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## Transnational Marriages between Vietnamese Women and Asian Men in Vietnamese Online Media

International marriage migration has increased significantly in the Asian region over the past few decades.<sup>1</sup> In other parts of the world, this migration would fall under the category of family reunification. In the Asian context, however, marriage migration is singled out as one type of migration and migrants are constructed as belonging to a distinct group.<sup>2</sup> A significant number of international marriage migrants within Asia originate from Vietnam. In Taiwan and South Korea, female migrant spouses from Vietnam rank second after migrant spouses from Mainland China.<sup>3</sup> The popularity of Vietnamese women for single men arises, in part, from the existence of business networks that provide channels for agencies devoted to matchmaking, the agencies' branding of Vietnamese brides as docile, young virgins, and the snowball effect of migrants' networks.<sup>4</sup>

This paper discusses how the mass media constructs the phenomenon of marriage migration. According to Russel King and Nancy Wood, mass media and migration interact in various ways.<sup>5</sup> Firstly, the global media provides information to candidates for migration. Whether this information is accurate or not, the global media is the primary source of imagined places

of immigration for many. Secondly, media in the host country plays a prominent role in shaping public opinion about immigrants and, therefore, influences migrants' context of reception. For example, a rich body of research documents how the European media produces a racist discourse and casts immigrants, particularly asylum seekers and refugees, as "undesirable others."<sup>6</sup> Thirdly, as King and Wood argue, the media in the migrants' countries of origin plays a key role in the formation of a diasporic transnational community by connecting immigrants to their "homeland."<sup>7</sup> This paper extends this framework by examining how the mass media of an emigration country, in this case Vietnam, constructs a particular group of emigrants, that is, female emigrant spouses.

Marriage migration has received a great deal of attention in Asian and international media, and matchmaking agencies have provided abundant sensational material for media in the West.<sup>8</sup> Researchers have documented how media representations of migrant spouses in receiving countries have been generally negative; analyses show how they contribute to victimizing or demonizing "foreign brides" and to stigmatizing grooms who marry foreign women from "poor" countries.<sup>9</sup> Since the early 1990s, the media in Vietnam has widely reported stories of women involved in international marriage migration, largely covering sensationalist cases of abuse, rape, forced marriage, trafficking, and even murder. In contrast to these isolated cases, however, research suggests that Vietnamese marriage migrants abroad are generally successful migrants who have children, establish networks, and work to send remittances—a reality rarely reflected in media coverage in Vietnam.<sup>10</sup>

In this paper, we perform a content analysis of more than 643 items posted to online media between 2000 and 2010 in Vietnam. We examine how the media portrays women migrants, the men they marry, the marriages themselves, the matchmaking industry, and the international politics of these marriages. We argue that the media treatment of Vietnamese women's marriage migration speaks to four major shifts discussed by scholars in Vietnam.

First, shifting notions of gender, sexuality, and marriage well-documented by feminist scholars writing on Vietnam, such as Lisa Drummond and Helle Rydström, Nguyễn-võ Thu-hương, Ashley Pettus, and

Hung Cam Thai, find ample support in our analysis.<sup>11</sup> The most salient media content about marriage migration is that involving discussions and criticisms about women's sexuality and roles as wives and mothers, which encapsulate tensions around the search for national identity. According to the media, marriage migrant women's behavior brings harm and shame to the "nation" and all Vietnamese people. Such a depiction uses one small group of women to show the right and wrong paths in the process of building a modern, yet authentic, "Vietnamese" national identity. Second, discourse around class-making that creates categories of desirable and undesirable citizens powerfully emerges in reporting on marriage migration. This phenomenon is depicted as involving low-quality citizens who belong to lower social classes. Such discourse serves as a backdrop to urban, middle class readers striving to distinguish themselves from rural, backward, ignorant young women making poor life choices. Third, the global and pervasive social construction around human trafficking as a moral crusade—largely fueled by international organizations and western NGOs—finds a goldmine of material in marriage migration.<sup>12</sup> Marriage migration becomes an obvious case of well-organized, widespread human trafficking that requires state monitoring and law enforcement, which implies that all women are forced migrants in need of rescue. Finally, recent shifts in Vietnamese media, brought about by commercialization, privatization, and a certain degree of autonomy from the communist party, are illustrated by the steady use of sensationalism and authoritative voices both from state authorities and foreign experts. As a whole, the content analysis presented here serves as a window into some of the broader social changes discussed in Vietnamese studies over the past two decades.

### Previous Research on Women Migrants and Mass Media

It is a well-documented fact that specific and repeated representations of women in the media create and reinforce stereotypes.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, analysis of media discourse on women underscores the frequent use of stereotypical dichotomies. With respect to rape victims, for instance, Helen Benedict documents how American mass media portrays them as "virgins" or "vamps."<sup>14</sup> Studies of Asian migrant women have examined how these women are socially constructed in various sources and media. Negative and

homogeneous stereotypes of Asian brides emerge from content analyses of Western-Asian matchmaking websites and from discourse of recruiting agents who place Asian foreign domestic workers in Canada.<sup>15</sup> Analyses of the printed press show a dichotomous, simplistic, ambiguous image of Asian women who marry internationally and migrate. A recurrent theme of all analyses is the contradictory images of “foreign brides” as being either victims of poverty or calculating actors, lotus blossoms or dragon ladies, prey or cunning scavengers, passive manipulators or grasping predators, and passive victims or materialist gold-diggers.<sup>16</sup> These representations cast women as either sex workers or natural mothers; consequently, women’s sexuality and fertility are also dichotomized. Women’s agency, except when motivated by immoral motives or the possibility of love and romance in these marriages, is silenced.

Hsiao-Chuan Hsia’s detailed analysis of Taiwanese media coverage of “foreign brides” shows that it portrays foreign migrant spouses as being a “social problem”; this problematization creates a negative image that has adverse implications for women’s insertion into Taiwanese society.<sup>17</sup> Christine So argues that Asian brides in the United States embody the threats of global capitalism, which explains the nature of media coverage.<sup>18</sup> Kathryn Robinson’s analysis of Australian media reveals an orientalist discourse in which authoritative and critical statements about Asian women assert the superiority of Western women in an Australian-Western quest for identity.<sup>19</sup>

Some of these analyses examine the competing and diverging discourses of matchmaking agencies, the media, and governments. For instance, James Tyner documents how Japanese and American matchmaking agencies introduce potential Asian foreign brides to their clients as being very desirable mates by emphasizing their middle class origins, suitability to performing housework, gentleness, and ability to work hard.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, the mass media of both countries portray the women as being uneducated, poor, and a threat to family stability. Geraldine Pratt introduces the concept of ambivalence to unpack how agents who recruit women and place them with employers represent domestic workers. Agents construct and deconstruct women in certain ways through repetition, contradiction, silencing, and an emphasis that underscores the complexities and untidiness of stereotypes.<sup>21</sup> Hongzen Wang and Danièle Bélanger analyze how discourse

from governments, nongovernmental organizations, and academics together reinforce the victimization of women marriage migrants.<sup>22</sup>

## Vietnamese Media

According to Vietnamese media law, the media should act as a “forum for the people,” but also the “mouthpiece of the Party.”<sup>23</sup> Along with its propaganda campaigns, the media serves to shape public opinion and instill changes in mentality and behavior. Since the early 1990s, the media has gained a relative degree of autonomy from the communist state, and the responsibility of the media to generate their own revenue in the context of reduced state subsidies is a significant change.<sup>24</sup> A leading Vietnamese online newspaper, *VnExpress*, made the list of the top one hundred most read online media in the world in 2007.<sup>25</sup> Online or print, all media is checked and censored by Vietnam’s Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism.

Russell Hiang-Khng Heng argues that, despite relaxed censorship, the media remains Leninist in its structure.<sup>26</sup> In the near absence of a civil society, as defined in neoliberal democratic regimes, the Vietnamese media has played the role of watchdog voicing citizens’ concerns.<sup>27</sup> In the past decade, there have been numerous incidents of journalists being arrested or media being shut down; there have also been cases of assertive reporting of corruption, critiques of party expenditures, and injustices to citizens.<sup>28</sup> Journalists and media are thus on moving sands, trying to achieve a delicate balance between serving the party’s interests, becoming financially independent, and being the discrete watchdog of their owners. For citizens, taking their plight to the media is often the only way to attract political and public attention. Media in Vietnam is thus an important channel of state-society relations and dialogue.

Mass media in Vietnam includes television, radio, newspapers, and magazines, both electronic and print. According to the former Ministry of Information and Communication (now the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism), by the end of 2009, there were 17,000 journalists, 706 pieces of print media (178 newspapers and 528 magazines), 67 television-radio stations, 21 strictly online newspapers, and 160 printed newspapers online. In addition, there are numerous websites of the party, government agencies, and various social or professional organizations. As Heng states, “the term

‘press’ is also used synonymously with ‘media’ and does not just refer to newspapers.”<sup>29</sup>

National-level media includes Đài Truyền Hình Việt Nam [Vietnam Television], Đài Tiếng Nói Việt Nam [Radio Voice of Vietnam], and several large newspapers, including *Nhân Dân* [People] representing the voice of the Vietnamese Communist Party, *Phụ Nữ Việt Nam* [Vietnamese Women] representing the Vietnamese Women’s Union (VWU), *Tiền Phong* [Avant Garde] representing the Communist Youth Union, as well as *Thanh Niên* [Young People] and *Tuổi Trẻ* [Youth], both representing The Youth Association. Major online media include *VietnamNet* and *VnExpress*, along with a number of major newspapers that have online editions, such as *Nhân Dân*, *Thanh Niên*, and *Tuổi Trẻ*.<sup>30</sup> Besides the national media, each province has its own television and radio stations and various newspapers, such as *Hà Nội Mới* [New Hà Nội] and *Sài Gòn Giải Phóng* [Sài Gòn Liberation]. Many ministries also have newspapers and magazines, including the Ministry of Justice’s *Pháp Luật* [Law], and the Ministry of Police’s *Công An Nhân Dân* [People’s Police] and *An Ninh Thế Giới* [World Security].

In 2000, online media rapidly developed with the dramatic expansion of broadband internet. Internet users in 2000 accounted for only 0.3 percent of the total population (200,000 people), but by 2010 up to 27.1 percent of the population (24.3 million people) used the internet.<sup>31</sup> Internet access continues to expand and is gradually growing in rural areas. According to a 2010 survey with 4,924 participants, most Vietnamese internet users were young (aged 15–30 years), educated (officers and students), resided in Hà Nội or Hồ Chí Minh City, and mostly used the internet for surfing online media for information.<sup>32</sup> Nearly all print media have online versions. Generally, the same articles are printed and posted online, while in some cases only summaries are posted on the web. For those without internet access, the printed press provides low-income earners an affordable option that continues to be widely distributed throughout the country.

## Data Collection and Analysis

We conducted a quantitative content analysis of 643 articles published online between 2000 and 2010 about the marriage migration of Vietnamese women who married East and Southeast Asian men from South Korea, Taiwan,

Malaysia, China, and Singapore.<sup>33</sup> We searched selected websites and compiled a database of all items on marriage migrants and marriage migration. These articles were all written in Vietnamese and came from four main sources: (1) Vietnamese online media from Vietnam; (2) Vietnamese websites of mass organizations and various national, provincial, and local government bodies; (3) “Việt Kiều” or diaspora media online articles accessible in Vietnam; and (4) foreign news agencies that publish in the Vietnamese language.<sup>34</sup> A total of 92 percent of items included in the database originated from Vietnam (categories 1 and 2), while 8 percent were published on Việt Kiều or foreign online media.

In terms of specific sources, *VnExpress*, a very popular online newspaper with a broad range of audiences, ranks first with 101 articles (15.7 percent); *Tuổi Trẻ Online*, the official voice of the Youth Association, occupies the second place with ninety-nine articles (15.4 percent); in third place is *Tiền Phong Online* with forty-three articles (6.7 percent); and *Người Lao Động Điện Tử* [Laborer Online] ranks fourth with forty-two articles (6.5 percent). The remaining articles derive from the Vietnamese Women’s Union website, *Vietnamnet*, *Sài Gòn Giải Phóng Online*, *Thanh Niên Online*, and other newspapers. The website of Vietnam Missionaries in Taiwan, which is part of the Việt Kiều Catholics in Asia website, and BBC Vietnam circulated some of the earliest articles on this issue.

The analysis involved coding articles by year of publication, source, source ownership, country discussed, and topics/themes. We identified six main themes: (1) Vietnamese brides/migrants: articles focusing on individual cases or Vietnamese brides as a distinct group (characteristics, motives, and numbers); (2) Foreign husbands/grooms: articles on individual cases (nearly all abusive husbands) or foreign men as a group seeking to marry Vietnamese women; (3) Transnational marriages: articles on international marriages between Vietnamese women and Asian men (statistics, trends, happiness levels); (4) Matchmaking industry: articles about agencies, intermediaries, recruitment, trafficking, fees, process of entering an international marriage, and police raids on traffickers; (5) Consequences of marriage migration: articles on the negative impact of the marriage market, mixed-blood marriage, marriage failures, and return of migrants; (6) Policies: articles on Vietnamese government policies and laws regarding marriage migration,

international relations to discuss policies, international cooperation in transnational activities, and visits of Vietnamese relatives in the destination country.

In the first stage of the analysis, we coded articles under the most important theme. Table 1 shows that the largest number of items involved “Vietnamese brides” (147 articles, 23 percent), followed by those about “policies” (138 articles, 21.5 percent). The other dominant themes, in order of prevalence, were “matchmaking industry” (113 articles, 17.6 percent), the “consequences of marriage migration” for Vietnam (109 articles, 17 percent), and “transnational marriages” (102 articles, 15.9 percent). The least frequent theme was “foreign husbands.” The coding of articles by themes (one main theme per article) was useful in providing an overview of contents from a quantitative point of view. In the second stage of analysis, we analyzed the articles in a qualitative manner allowing for multiple and overlapping themes within one article.

Media coverage varied depending on the husband’s country of origin. Marriages involving men from South Korea received the most attention, with a total of 309 articles (48.1 percent); marriage to men from Taiwan was the topic of two hundred articles (31.1 percent); and marriage to men from China garnered only ten articles (1.6 percent). Compared to marriages of Vietnamese women to East Asian men, marriages to Southeast Asian men, mostly from Singapore and Malaysia, received less attention with only fifty-one articles (7.9 percent) being written. The remaining seventy-three articles focused on transnational marriage between Vietnamese women and other Asian citizens. Finally, Figure 1 shows that most articles were written about Taiwan in the early 2000s, whereas articles about South Korea dominated after 2006.

#### SHIFTING NOTIONS OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Feminist scholars of Vietnam have extensively studied the tensions around the Vietnamese state’s shifting portrayals of women over the previous decades.<sup>35</sup> Pettus has eloquently shown how the media in the 1990s “employed the Vietnamese woman as a key allegorical tool for reflecting on and critiquing the human costs of market transition.”<sup>36</sup> She further argues that the woman is “a repository for the perceived losses and a vehicle for the cultural



TABLE 1: Number of Articles Published by Themes and Sources

Themes Sources	Vietnamese brides/ migrants	Foreign husbands/ grooms	Transnational marriages	Matchmaking industry	Consequences	Policies	Total
VnExpress	27	8	11	14	13	28	101
Tuổi Trẻ Online	20	6	13	16	21	23	99
Tiền Phong Online	5	1	9	12	14	2	43
Người Lao Động Online	17	2	8	8	2	5	42
Vietnamese Women's Union website	3	2	0	5	4	25	39
VietnamNet	8	3	10	7	5	3	36
Sài Gòn Giải Phóng Online	4	1	4	7	3	14	33
Thanh Niên Online	12	1	3	7	4	2	29
Vietnam Missionaries in Taiwan	10	0	8	2	6	0	26
BBC Vietnam	2	0	3	2	0	3	10
Others	39	10	33	33	37	33	185
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>643</b>

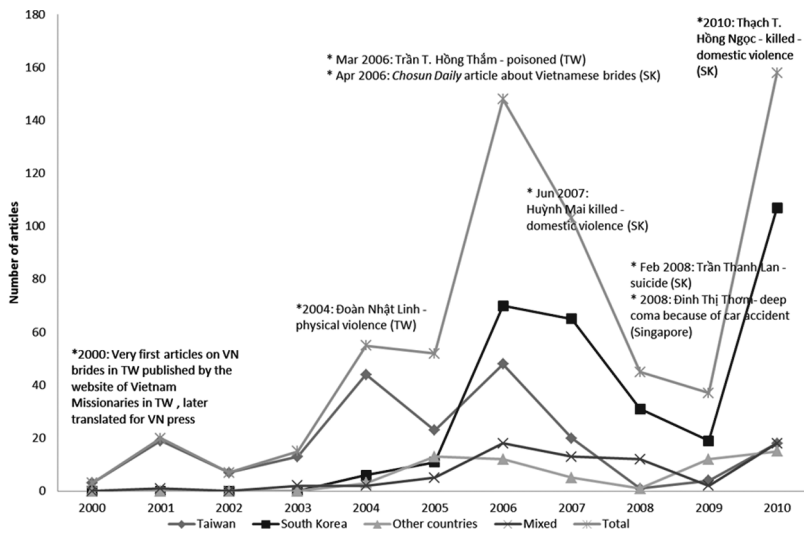


FIGURE 1: Number of Articles by Years of Publication and Destination Country of Marriage Migrants

aspirations of national modernity.”<sup>37</sup> She contends that representations of women speak to dilemmas around national identity and the tensions between tradition and modernity. Her study shows how the constant scrutiny of women’s behaviors, choices, and lives serves to create categories of those who are considered either worthy and deserving or underclass and undesirable. The media portrayal of women involved in marriage migration lends further support to Pettus’ argument and highlights its significance and relevance beyond the scope and duration of her own study.

The media portrays women who marry foreigners and migrate overseas afterwards as being opportunistic, calculating individuals who only enter into international marriages for selfish purposes. Such women are thought to enter into marriage as the means to an end: migration to a rich nation in order to have a comfortable life. This coverage portrays women as being without values or morals and taking advantage of a situation:

There are different types of women who want to marry foreign husbands: some are from wealthy families; some are lazy; some only want to ride an airplane; and some have been abandoned by their Vietnamese boyfriends. Particularly worrisome is that many young women view marrying a foreign

husband as being fashionable or trendy; they don't need to know what the husband looks like beforehand.<sup>38</sup>

These reports suggest that in order to achieve their objective of having a good and easy life by going abroad, women engage in activities closely resembling sex work. Women who marry foreigners thus “sell” sex for visas. By prostituting their bodies, they show that their intentions are impure and that they are simply in pursuit of personal materialist objectives:

Many women were careless about everything. They kept going to the brokerage agencies and were willing to do whatever the brokers required, even undress for foreign grooms to check them. This indicates that the women were willing to pay whatever price to get married to a foreign husband [*họ chấp nhận mọi giá để lấy được chồng ngoại*].<sup>39</sup>

Articles reporting on the high proportion of women who married foreigners and were diagnosed with HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases questioned the morality and sexual mores of these women. These articles allude to the links between marrying a foreign husband, having engaged in sex work, and being a STD carrier. Besides being reported as working in the sex trade, more recently, Vietnamese marriage migrants were also portrayed as being deceitful and defrauding foreign men in various ways to achieve their ambition:

Most Vietnamese girls married South Korean men for financial reasons. Some girls got into “fake marriages” and then left their foreign husbands in order to work illegally...or they get divorced, then work illegally or even go out with Vietnamese male migrant workers. Because of this phenomenon, the South Korean government promulgated a law that does not grant citizenship to Vietnamese immigrant spouses until they have been married for two years.<sup>40</sup>

According to media reports, women are not only irresponsible towards their family by engaging in these marriages, but also towards their community and nation (not only do they marry foreigners, but they also leave their country). Underlying these reports is the social construction of good women as being decent middle class housewives who stay home to look after their family's happiness:

More than anger, it is also the pain and shame of Vietnamese women—of every Vietnamese. The pride of our nation has been seriously hurt by this

event [*Hơn cả sự phẫn nộ, đó còn là nỗi đau và nỗi nhục của phụ nữ Việt Nam, của mọi người Việt Nam chúng ta. Niềm tự tôn và tự hào dân tộc của chúng ta đã bị vạ việc này làm cho tổn thương sâu sắc*].<sup>41</sup>

Every day, the Department of Citizenship Management (Ministry of Justice) receives many documents from Vietnamese girls who apply to give up their Vietnamese citizenship [these women are not entitled to dual citizenship]. It creates great anguish to see that forty thousand Vietnamese girls so easily renounce the citizenship that attaches them to their homeland [*Thật đau xót khi quốc tịch gắn liền với sinh mạng con người từ khi sinh ra cất tiếng khóc chào đời trên quê hương đất mẹ lại dễ dàng bị hơn bốn mươi nghìn người từ bỏ*]....By renouncing their Vietnamese citizenship and applying for foreign citizenship, these girls want to make their fortunes by “depending” [*dựa hơi*] on their foreign husbands. However, many girls, after giving up Vietnamese citizenship, break up with their husbands, get divorced, and are denied the citizenship of their destination country. They then become persons without any citizenship.<sup>42</sup>

The “sacrificing daughter” is another common stereotype of marriage migrants documented by scholars and depicted in the media. Instead of following their “free will,” these women sacrifice themselves for the sake of their family, which explains why they emigrate and apparently spoil their bodies:

The majority of girls accept marriage to foreign husbands because they have to bear a great burden of supporting their large, poor families....Because their families encounter many difficulties and their parents are old and ailing, these girls “smack their tongues and cast their frail and fragile lots to foreign lands” [*tặc lưỡi gửi thân phận yếu ớt mỏng manh của mình sang xứ người*] in the hopes of sending remittances to their parents at home....In the bottom of their hearts, they really do not want to marry abroad.<sup>43</sup>

One major consequence of women marrying foreigners is the harm it causes to national pride [*tự hào dân tộc*]. Through these marriages, women betray their nation and harm Vietnam’s reputation, a perceived pattern that lends support to Pettus’ earlier work:

Most Vietnamese women who currently live in Singapore (including students and housewives) share the same opinion that the image of Vietnamese women has been degraded [*coi rẻ*] in the eyes of Singaporean men because there are more young Vietnamese girls going to Singapore through the matchmaking industry. Vietnamese women who have dignity always feel offended [*những người phụ nữ Việt Nam có lòng tự trọng không thể không cảm thấy bất bình*]

when they see the ads about how to get a Vietnamese bride. These ads are innumerable on buses and in subway stations.<sup>44</sup>

An article published in the South Korean newspaper *Chosun Daily* on April 21, 2006, “Vietnamese Virgins Coming to Korea – A Land of Hope,” described a matchmaking process whereby a Korean suitor called Kim went to see his would-be brides and browsed through “a chorus line of Vietnamese women,” who were portrayed as just dying to marry a Korean man. Under the photo of eleven women whose faces appeared distinctly there was a caption: “Korean princes please take me home.” The article was judged as being seriously insulting to Vietnam and Vietnamese women. Vietnamese media severely criticized the *Chosun* article, emphasizing that bride selection by foreign men seriously damages national pride and creates pain and shame for Vietnamese women and all Vietnamese people. For example, on June 13, 2006, the Vietnam Women’s Union website wrote:

Today, some regions remain in difficult situations. Many families are still poor, but they cannot be so poor as to lose one’s dignity and honor like that [*nhưng không thể nghèo đến mức làm mất nhân phẩm, danh dự như vậy được*].<sup>45</sup>

In speeches by female officials from the Vietnamese Women’s Union (VWU), women marrying abroad are further portrayed as being irresponsible towards their families, communities, and nation. At the VWU conference on “Issues of Vietnamese Women Marrying Foreigners” on June 9, 2006, the president of the VWU stated:

For various reasons, the number of Vietnamese women (marrying foreigners) has increased annually in recent years. Besides a number of voluntary, progressive marriages, there are many commercialized marriages [*cuộc hôn nhân mang tính lừa gạt, buôn bán*]. This becomes a social problem affecting the reputation and image [*uy tín và hình ảnh*] of Vietnamese women internationally.

The president of the VWU expressed sharp criticism towards women who accepted marriage to old and sick foreign men and considered it offensive to the nation. She clearly singled out Vietnamese women as being responsible for the phenomenon:

Why do these marriages happen? Why do our girls marry men as old as their grandfathers, marry even men with mental disorders [*Vì sao lại thế được chứ, vì sao các cô gái của chúng ta lại lấy những ông già bằng tuổi ông, lấy người thần kinh làm chồng*]? Some girls say they have to marry foreigners because they think that Vietnamese men are lazy and unable to maintain their families. These women offend all of us [*Họ đã xúc phạm đến tất cả chúng ta*]. I am sure they do not marry abroad because they are poor. We used to eat cassava, but we won the war against the French.<sup>46</sup>

Our analysis underscores how the media casts women who leave Vietnam for marriage abroad as having failed to meet their responsibilities towards the building of their own nation. They are constructed as having challenged the patriarchal order because they bypassed Vietnamese marriage traditions. Their morality is questioned and they are associated with the sex trade: marriage abroad equates to selling one's body and soul.

#### DISCOURSE AROUND CLASS-MAKING

Discourse around class-making has evolved in Vietnam since Đổi Mới [Renovation (1986)] with an emerging urban class being constructed in opposition to a backward, poor, rural class.<sup>47</sup> Issues of marriage, sexual mores, and femininity take center stage in the creation of class boundaries. Lifestyles, life choices, and consumption patterns are fields of class-identity building promoted and nurtured by media. As such, marriage migration provides an additional site for reinforcing class boundaries between lower- and higher-quality individuals or those involved in the phenomenon of class-making and those who are not.<sup>48</sup>

The analysis reveals a discourse around class-making whereby individuals involved in international marriages (women and men), children born of these marriages, and Vietnamese citizens suffering the consequences of these marriages (Vietnamese single men) are labeled as low quality, problematic, and undesirable. First, the media portrays migrant brides as being ignorant and poorly educated; therefore, they lack an understanding of the risks involved in marriage migration: “Those women who want to get married to foreign men are young (including street children), poorly educated, and come from families with economic difficulties. They are easily cheated by brokers.”<sup>49</sup> It also frequently describes Vietnamese women as being

ignorant and naïve because they are easily influenced by South Korean popular culture (dramas):

Obsessed with marrying men from South Korea to be loved and enjoy an easy, romantic life as seen in the Korean soap operas, many girls are willing to “take a risk” [*liều thân*] even though they do not know anything about their potential grooms.<sup>50</sup>

While increasing proportions of women from northern provinces are also marrying foreigners, reports tend to focus on cases from the southern parts of Vietnam. These reports portray the phenomenon as essentially taking place in the south, where social evils are apparently more common and more difficult to monitor and control. The discourse around class-making is, therefore, cast in a north-south regionalism:

...while young women in the north and central regions are diligent and hardworking, some young women in the Mekong Delta show signs of laziness and want to live an easy, wealthy life abroad.<sup>51</sup>

Second, the discourse around class-making depicts men who marry Vietnamese women very negatively. They, too, are of poor “quality.” Hsia’s analysis of Taiwan’s media discusses the images of Taiwanese husbands marrying foreign women through matchmaking tours. She finds that the media portrays these men as being “physically and mentally ill,” as well as “morally inferior, deceitful, and sexist.”<sup>52</sup> Vietnamese press reports on Asian men who marry Vietnamese women are very similar:

The way her husband expressed his love to her was beating her cruelly every day. Without any reason, he beat her whenever he wanted. He beat her from the bed to the floor. He forced her to kneel on the floor and beat her on her face until it was black and blue. She did not dare protest because he would choke her or threaten to kill her.<sup>53</sup>

These grooms are essentially represented as having neither morals nor ethics because by engaging in marriages organized by matchmaking agencies they challenge Vietnamese cultural norms and disregard marriage customs. Because the two families do not meet, the spouses rarely get to know each other and the bride’s parents know nothing about the groom. It is perceived that men who engage in such commodified marriages are only after a female

body, for which they are willing to pay a large amount of money. Reports also suggest that only the worst men in society choose an international marriage:

Many grooms who were unable to marry native women had to go to Vietnam through a matchmaking agency to marry women. They were unemployed and had bad reputations in their own community because of unhealthy lifestyles.<sup>54</sup>

Despite the negative images of men engaged in these marriages, reports also victimize them as powerless bachelors. Stories suggest that men turn to Vietnamese women because they experience difficulty in finding a spouse in their own country. Some stories suggest that women from Taiwan and South Korea are responsible for international marriages.

It becomes more and more difficult for rural Korean men to get married because Korean women don't accept hardship and prefer to live in cities to work...more and more women are reluctant to give birth, which puts Korea's fertility rate at an alarming level.<sup>55</sup>

Third, class-making also involves the creation of a new underclass of Vietnamese forced bachelors, as “Vietnamese rural men can only watch their childhood girlfriends get on a plane to become the wife of a farmer living in a foreign country!”<sup>56</sup> Fourth, reports construct the “mixed-blood” generation [*thế hệ con lai*], born of international marriages, as being a problem for the future of Vietnam. This lower-class generation will lack attachment to the maternal homeland, suggesting parallels between these children and the ones born of women who married GIs and left Vietnam during and after the American War:

Because of low education and poor awareness, a high number of women marrying foreigners hide their backgrounds and education levels. For that reason, a generation of mixed-blood children with Korean, Taiwanese, Singaporean, and Malaysian men will be a big societal problem for Vietnam and other countries in the area. One certainty is that the mixed-blood generation will not be attached to the maternal homeland.<sup>57</sup>

Fifth, media reports construct marriage migrant returnees as a social problem for Vietnam. A number of articles relate the issue of Vietnamese brides who got divorced or ran away from their husbands and returned to Vietnam. Being poor and without the support of a husband, these women have to leave



their children with their parents and go work in the cities. According to these articles, this creates a burden for their elderly parents and for society as well:

For the children born from Taiwan-Vietnamese marriages (and currently living in some southern provinces), the issue of citizenship is still in question. These children came to Vietnam with their divorced mothers or were sent to Vietnam and placed in the care of their grandparents. Issues regarding birth certificates, household registrations, education, and health care are still unresolved.<sup>58</sup>

In sum, the representation of women and men involved in transnational marriages provides a rich example of how the intersection of class, ethnicity (nationality), and gender becomes intertwined “in the construction of meanings of identity and citizenship through the media.”<sup>59</sup> Moreover, the discourse around class-making is anchored in recent government narratives around the need to promote the *quality* of the Vietnamese population.<sup>60</sup> Marriage migrant returnees, along with their binational children, and men who must remain bachelors due to the shortage of women, are among the new categories constructed as preventing the enhancement of population quality. Overall, media reports depict marriage migration as an option that attracts underclass citizens; even worse, marriage migration *creates* new groups of undesirable individuals, such as returnees and their children. In addition, this discourse around class-making serves to distinguish women making poor choices (marrying a foreign Asian man from abroad) from those belonging to the emerging middle class who aspire to a modern, urban lifestyle.<sup>61</sup> Ironically, some Vietnamese women marry foreigners because they, themselves, aspire to a middle class lifestyle while some of them may experience downward class mobility after their migration. Indeed, as Nicole Constable discussed of the “paradoxes of global hypergamy,” it is wrong to assume that marriage migration is a simple process whereby poor low-class women marry foreign men.<sup>62</sup> In contrast to the complexity of class and gender processes involved, media narratives construct marriage migration quite narrowly. By doing so, the narratives comfort a middle class that claims values of tradition and modernity while remaining “faithful” to their Vietnamese roots by opposing themselves to rural, ignorant, “low-quality” women and their family members.

## SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Vietnam has endorsed the international discourse around human trafficking, equating the phenomenon of marriage migration to the trafficking of women and children for forced prostitution. In what Ronald Weitzer calls a “moral crusade” led by ideological tenets rather than scientific evidence, human trafficking tends to refer only to men and women involved in prostitution and not to those involved in various other forms of forced labor.<sup>63</sup> For Vietnam, the current international “moral crusade” fits with the socialist mandate to eradicate social evils—prostitution being one of them. In addition, as a receiver of official development assistance, Vietnam has been encouraged to endorse international conventions on human trafficking and create a legal framework to combat the phenomenon. Not surprisingly, human trafficking has become a centerpiece in international projects and the Vietnamese media has seized upon the issue.

Indeed, media coverage of international marriage portrays migrant brides as being victims of a flourishing traffic. The reports generally depict Vietnamese women as being passive victims abused by many different individuals: brokers, foreign husbands, and even family members. This sweeping generalization underlies most articles on the matter:

...in the southern provinces of Vietnam, thousands of Vietnamese girls eagerly look for broker companies to get married to Taiwanese husbands, while in Taiwan itself thousands of brides are tortured and maltreated day and night. But, because the cries of Vietnamese brides are locked within walls [*tiếng khóc của những cô dâu Việt Nam thường bị bịt kín trong bốn bức tường*], their mothers in Vietnam who sold them [*gã bán con mình*] cannot imagine their beloved daughters are being treated like animals [*đối xử không thua gì súc vật*].<sup>64</sup>

A number of articles reported on marriages that ended tragically with the bride escaping from her husband’s family and ending up in the sex trade:

The brides who escaped from their husband’s family could not find jobs, so they ended up working for “sex tours.” Because they didn’t speak Korean and had no money to meet their needs, they had to borrow money and get their debts reduced by “receiving guests.”<sup>65</sup>

Reports on the matchmaking industry systematically associate it with trafficking activities and suggest that all brokers are traffickers:

According to statistics, 30 percent of Vietnamese-Taiwanese marriages are “fake marriages” so that women can enter Taiwan. A number of women were cheated and sold from one person to another, while some brides go out to work. Many bad things happened, creating instability for society.<sup>66</sup>

Many articles reported on a 2007 police raid on matchmaking rings in Hồ Chí Minh City and described the tricks brokers used to make money from the families of both the bride and groom. It is worth noting that almost all articles use patronizing, derogatory language when referring to the women. For instance, one of these articles used the title “The Rings of Herding Women for Marriage with Taiwanese Men” [*Đường dây gom phụ nữ kết hôn với đàn ông Đài Loan*]. A piece in *Người Lao Động Online* on December 19, 2005, entitled “Market for Those Seeking a Husband” [*Thị trường tìm chồng*], described women who looked for foreign husbands as being audacious, ignorant, and at risk of being cheated. Again, reports depicted international marriage as having a high risk of failure. The case of 178 women in Tây Ninh who were trafficked and sold in Malaysia was covered extensively in many newspapers.

The June 9, 2007 *Ngôi Sao* [Star] article, “Painful Fate of Those Married to Foreign Husbands” [*Đón đau phận lấy chồng Tây*], citing *Thanh Niên* newspaper, described the process of bride selection in Hồ Chí Minh City in lurid detail. The matchmaking center recruited young women, checked to ensure they were virgins, and “trained” them to pass the selection process. The article then described an episode of bride selection by two Korean men:

A group of five girls entered the room for two South Korean men to perform “health checks.” T., 20 years old from Chợ Mới, An Giang, said, “Once the girls entered the room, they were asked to undress completely for “checking.” The two Korean men touched their legs, carefully examined each scar on their body, like they were buying goods [*như tìm mua một món đồ*].” Another girl named V., 18 years old from Châu Đốc, An Giang, went out of the room and was very upset. “They looked at us like commodities. It’s very shameful” [*Họ coi tụi em như đồ vật. Nhục nhã lắm!*]. At the end of the day, only two girls were selected.

Overall, media coverage described the matchmaking industry as a criminal activity commodifying and harming women. In addition, reports on police raids, arrests, and sanctions convey to the Vietnamese public that their

government is looking after abused women and forcefully punishing those involved in these illegal and shameful activities. The current “moral crusade” against human trafficking for sex work has taken under its wing the sub-phenomenon of marriage migration. For the media, marriage migration provides a powerful example of how well-organized, widespread, and terrible human trafficking has become. At the same time, stories of raids, arrests, and convictions convince readers that the government is being proactive in protecting its weak female citizens who fall victim to traffickers.

#### SHIFTING ROLE OF THE MEDIA

The thematic analysis of this body of articles provides interesting evidence about the continually shifting roles of the media documented in other research.

##### *Voice of the Communist Party*

To assert the media’s role as the voice of the communist party, reporters frequently ask high-ranking officials to comment when very severe cases of abuse or trafficking are uncovered. The Vietnamese media also reports on Vietnamese officials going to the destination countries of migrant spouses to discuss particular cases and policies that would supposedly prevent further problems. The politicization of the issue often results in the use of authoritative voices, as the following examples show. On December 22, 2006, following the news that there were “Vietnamese Brides Sold in a Public Market in Malaysia” [*Phụ nữ Việt Nam bị đưa đi “chào hàng” tại Malaysia*], the Vietnamese Women’s Union sent an official representative to the Vietnamese Embassy in Malaysia asking for more information on the case and demanding that prompt action be taken.<sup>67</sup> Below is one section of the fax signed by the Vietnamese Ambassador in Malaysia in response to their request. The document was published and posted on the VWU website:

The Embassy would like to propose that the Vietnamese Women’s Union will cooperate with authorities at all levels to maximize communication and education to enhance women’s full awareness of the risks that may occur in international marriage (differences in culture and language, lack of information about husband’s family, high risk of being coerced to work in a bar or brothel...) and thus reduce the trend of marrying foreign men. In fact,

several Vietnamese women going to Malaysia through legal and illegal marriages face a lot of risks of maltreatment as reported by local newspapers. This is negatively affecting the image and reputation of Vietnam, in general, and of Vietnamese women, in particular.”<sup>68</sup>

A male official from the Ministry of Justice was quoted as saying:

There are already many educational and propaganda activities on television and in newspapers to raise awareness. People are aware of the negative consequences [of marriage to foreigners], but we must admit that a number of women—mainly young women—because of inaccurate perceptions and laziness only want to be rich instantly [*một bước lên bà*].<sup>69</sup>

Given the strong links between the state’s position and media discourse in Vietnam, media representations give readers the official position of the communist state and its different bodies regarding this issue. Citing the speeches of high-ranking officials, the media emphasizes that marriage migration is a serious political issue and a national concern.

#### *Increased Use of Sensationalism*

The growing independence of Vietnamese media from the state has been associated with higher quality journalism, but also with the need to boost readership through sensational stories.<sup>70</sup> Since the mid 1990s, a new style of reporting has been to uncover “hidden realities” that are, in fact, social vices “behind some façade of normalcy.”<sup>71</sup> As Nguyễn-võ Thu-hương argues about practices of commercial sex, marriage migration also serves “well this formula in its representation of a phenomenon that needs uncovering.”<sup>72</sup> Marriage migration has provided a profusion of dramatic stories to uncover. Sensational cases dominate the media and contribute to the increased number of articles published annually over the last decade (see Figure 1). Among the 643 articles analyzed, 491 articles (76 percent) were published between 2006 and 2010. The most commonly used words in the titles of articles include: tragedy, broken dream, nightmare, marriage migration fever, illusion, and false hope.

Peaks in media coverage correspond to tragic cases. In 2004 alone, of the fifty-five articles published, ten of those reported on the case of Đoàn Nhật Linh, a Vietnamese woman who suffered from sexual coercion and violence perpetrated by her foreign husband and his ex-wife. She was found nearly

dead in a wasteland by an electric generator factory in Taiwan. Sensational reporting intensified in 2006 with two cases that received extensive coverage. One item involved the death of Trần Thị Hồng Thắm in Taiwan and the other was a reaction to the above-mentioned article published in the Korean *Chosun Daily*. In 2010, media coverage reached its peak with a total of 158 articles. The story of Thạch Thị Hồng Ngọc, who was killed by her mentally ill, violent husband in South Korea in July 2010, garnered the most articles on a single case. As many as forty articles were published over several months and the media kept their audience interested by following the investigation and reporting on the various rumors surrounding it. The story unfolded as a never-ending drama with reports on family members' opinions and feedback on the resolution of the case by Vietnam and South Korea. Figure 1 highlights several additional stories that amassed a significant number of articles and identifies the destination countries of residence.

#### SEEKING LEGITIMACY THROUGH INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS

The politics of transnational marriage often involves using authoritative voices from the receiving countries of Vietnamese immigrant spouses. Doing so strengthens Vietnam's official position on the issue, since the information provided does not only come from the Vietnamese government but from Taiwanese and South Korean officials as well. This discursive strategy is very convincing for skeptical readers who might doubt Vietnamese media reporting. Often cited were authorities from receiving countries using alarming and threatening tones:

According to Peter Chen, the police officer specializing on immigrants in Taichung (Taiwan), the situation will become even worse for foreign brides in this city in the future. Statistics from his office show that 10 percent of 384 Vietnamese brides were victims of domestic violence. They were beaten and cruelly exploited by their husbands. The majority of them married poor farmers or workers with little or no education. A number of them married men with disabilities.<sup>73</sup>

These reports also often cite NGO representatives and their social workers, who work with immigrant spouses and lobby for their rights to reinforce the Vietnamese government's message concerning the risks of international marriage:

The social workers we met conveyed a common message to young Vietnamese girls who want to marry Korean men through matchmaking agencies: be careful and don't entertain illusions [*hãy thận trọng và đừng ảo tưởng*].

Ms. Lee Kum Yeon Cecilia from the Center of Social Welfare Jeon Jin Sang said, "I know Korean films are very popular in Vietnam. However, believe me, the life you see in these films, beautiful cars, comfortable houses, and fashionable clothes...these belong to the life of an elite group only, not to the life you would have in Korea."<sup>74</sup>

Extensive media coverage appeared in the aftermath of the above-mentioned article published in the South Korean *Chosun Daily* on April 21, 2006. The story became a national matter and made the headlines. Letters from government officials to the South Korean government were published. Reports were written on Vietnamese public opinion and the actions and reactions of numerous actors, including officials from Vietnam and South Korea, journalists, Vietnamese students and immigrant women living in South Korea, and NGOs in South Korea. Public protest about the article by activists and feminist groups in South Korea triggered reactions in Vietnam. The voices of many actors were cited in the numerous articles on the incident; however, those of Vietnamese immigrant spouses living in South Korea were not included.

#### BORROWING FROM DIASPORA MEDIA?

It seems that Việt Kiều or diaspora community online media influences Vietnamese media to some degree. The first articles that appeared in Vietnamese media on the *Chosun* report used the nearly exact same wording as those articles previously published in Việt Kiều or diaspora community online media. We identified several cases of translations, reproductions, and repetitions of articles from diaspora and other foreign sources that suggest an interesting dynamic of borrowing and influences in reporting stories about international marriage migration in Vietnam. We provide one example below.

In early 2000, the website of the Vietnam Missionaries in Taiwan (catholic.org.tw) posted three articles focusing on the tragic plights of some Vietnamese brides in Taiwan. Soon after, in 2001, Vietnamese online media published very similar tragic stories and used the same sensational tone,

without referring to the original source.<sup>75</sup> The first individual case widely covered was that of Đoàn Nhật Linh in 2004, as mentioned in the previous section. The first Vietnamese-language article on this case was written by Joseph Trương and published on the *VietCatholic News* website on June 25, 2004. A month later, this case appeared in an article entitled “The Tragic Plight of Vietnamese Brides in Taiwan” [*Thảm cảnh của những cô gái Việt Nam lấy chồng Đài Loan*] by Tuệ Quân from *Thanh Niên Online*. It was almost identical to the one published by *VietCatholic News*.<sup>76</sup> Not long after, Đoàn Nhật Linh’s story appeared in various newspapers and created shock in Vietnam. Photos showing Đoàn Nhật Linh nearly dead and after she recovered were reprinted many times. The media used Đoàn Nhật Linh’s case extensively; she became a martyr and a heroine because she survived after falling into the hands of Taiwanese abusers. Vietnamese media used her case to highlight the dangers and risks of international marriage (implying with their narrative that abusive relationships only involved foreign men).

In sum, Vietnamese media coverage of marriage migration exemplifies the recent changes the media has undergone over the past decade. Most prominent in coverage of the subject are media being used as the “Mouth of the Party,” sensationalist and dramatic accounts, and the use of international authoritative voices. How the voice of diaspora media may influence Vietnamese media suggests an interesting dynamic of information flow and positioning. Interestingly, both Vietnamese and diaspora media took on a similarly dramatic representation of marriage migration as being a form of trafficking, but for different purposes.

## Conclusion

The mass media plays a key role in shaping public opinion about migration and migrants. In a country like Vietnam, where the media is closely controlled by the government, it is used to convey the government’s ideology and express its power. From the migration theory point of view, where the migration process is often described in relation to push and pull factors, the media in Vietnam focuses solely on the pulls. The only motivation the media gives for women choosing marriage migration is that they are searching for better material conditions in the destination country. The push factors are deliberately ignored. Instead of questioning why thousands of young women



choose to leave their family to get married abroad, the mass media blames the women, and, in doing so, distracts public attention away from the reasons that push them to migrate. These women are then easily associated with the worst class of women—those who shamelessly sell their bodies for material gain. No one else is blamed, except for, in a few cases, greedy brokers who cheated the women. The media describes women who migrate as being impulsive, young, ignorant, poorly educated, selfish, and lazy. In reality, migration is a result of complex social processes and may involve many considerations. The fact that thousands of women migrate clearly indicates that they believe they are making a good trade-off.

Our analysis has provided evidence into important shifts in Vietnamese society. First, a feminist reading of the material underscores the highly gendered treatment of the subject. When constructed as a gendered threat to nationalism, the phenomenon is taken to a macro level and its significance is politicized. Women engaging in these marriages are seen as harming Vietnam's national pride and international reputation. The phenomenon of transnational marriage is likened to a stain damaging the image of Vietnam as a thriving nation with one of the highest economic growth rates in the world. This analysis echoes previous feminist analyses of Vietnamese media published mostly during the 1990s to mid 2000s. Our analysis reaffirms the relevance of these earlier works and supports the view that women and women's sexualized bodies are used to represent the contradictions, tensions, and "dangers" of modernity. Furthermore, women who leave their country to marry foreign men (and have sex with them) threaten Vietnamese patriarchy and masculinity. This threat is particularly evident in the discourse that equates women to sex workers and calculating actors. The fact that thousands of women migrate out of Vietnam to give their bodies to foreign men abroad implies a question about Vietnamese masculinity. Women who marry foreigners and make themselves accessible to foreign men threaten Vietnamese men's sense of exclusive access to and knowledge of Vietnamese women.

Secondly, our analysis makes a contribution to analyses of class-making. The construction of new categories of citizens and non-citizens of low quality is particularly telling of a recent agenda aimed at enhancing the quality, rather than the quantity, of the population. Thirdly, the equation of marriage migration with human trafficking serves the anti-social evil campaigns by providing

evidence that such evils come from outside and represent a threat to the stability and integrity of Vietnam. Finally, our analysis has provided an example of how the Vietnamese media has changed over the past two decades. The media's desire to catch readers' attention and the party's continued control over content are among the factors that lead to sensationalist accounts that present an extremely narrow and distorted picture of a social phenomenon with numerous ramifications and impacts. As Nguyễn-võ Thu-hương eloquently stated about the journalistic coverage of commercial sex in Vietnam, the media's main message about marriage migration resembles an "ambiguous alarm about consequences, about wasted lives, social disorder, and corrupted tradition."<sup>77</sup>

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#### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the social construction of marriage migration in Vietnamese online media. We present a content analysis of 643 items published online between 2000 and 2010 on international marriages between Vietnamese women and foreign Asian men. Our analysis reveals that online media content speaks to four important shifts discussed in Vietnamese studies: (1) shifts in notions of gender, sexuality, and marriage; (2) emerging discourses around class-making; (3) emerging discourse on human trafficking; and (4) shifting roles of the media.*

KEYWORDS: *marriage, migration, Vietnamese women, Asian men, Vietnamese media*

#### Notes

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7. King and Wood, "Media and Migration: An Overview," in King and Wood, eds., *Media and Migration*, 1–22.
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23. The decision of the 5th Meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (10th term) in 2007 emphasized that "Media has to be well informed and disseminate widely, timely, and effectively the Party direction and decision, the Government policies and laws...actively fight against and contribute to prevent and step-by-step push back corruption, waste...and social evils..."
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27. Oscar Salemink, “Translating, Interpreting, and Practicing Civil Society in Vietnam: A Tale of Calculated Misunderstandings,” in *Development Brokers and Translators: The Ethnography of Aid and Agencies*, eds. David Lewis and David Mosse (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press Inc., 2006), 101–126.
28. McKinley, “Can a State-Owned Media Effectively Monitor Corruption.”
29. Heng, “Media Negotiating the State,” 213.
30. Unlike television and radio that are aimed at a broad audience, each newspaper/magazine specializes in a certain topic and serves a specific audience. For instance, *Tiền Phong*, *Thanh Niên*, and *Tuổi Trẻ* target young people, while *Nhân Dân* is compulsory reading for Communist Party members and government employees.
31. International Telecommunication Union, United Nations Agency for Information and Communication Technologies, 2010, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia/vn.htm> (accessed April 20, 2011).
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33. We did not include articles on marriages to men from Western countries, since the trend taking place within Asia is much more important in terms of migration flow and is also different in terms of the process (centrality of matchmaking agencies). Hung Cam Thai’s research focuses on Vietnamese-American men who return to Vietnam to find a Vietnamese wife. These marriages are generally organized through personal and family networks. See Hung Cam Thai, *For Better or Worse*.
34. One important feature of online media is that readers can provide feedback on published items. For instance, when Thạch Thị Hồng Ngọc was killed by her South Korean husband in July 2010, thirty-eight readers expressed their sympathy, while others expressed anger or shame towards Vietnamese marriage migrants. The media also collects information on readers’ opinions through online surveys. In a 2006 survey, *VnExpress* asked readers for their opinions about international marriages resulting from matchmaking. Out of 4,501 readers who responded, the majority (56 percent) thought that it was a “shameful” phenomenon, while the remainder thought that it was “normal” (32 percent) or a “good opportunity to change one’s life” (12 percent). Many readers expressed

a wide range of opinions, which reflects how media influences readers and readers can influence media. In this paper, we focus on media representations and do not have enough space to undertake an analysis of media content reception by audiences.

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  75. Very similar wording and references to the same events lead us to think that the articles were picked up from these sites and slightly rewritten before publication.
  76. Diaspora media publish reports on marriage migration that equate the phenomenon to trafficking as a strategy to raise funding for diaspora organizations who run shelters for runaway migrants. One prominent case in Taiwan involved a religious leader who ran a shelter and gave talks to diaspora organizations in order to raise funds for his operation in Taiwan. We witnessed such fundraising activities in Canada and were aware of similar activities taking place in the United States and Australia. In Canada, in the mid 2000s, anti-trafficking activism was a cause that effectively rallied children of Vietnamese refugees from the 1970s (unpublished observations, first author of this paper). In these activities, young Vietnamese women who were “trafficked” to Taiwan and South Korea for the purpose of “forced marriage” were an effective target to mobilize youth.
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