarchy in families:**

- . What do you think about the roles of husband and wife in your family? Is that important for you? Why?
- . What do you think about the roles of sons and daughters in your family? Is that important for you? Why?
- . Who in your family is responsible for domestic chores, decision-making and other gender roles?
- . What do you expect to share/not share with your children about the roles of men and women in families? How have you shared these expectations? Why?
- . How have you taught your sons and daughters to become good husbands and wives?

### **Part 3: Other questions**

- . What other Vietnamese cultural values do you expect your children to maintain that I haven't asked you about?
- . Do you have any special strategies to teach your children about Vietnamese cultural values?

### **Part 4: Questionnaire**

- Age
- Gender
- Time of arrival in Australia
- Number of children
- Level of education and type of education
- Refugees/Skilled migrants

### **For Child participants:**

#### **Part 1: Breaking the ice**

- . Can you tell me a bit about your family? How many brothers and sisters do you have? With whom do you live?
- . How did your family come to Australia?

. Have you ever been back to Vietnam? How often? What do you know about Vietnam?

. When I say Vietnamese cultural values in families, what do you think of?

## **Part 2: Vietnamese cultural values in your family:**

### **Filial piety values:**

. What do you think about filial piety values in your family? What did your parents share with you about these values? How did they share this with you?

. What do you think about your obligations to parents in terms of living with them, taking care of them and providing financial support?

. What do you think about maintaining these values in your life? Is this important with you? Why?

### **Harmony and solidarity values**

. What do you think about harmony and solidarity values? What did your parents share with you about these values? How did they share this with you?

. Can you tell me about the relationships between you and your siblings, your relatives? What have you done to maintain harmony and solidarity with them?

. Do you communicate with them in Vietnamese? Could you tell me about retaining the Vietnamese language in your life?

. What do you think about keeping these values in your life? Is this important with you? Why?

### **Gender hierarchy**

. What do you think about the roles of men/husbands and women/wives in families? What did your parents share with you about that?

. What do you think about the roles of sons and daughters in families? What did your parents teach you about that?

. For male participants: are you expected to be a role model in your family? (In what ways?)

. For female participants: Are you expected to be a good woman by practising the four virtues? (in what ways?)

. What do you think about keeping these values in your life? Is this important with you? Why?

### **Part 3: Other questions**

- . Do you have any other ways of learning about Vietnamese cultural values yourself?
- . Do you think that Vietnamese cultural values still affect you? In what ways?
- . What did you think about the questions? Is there something I haven't asked you about that you would like to discuss?

### **Part 4: Questionnaire**

- Age
- Gender
- Level of education and type of occupation
- Marital status
- Family background

## Appendix 8: Publications by PhD candidate related to the thesis

### Conference papers:

Giang Tran, Deborah Dempsey, and Karen Farquharson (2015) 'Gender hierarchy in Vietnamese migrant families in Australia' in The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) - Families, Relationships, and Gender Symposium: The Changing Face of Families and Relationships, Melbourne 31 October.

Giang Tran, Karen Farquharson, and Deborah Dempsey (2016) 'Filial Piety beliefs and practices across generations in Australian Vietnamese migrant families' in Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS) and Committee of Family Research of International Sociological Association (RC06) Joint Conference: Social Change and Family Developments, Beijing, 25- 28 May.

Giang Tran, Karen Farquharson, and Deborah Dempsey (2016) 'Maintaining cultural values in Vietnamese migrant families in Australia' in the 8<sup>th</sup> Engaging with Vietnam conference, University of Hawaii at Mānoa, Hawaii, 6-7 October.

Giang Tran, Karen Farquharson, and Deborah Dempsey (2016) 'United we stand, divided we fall': Harmony and solidarity in Australian-Vietnamese migrant families' in Annual conference of The Australian Sociological Association: Cities and Successful Societies, Melbourne, 28 November - 1 December.

Giang Tran, Karen Farquharson, and Deborah Dempsey (2016) 'Preserving and modifying cultural values in Vietnamese migrant families in Melbourne' in the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Vietnam Studies: Sustainable Development in the Context of Global Change, Hanoi, 15-16 December.