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Article

Lifecourse Transitions: How ICTS Support Older Migrants' Adaptation to Transnational Lives

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Abstract
Lifecourse transitions from adulthood into older age are particularly complex for transnational migrants, bringing additional challenges and opportunities. Adding to the growing literature on ageing and migration, this article illustrates the ways ICTs facilitate the transnational lifecourse transitions of Vietnamese migrant grandparents in Australia through lifecourse digital learning. Research findings highlight the crucial role that digital citizenship plays in supporting migrant grandparents' adaptation to increasingly mobile lives through practices of digital kinning and digital homing. These practices include using technological tools to maintain social support networks, exchange transnational caregiving, tackle language, navigation, and social integration barriers, and consume culturally relevant media, all of which support migrant identities and belongings. Findings confirm the importance of ICTs in promoting lifecourse digital learning for older migrants who are often stereotyped for their poor learning capacities and ability to adapt to new living arrangements because of their older age.

Keywords
ageing; ICTs; lifecourse learning; lifecourse transition; migration; Vietnamese older migrants

1. Introduction

Transitioning from adulthood to old age is a process that often involves changes in social identities, from worker to retiree, from healthy and able-bodied to precarious states of wellness and increasing frailty, including restricted mobility that can further compound poor health conditions from relative independence to increasing dependence, from being a couple to being single, and from being socially active to reduced levels of social engagement, shrinking social networks. (Brink, 2017; Jennifer & Karen, 2004; Prendergast & Garattini, 2017; Tam, 2018). For older adults who are members of transnational families, there are additional complexi-

ties to negotiate. Transnational families comprise multigenerational members dispersed in households that span national borders. Older adults in transnational families might be left behind by migrant adult children (Ariadi et al., 2019; Falkingham et al., 2017; Zickgraf, 2017), follow adult children to a new country (King et al., 2014; Plaza, 2000; Zhou, 2019), or participate in ongoing movement between home and host countries to provide and/or receive care and support (Da, 2003; Horn, 2017; Tezcan, 2021). As a result, their ageing process often involves living in unfamiliar places, requiring significant effort, new skills, and knowledge to adapt. It also requires the development of a transnational habitus, the ability to balance local and transnational lives across

places that have different lifestyles, cultural beliefs, and practices (Tian, 2016; Wyss & Nedelcu, 2020).

Therefore, in addition to experiencing the age-related trajectory known in lifecourse theory as the "timing of lives" (major stages of life such as childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age; see Elder, 1994), transnational older adults undergo other lifecourse transitions that are influenced by changes in social and cultural context (Bengtson & Achenbaum, 1993), which are the focus of this article. These changes are complex and varied, often including limited opportunities to engage in free expression and conversations using their mother tongue, and restricted capacity in written and spoken communications using the host-country language (Lie, 2010; Shankar, 2003). They also undergo profound adjustments to their independence, as their homeland networks transition from proximate to virtual contact and care (Ho & Chiu, 2020; Wilding & Baldassar, 2018). Moving to a new country often results in a shift from their role as income generators to income dependants (Subramaniam, 2019), from paid workers to unpaid caregivers and care recipients (Hamilton, Kintominas, & Adamson, 2021), from being primary decision-makers to dependants (Subramaniam, 2019), and from a high-ranking social position to the position of newcomer migrant without social recognition or status (Treas, 2008).

One important resource in older migrants' lifecourse transitions caused by these changes is the motivation to become skilled users of digital technologies (Baldassar, 2016). A range of technologies (e.g., tablets, the internet, laptops, computers, and smartphones) are actively sought out by migrant grandparents to support their adaptation to increasingly mobile lives. Compared to their non-migrant counterparts, older migrants are more motivated and active in learning how to use digital technologies (Baldassar et al., 2022). Recent research identifies two modes of engagement with digital technologies in transnational families and communities, which are referred to as practices of "digital kinning" (Baldassar & Wilding, 2020) and "digital homing" (Wilding et al., 2022). Digital kinning refers to the regular, routine, and ritual online interactions that are used by kin to sustain their sense of familyhood and "mutuality of being" across time and distance. For example, digital kinning might include frequent messaging on a smartphone that shares the details of daily life, such as meals and activities, including providing regular emotional support and practical advice. Digital homing, on the other hand, refers to online practices that are aimed at sustaining a sense of home and belonging that transcends here and there, past and present, for a migrant. Digital homing practices secure an ongoing connection to the homeland and associated cultural, ethnic, and national identities that extend beyond kinship networks. This might include organizing activities with diaspora community members and providing or receiving community support (Wilding et al., 2022) as well as accessing culturally significant resources like online music and film content from the country of origin in the homeland language (Baldassar et al., 2020). Both digital kinning and digital homing rely on digital citizenship, which helps address challenges such as language barriers and difficulties accessing appropriate services by facilitating the navigation of spaces and places as well as aiding everyday activities overseas (Ho & Chiu, 2020). Hence, the processes of digital engagement are salient to older migrants' lifecourse transitions (Prendergast & Garattini, 2017), whereby their lifecourse learning continues in different forms to facilitate their wellbeing, social integration, adjustment, and adaptation (Kim et al., 2011; Lam et al., 2010; Rawinski, 2017; Zhu & Zhang, 2019). Despite the nexus of ageing, ICTs, and migration, there is a paucity of research regarding the role of ICTs in the lifecourse transitions of older migrant adults.

To address the existing gap, this article explores how ICTs are used by Vietnamese migrant grandparents to support their lifecourse transitions. It begins with an overview of lifecourse theory and its relevance to ageing and migration, followed by a brief review of the literature on the importance of ICTs in ageing and migration. Next, it outlines the challenges faced in their transnational lives, then closely examines the ways Vietnamese grandparents, through lifecourse digital learning, apply digital technologies to navigate their overseas lives. Finally, the article discusses the relationships between digital technologies and lifecourse transitions in supporting Vietnamese migrant grandparents to preserve their social and cultural identities and enhance their social integration and adaptation, which are important cornerstones for social wellbeing in late-life migration.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Lifecourse Theory, Ageing, and Migration

The lifecourse perspective is a multidisciplinary paradigm that is broadly employed to research changes in people's lives, taking account of structural, cultural, and social conditions (Mills, 2000). Giele and Elder (1998) introduced five fundamental themes of the lifecourse theory that highlight changes in one's lifetime. These themes include life-span development (lifelong processes of ageing and human evolution), agency (human lives constructed through choices and actions comprising opportunities and constraints created by history and social context), time and place (historical times and places that individuals experience shaping their lifecourse), timing (developmental antecedents and consequences of individuals' life transitions, incidents, and behavioural types across timing in their life), and linked lives (individuals' interdependent relationships and socio-historical influences). The lifecourse paradigm has been extensively applied in different disciplines such as health, criminology, culture, and family studies (Brotman et al., 2020; Elder, 1994; Giele & Elder, 1998; Hareven & Adams, 1982; Moncur, 2017).

Lifecourse theory has also been applied in ageing and migration studies to interrogate the causes and effects of changes resulting from the economic, social, and cultural contexts of people's later lives. For instance, Ferrer et al. (2017) utilized an intersectional lifecourse perspective to examine the connections between structural inequalities and lived experiences of ageing among older migrants in Canada, highlighting the intersectional lifecourse perspective that can help nuance the connection of personal, relational, and structural process that various groups of older adults undergo in late life and across the lifecourse. Other research features the negative impact of transnational mobility on migrants' lifecourse transitions into older age, where different socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional contexts and limited knowledge and skills for social integration and adaptation conspire to reduce older migrants' access to appropriate health and social care services (Koehn et al., 2013; Rao et al., 2006). Several other studies indicate that shifts in cultural values and beliefs (e.g., from collectivism to individualism) may cause intergenerational conflicts and adjustments in care practices and exchanges between older migrants and their family members (Hugo & Thomas, 2002).

Of particular relevance to this article is the modest number of studies that examine the role of lifecourse learning in facilitating older migrants' adaptation to their transnational lives. For example, Kim et al. (2011) indicate that older Asian immigrants benefit from participation in leisure educational programs, meaningful recreational activities, and multicultural events in the USA to cope with adaptation challenges associated with cultural differences. In another empirical study, Zhu and Zhang (2019) demonstrate that older Chinese migrants adapt to new lives and access successful ageing in Canada through lifecourse learning, including developing new language and computer skills, learning about culture and history, and engaging in civic, leisure, and health activities. Thus, while they are still a relative rarity, studies on migration and ageing should not ignore the role of lifecourse learning in supporting older migrants' lifecourse transitions, including the links between lifecourse learning, digital citizenship, and the opportunities afforded by the current multimedia environment.

2.2. Digital Citizenship, Digital Kinning, and Digital Homing

Digital citizenship is "the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide variety of sources when it is presented via computers connected to the internet" (Gilster, 1997, p. 6). Digital citizens have the "digital literacy" (Hagel, 2015) to effectively use digital technologies for various purposes, including searching, utilizing, and disseminating information in the digital world. Digital citizenship can be limited by a lack of motivation and self-efficacy (low interest), functional constraints (cognitive decline), structural limitations (unaf-

fordability), and interpersonal limitations (lack of support; Friemel, 2016; Schreurs et al., 2017). These constraints and limitations, along with socio-economic status, age, gender and education (Ono & Zavodny, 2007) can contribute to the digital divide, which is defined as "the gap between individuals, households, businesses, and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard both to their opportunities to access information and communication technologies (ICTs) and to their use of the internet for a wide variety of activities" (OECD, 2011, p. 5).

Digital citizenship enables migrants to benefit from polymedia environments in which the "integrated structure" and "affordances" of ICTs create a growing environment of communicative opportunities for users coming from various social and cultural contexts (Madianou & Miller, 2012). It is in these spaces that transnational families engage in practices of digital kinning and digital homing. Digital kinning processes feature the development and maintenance of both kin and kin-like relations, which play an important part in assisting older migrants to overcome feelings of loneliness and isolation in the new living environment where they do not have pre-established social relations (Baldassar & Wilding, 2020). Digital homing, on the other hand, features processes that help older migrants sustain a sense of self that extends beyond the family, supporting their sense of connection to both homeland and host cultures and societies, which helps reduce feelings of isolation and enhances a sense of belonging (Wilding et al., 2022). Despite some distinctions in practices, both digital kinning and digital homing can contribute to protecting the social and cultural identities of migrants who are navigating transnational lives (Baldassar & Wilding, 2020; Wilding et al., 2022).

3. Methodology

3.1. Notes on Research Methodology

This article builds on data drawn from qualitative research conducted with 22 Vietnamese migrant grandparents (10 grandparent visitors and 12 grandparent migrants) in Perth, Melbourne, and Sydney, Australia, in the twelve months of 2020, during the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the original research design, physical fieldwork was planned; however, social distancing practices and border closures made physical field trips non-viable. To address this challenge, data collection was conducted mostly online, and comprised of fine-grained ethnographic interviews and online participant observation. Each participant chose to join one or several short online and/or offline interviews ranging in length from one to four hours, depending on their availability and preferences. The interviews employed broad, semi-structured and descriptive questions (Westby et al., 2003) that allowed grandparent participants to describe their everyday activities, life and migration histories, perceptions of ICTs, social support networks (SSNs),

reflections on ageing, and histories of technology use. Online participant observation was conducted with permission from grandparent participants after ethnographic interviews were carried out with them, and involved gathering information about how participants were engaging with social media. After becoming online friends with grandparents, the first author visited their Facebook profiles to follow their posts and record the ways they interacted with online and distant family members and friends (e.g., sending emojis and texts or remaining silent). Relevant online comments and posts were documented in electronic diary notes to observe grandparents' patterns, frequency and developments of social media use, including practices of digital kinning and digital homing. In addition, ethnographic field notes were collected including short descriptions of participants, their living environments, and their interactions with ICTs. The field notes and electronic diary notes were then coded and analysed to identify similarities and differences in grandparent participants' demographic backgrounds, living environments and interactions with ICTs and new media.

Data analysis was aided by NVivo software 12 to code transcribed ethnographic interviews and field notes to construct themes for analysis. All interview transcripts and field notes were carefully read and collated for each participant to select the case studies and excerpts relevant to the themes constructed. Data coding was carried out in the interviewing language (Vietnamese). Case studies and excerpts were translated into English and carefully double-checked. In particular, to depict how Vietnamese migrant grandparents use ICTs to facilitate transnational SSNs through digital kinning processes, an actor-centred interactive network-mapping tool called Vennmaker was used. The maps provide a useful illustration of various dimensions of digital homing and digital kinning that emerged through the data analysis, including type of SSNs (proximate, distant, virtual), frequency of contact (daily, weekly, monthly, on occasion, yearly and never), type of kin and non-kin relations (spouse, children, grandchildren, siblings, relatives, friends, colleagues, neighbours, support workers, medical professionals, organizations), type of communicative forms (audio calls, video calls, emails, group chat, i-messages, home visits, no contact), and degree of importance of kin and non-kin relations (positive, neutral, negative).

To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of research participants, pseudonyms are used following the conditions of ethics approval.

3.2. Research Participants

The sample comprises 12 women and 10 men, aged 54 to 91. The grandparent visitor cohort is younger with an average age of 62.2 years, while the grandparent migrant cohort is older with an average age of 72.8 years. According to the lifecourse stage (lifespan development) defined by Elder (1994), all grandparent participants had reached old age because they had all become grandparents. In addition, Vietnamese legislation defines "elderly" as 60+ years (Vietnamese National Assembly, 2009). However, according to Australian Government definitions, old age begins at 65 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016), although there is an acknowledgement that for some culturally and linguistically diverse groups, old age may begin a decade earlier.

If we define the lifecourse as "a sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time" (Giele & Elder, 1998, p. 22), then almost all grandparent participants stated that their roles had changed as a result of becoming grandparents, but also because of transnational mobility. These changes included moving from only being parents to also being grandparents, from being income generators to income dependants, from paid workers or retirees to unpaid caregivers and care recipients, and from masters of the home to "guests" of their migrant descendants. In particular, they all assumed a primary caring role for grandchildren, helped maintain their adult children's homes, and relied on adult children to pay for migration-related costs (e.g., return air tickets, health insurance, visa, accommodation, and food). Some of them resigned from paid work or terminated their own businesses temporarily or permanently in the homeland (Nguyen et al., in press). In addition, most grandparent participants confided that migration had been a major life event for them, whereby they experienced severe displacement, shifts in social and cultural norms, different practices in service provision, and challenges to their independence because of difficulties in navigating places and spaces, as well as the inability to drive.

Regarding educational background, 14 grandparents had completed general (primary or secondary) education while eight had obtained a university degree or higher. Distinctively, three grandparents possess a doctorate, and one of them held the associate professor title before retirement. Regarding socio-economic background, most grandparents ranked themselves in the middling (low-middle) class, defined as "often, but not always, well educated. They may come from wealthy families, but more often than not they appear to be simply middle class" (Conradson & Latham, 2005, p. 229). These socioeconomic and educational features are important factors influencing migrant grandparents' engagement with ICTs for lifecourse digital learning, which are further analysed below.

Regarding access to digital devices, all grandparents stated that they possessed at least one digital device (smartphone, tablet, smart TV, laptop, or desktop) that was connected to the internet for 24 hours over seven days per week. Adult children mainly supplied these devices and paid for monthly internet connection; however, some grandparents had purchased their smartphones themselves before migration. All grandparents revealed that they had some basic digital skills and knowledge (e.g., receiving and making audio and video

calls, opening webpages to search for desirable online information or watching favourite programs, engaging in online platforms such as Facebook, Zalo, and Viber to stay in touch with kin and friends through online interactions or group chats, playing games, and learning new cooking, gardening, and exercise skills). Over half of the grandparent participants started using ICTs only *after* their first migration. Some have become proficient ICT users while a few others are not keen to engage because they lack motivation, self-efficacy, and/or have functional constraints. Despite this, all grandparents reported no significant emotional or instrumental barriers in accessing and using ICTs. In other words, an insignificant digital divide was identified in this research sample. This can be explained by the evidence that migrant grandparents receive greater digital support from transnational family members and have greater motivations to stay in touch with distant kin and non-kin ties with the assistance of ICTs (Baldassar et al., 2022).

4. Research Findings

4.1. Changes and Constraints Faced in Transnational Lives

Similar to transnational grandparents in other studies (e.g., Da, 2003; Hamilton, Hill, & Kintominas, 2021; Ho & Chiu, 2020; King et al., 2014; Plaza, 2000; Treas, 2008), Vietnamese migrant grandparents face a wide range of challenges during their settlement processes and sojourns in Australia. The predominant challenge is the language barrier. Of the 22 participants, only one grandparent stated that he faced no language barrier as he could speak English fluently. This grandparent had travelled and worked internationally before retirement in Vietnam. Two others stated that they had "enough English" for everyday conversations but no confidence in addressing complicated issues such as meeting with medical professionals or bank staff. The other 19 grandparents either knew some basic English or could only say a greeting such as "hello/goodbye" or "good morning/afternoon," taught by their grandchildren or adult children. Grandparents also face difficulties in autonomous local travel. Of the 22 grandparents, only four male grandparents could drive and only six grandparents (mainly women) could use public transport. The others relied on their adult children for local transport. Some grandparents reported limited digital skills and knowledge about how to use ICTs for various purposes and relied on support from adult children or friends. However, they all recognized the importance of ICTs in their transnational lives. Anh, a grandparent visitor, revealed:

> I find ICTs very convenient and affordable. I am living in two distant hemispheres but I can talk to my kin and friends in Vietnam without paying any costs….To be honest, the internet and smartphone are like…uhm…the meals I must eat and the clothes

> I have to wear every day. If I don't use it in a day, I feel like….I lost connections and contacts to the world.

In addition, Vietnamese grandparents disclosed that they experienced shifts in social and cultural norms and practices, from familism and collectivism (which are central to Vietnamese people's lives) to individualism (which is endorsed by most Australians and their migrant descendants). Other constraints, such as visa and migration restrictions applied by the Australian Government to limit overseas grandparents' permanent or long-term stays, border lockdowns because of the Covid-19 pandemic, care burdens either in the home or host country, loss of social connections, isolation, boredom and depression, and difficulties in accessing local social and aged care services, were also reported (Nguyen et al., in press).

4.2. Digital Kinning: Maintenance of Transnational Care and Social Support Networks

A growing body of literature demonstrates that the use of ICTs to maintain SSNs has become indispensable to transnational migrants. Thanks to the proliferation of digital affordances, migrants have increasingly engaged in digital learning to practise transnational care as well as to sustain transnational SSNs (Baldassar, 2016; Baldassar & Wilding, 2020; Nguyen et al., in press). The following network maps, developed with Vennmaker, help to illustrate the digital kinning practices of Vietnamese migrant grandparents who use ICTs to facilitate SSNs and exchange transnational care and support.

Dang (55 years old) and Dat (69 years old) are good examples of older migrants who use ICTs to exchange transnational care and support with distant kin and non-kin. Dang moved to Australia to provide hands-on personal care for her two granddaughters (pink quarter in Figure 1). Dang's son and his family migrated to Japan in 2019 to work for an international company (purple quarter). In Vietnam, Dang has an over-80-year-old bedridden mother (yellow quarter) who is primarily cared for by a live-in domestic worker and her brother living nearby. In her SSNs, Dang also has three siblings, an aunty, some former colleagues and staff, and in particular, a group of 10 close high-school friends in Vietnam (purple, light green, and yellow quarters). Dang defined herself as a follower of Catholicism and Buddhism, who continues maintaining her local and transnational ritual support networks (pink and green quarters).

In order for Dang to fulfil her care obligations to her frail mother and two distant young grandchildren, with the assistance of her daughter, she learnt how to use a smartphone and social media (Zalo and Facebook). Dang maintained daily contact via video calls, group chats, and i-messages with her son and grandchildren, as well as a group of Vietnamese close friends, whom she regards as "biological sisters." For her mother, she provided transnational care by sending remittances to pay the domestic
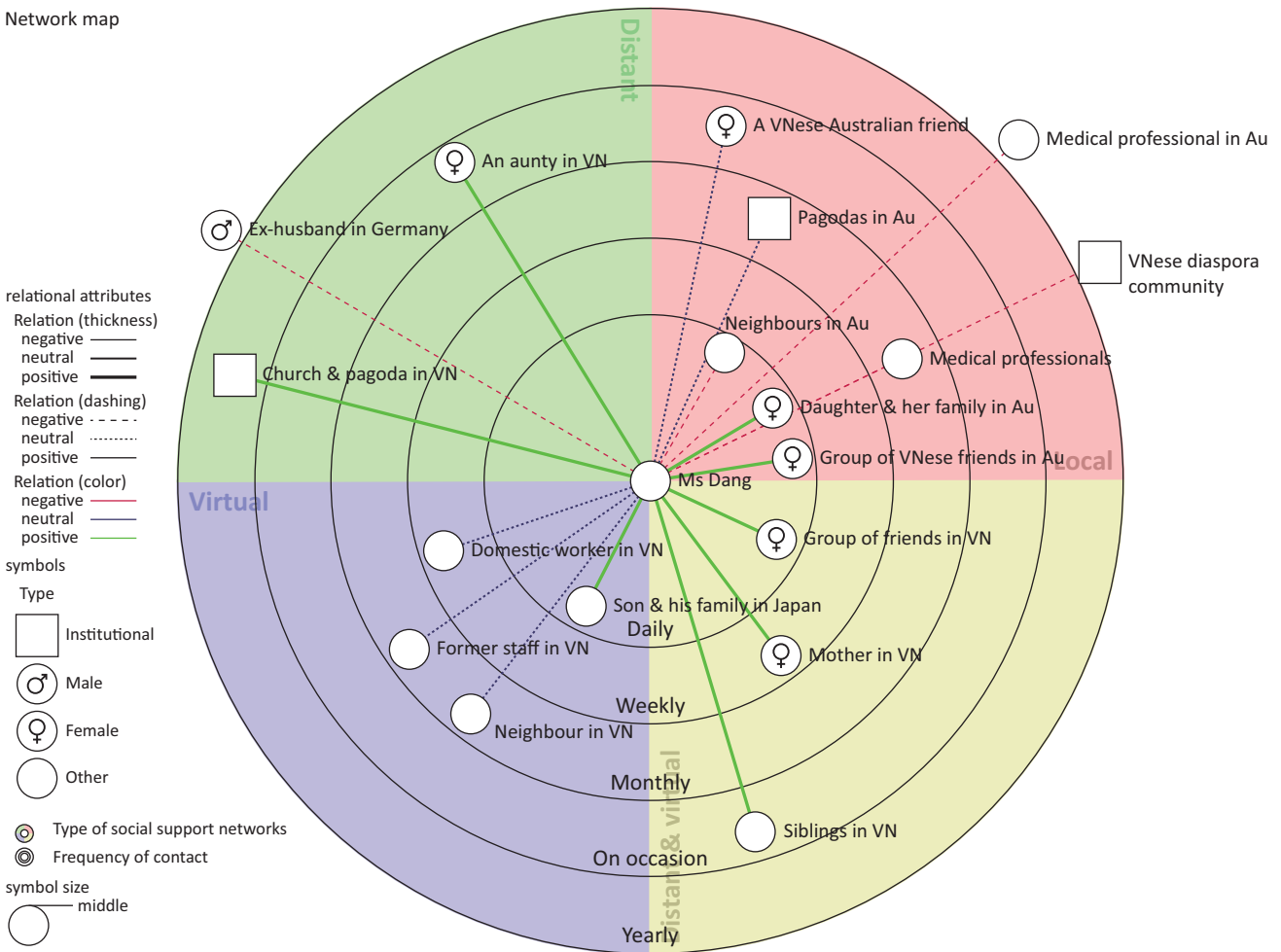
Network map

Figure 1. Illustration for digital kinning practices of a grandparent visitor.

worker, cover her mother's daily expenses, and purchase nutritional supplements. In addition, she made audio or video calls three days per week to monitor her mother's health condition and to support her mental wellbeing. She disclosed that she could not provide proximate care for her mother because she was unable to leave her care duties to her grandchildren in Australia. In particular, during the Covid-19 pandemic, Dang's transnational caregiving became intensive and frequent because she could not fly back to her homeland to care for her mother in proximity or travel to Japan to provide proximate care for her two younger grandchildren. Instead, Dang practised exchanges of regular financial and emotional support to reduce her feelings of guilt and help her sick mother feel her filial piety. Moreover, daily video calls to her grandchildren in Japan gave Dang a feeling of intergenerational solidarity. She could observe her grandchildren's growth while her grandchildren could practise Vietnamese, and feel their grandmother's love and care for them. Dang's social wellbeing was additionally supported by her daily digital engagement with her close friends in Vietnam. She confided that online group chats were very convenient for her to interact and share interesting news, social events, personal feelings, and cooking and garden-

ing tips. Hence, apart from giving her a feeling of being "there" despite being "here," Dang revealed that digital technologies helped balance her transnational life by providing her with new knowledge and skills as well as maintaining her transnational caregiving and SSNs.

Like Dang, Dat, a grandparent migrant, is managing his transnational care and relationships through digital kinning practices. Dat and his wife followed their two sons to settle in Australia under the Family Reunion Program in 2014, after having paid numerous short-term visits to them since 2006. However, some years after the reunion, their elder son fell ill with a chronic disease and died. Their daughter-in-law and granddaughter then returned to Vietnam while their second son migrated to the USA to work for a corporation. Dat and his wife had no choice but to remain in Australia, despite their advanced age. Because Dat and his wife do not plan to relocate to the USA or return to Vietnam, and their second son does not intend to resettle in Australia, transnational care is the only way for them to maintain distant support.

Unlike Dang, Dat began using ICTs 30 years ago as a part of his work requirements. Dat is proficient at using ICTs to practise digital kinning with his distant kin and social ties; however, he revealed that he only established

his Facebook profile and learnt how to use social media after his migration. Dat and his wife exchange transnational care with his son in the USA (yellow quarter in Figure 2) through daily video calls. They reported feeling "very pleased" and "close" to their son despite geographical distance. In addition, Dat makes weekly video calls to his granddaughter, siblings, and relatives in Vietnam (yellow quarter). Dat contacts his non-kin ties monthly through audio and video calls, i-messages, emails, online chatting, comments and emojis shared on Facebook profiles (purple quarter). These digital kinning practices have made him feel less isolated and helped him stay connected with distant family members and friends. Dat reported that his friends in Vietnam and other countries follow him on Facebook and vice versa, he follows them by engaging in their online posts and group chats.

The cases of Dang and Dat illustrate that ICTs are important to older migrants in sustaining distant and virtual SSNs. The network maps indicate the density of virtual and distant SSNs (purple and yellow quarters in Figure 2) and their greater frequency of contacts compared with the sole distant or proximate SSNs. For Vietnamese people whose family and community rela-

tions are central in their lives (Thomas, 1999), continuity of distant kin and non-kin ties are important sources of emotional support during their sojourns or early settlement overseas. Digital citizenship can assist in addressing transnational caregiving (Baldassar & Merla, 2014) and preserve kin and social relationships, which play a crucial part in late lifecourse transitions. The cases of Dang and Dat show that long or short histories of digital engagement and proficiency do not impede older migrants' continuity in gaining new digital skills and knowledge. The advancement of digital technologies with new functions, interfaces, and updates often requires all internet users, including older people, to continue lifecourse digital learning (Moncur, 2017; Prendergast & Garattini, 2017). Dat's experience of learning to use Facebook despite his previous relatively high digital literacy is a good example of this continuous digital learning. In comparison, Dang's digital learning occurs daily. She confided that whenever she forgets or does not understand something, she can ask her daughter or granddaughters to (re)teach her. Dang said that she was willing to learn new digital skills and knowledge not to be "left behind" in the digital world. She took pride in her fast learning and professional use of ICTs compared to other older
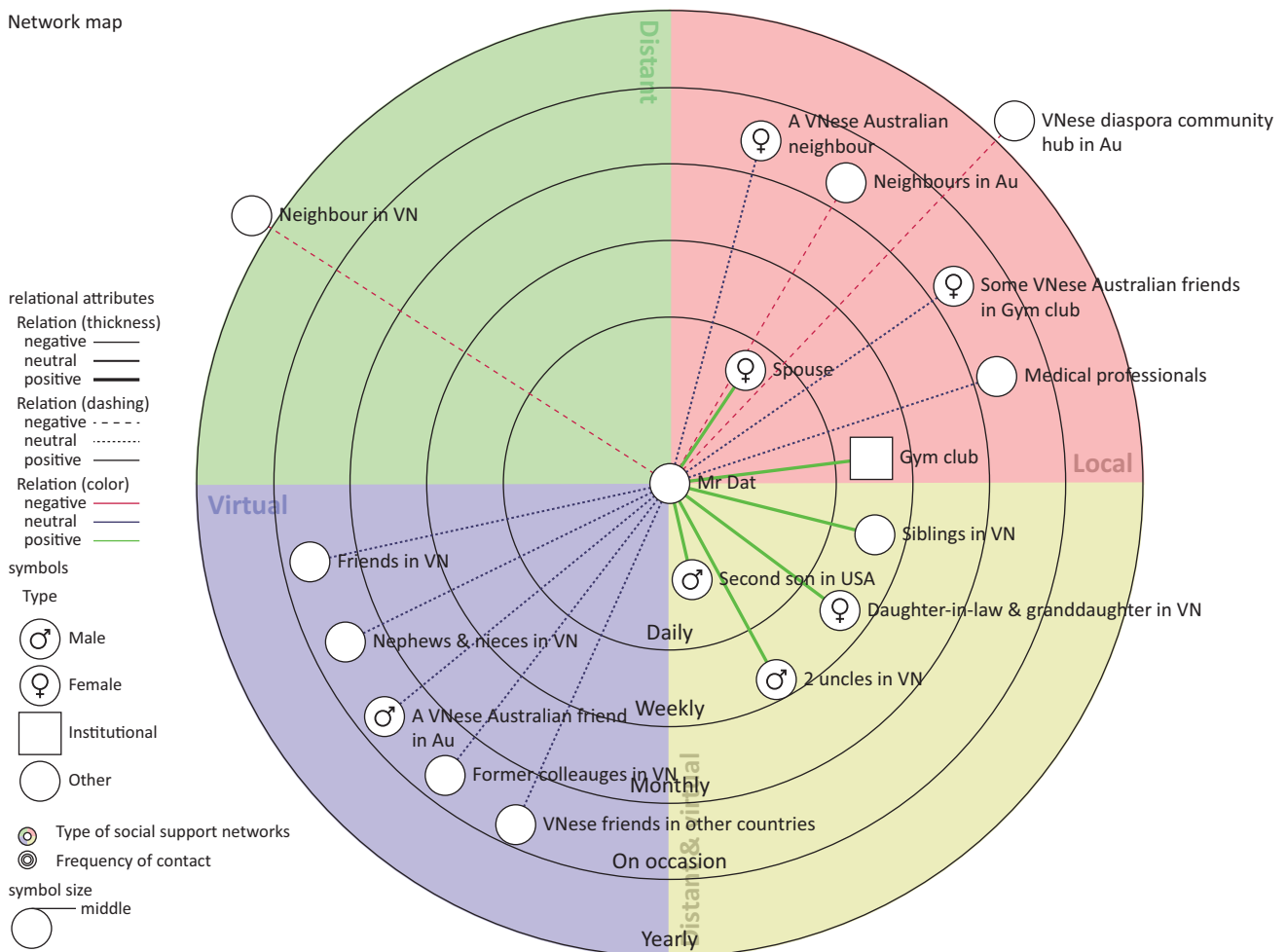

Figure 2. Illustration for digital kinning practices of a grandparent migrant.

migrants. Hence, with the assistance of family members or self-motivation, older migrants have engaged with ICTs frequently and effectively.

4.3. Digital Homing: Development of Migrant Belongings and Preservation of Social and Cultural Identities

Digital homing includes practices that help migrants feel a sense of belonging in the country of settlement and maintain their sense of connection with places and communities in the country of origin through ongoing consumption of homeland media (e.g., Baldassar et al., 2022; Wilding et al., 2022). This was also commonly evident amongst our research participants, as demonstrated by Tien (75 years old), a grandparent migrant who (together with his spouse) migrated to Perth to join their adult children in 2013. Tien used to be a factory worker who retired in 1989 and had not used ICTs until his migration. His adult children guided him to employ digital technologies to preserve his social and cultural identities by "watching the news on YouTube, reading news on electronic papers, listening to radio on the internet" through a smart TV. Reflecting existing accounts of digital homing, Tien confided that "consuming these media helped me feel more comfortable in Australia and more connected to my homeland."

Like Tien, other grandparent migrants reported spending between one to five hours per day consuming homeland-related media, including national and private radio and television channels such as the Voice of Vietnam, VTV channels, VTC14, electronic newspapers (e.g., *Dan Tri*, *Cong An Nhan Dan*, *Thanh Nien*), and Vietnamese contents on online platforms and applications like Media Player, YouTube, Music Apps, and social media (Facebook, Zalo). Several well-educated grandparents disclosed that they watched the news aired in the Vietnamese language by Australia's special broadcasting services, read print and online newspapers published by the Vietnamese diaspora community in Australia, and accessed the news shared on the Facebook profiles of Vietnamese international students and other diaspora members in the host country.

In addition to this established mode of digital homing, our research findings identify complementary modes of digital homing that have not previously been reported in detail. The first of these is the use of navigation tools to develop a sense of place in the host country. Vietnamese grandparents who migrate in late life often face barriers that limit their lives to within their houses or nearby areas (Nguyen et al., in press). However, with the assistance of ICTs, they can build a stronger and more independent sense of place (Convery et al., 2012). This supports the development of emotional attachments to the host country, which may reduce their longing to return to their homeland over time. The capacity to manage their overseas lives independently can also provide older migrants with a sense of satisfaction,

self-control, and independence, which plays an important role in their late lifecourse transitions by promoting their social wellbeing.

Anh and Thang are two grandparents who developed a clear sense of migrant belongings with the assistance of digital navigation technologies. Unlike Anh (a grandparent visitor providing two one-year visits between 2018 and 2020 to support her daughter, who did a master's degree in Australia), Thang is a grandparent migrant who, together with his wife and younger daughter, moved to Australia in 2012 permanently. Anh possesses a bachelor's degree and used to work for an insurance company before her retirement, while Thang completed secondary education and used to run a small business in Vietnam. Because her work required frequent online interactions with clients, Anh started using ICTs 20 years ago; meanwhile, Thang only commenced his digital learning since his migration.

Both Anh and Thang received some support from their adult children to learn how to use Google Maps and GPS to navigate places and spaces in Australia. Anh explained that her daughter helped her install the Victoria Public Transport Application on her smartphone and guided her on how to use it to plan her journeys for inner-city travel for shopping, sightseeing, and sporting activities. For walking, she uses Google Maps to navigate directions. If she has trouble finding a destination, she readily shows online maps to bus/tram drivers or passengers, using body language or online Google Translate to ask for assistance. Similarly, Thang's daughter guided him to use Google Maps and GPS to drive to work every day and take his wife and grandchildren out for sightseeing. However, Thang revealed that he had never used public transport as he had not found it convenient and he could not speak English to seek help. Anh and Thang stated that digital navigation applications helped them feel more confident to manage their overseas lives independently.

Tham and Duong (87 years old) are two other grandparents who joined their adult children in Australia in the 1990s. They are living with their partners in private rental properties and are eligible for the government-sponsored Home Care Package—the scheme provides support to older adults having complicated care needs to live independently in their own homes. Tham's mobility is restricted because she has had several surgeries on both legs and can only walk with aids for about 1.5 meters. Duong, meanwhile, can go out independently using his electronic scooter but he also has the primary caring role for his wife who is living with dementia. These grandparents are frail and need social support from carers or family members to join social activities, including shopping and attending community hubs. However, because of time limits on their formal care support, Tham and Duong cannot attend all desirable social activities, especially the daily and weekly prayer ceremonies hosted by local churches or pagodas.

In our second example of additional digital homing practices, Tham and Duong addressed their mobility

restrictions by choosing to attend online and recorded social events in Australia with the assistance of their friends (Duong) or family members (Tham). Duong often asks his Vietnamese Australian friends to Livestream or make video calls to him, so he and his wife can join praying ceremonies hosted by local churches from home. Similarly, Tham asked her daughter to open recorded files or video clips so she could attend prayer and social events organized by local pagodas. Thanks to ICTs, both Tham and Duong could join ritual practices and some social activities, which help reduce their isolation and loneliness in their late age.

Finally, language barriers continue to pose a big challenge for migrants, especially, older migrants (Kan et al., 2020; Pot et al., 2020). Empirical studies have indicated that language barriers are the biggest obstacle for older migrants to cope with in their transnational lives (Hamilton, Hill, & Kintominas, 2021; Ho & Chiu, 2020; Lie, 2010; Shih, 2012). However, recent studies reveal that digital technologies could help older migrants address this obstacle owing to the swift advancement of machine-assisted translation (MAT) tools, which offer digital users a range of options (Ho & Chiu, 2020). Our research findings contribute to this evidence as eight out of 22 grandparent participants know how to use at least one MAT tool to manage language barriers.

To illustrate this phenomenon, we use the cases of two grandparents, Hung and Dat. Hung (70 years old) is a retired teacher in Vietnam. Since 2005, together with his wife, they have undertaken five short-term visits (one year each) to stay with their youngest daughter's family in Sydney. Before his migration, Hung's nephew, who is working as an employee of a multinational company, helped install a MAT application on his smartphone and taught him to conduct audio, text, and visual translations. The tool supports Hung to tackle language barriers in his everyday activities. For instance, when shopping, if Hung wants to buy some nutritional supplements but he does not understand the prescriptions (e.g., ingredients, use, and side effects), he employs the scanning function of the application to interpret the prescriptions into the Vietnamese language. He revealed that this application was extremely convenient because it could translate several languages (not just English) into Vietnamese. Though the application cannot generate perfect translations, the translated contents are understandable. Hung explained:

> Language is not a barrier when I am here. For complicated issues such as visiting doctors, my adult children or interpreters will help me. For general matters, I can use this machine-assisted translation tool to understand conversations or texts….How good technologies are today [laughs].

Like Hung, Dat can independently use the Google Translate App (GTA) to manage his overseas life. Dat used to live, study, and work in a non-English speaking country

for six years when he was young; as a result, he only has moderate English capacity. He can conduct simple conversations in English but for complicated medical or legal issues, he needs assistance. His writing is not good, so he often uses GTA to support his writing. At the time of his interview, Dat appealed to the police to request an investigation into an online trading fraud of which he believed he was a victim. He declared that the company cheated him out of a large amount of money because of his poor English capacity. He did not know who he should seek help from to write a report to submit to the bank and the police for the investigation. The authors advised him to seek translation services or legal aid from lawyers but he refused because he did not want to expose his trouble to anyone, including his son and wife. He wrote the report in English with the assistance of GTA and then asked the authors to help edit his grammar and spelling. When the edited report was completed, he used the translation tool to translate the report into Vietnamese to check if the edited version fully conveyed his ideas, thoughts and accurate information. In this way, Dat explained that he was confident to deal with the authorities and re-told them his story.

The above-mentioned cases demonstrate that digital literacy that extends to MAT applications greatly assists Vietnamese older migrants to tackle language constraints. This contributes to digital homing, by expanding their sense of belonging to incorporate a sense of connection to the host society. Though the MAT tools can only partly address language obstacles, migrant grandparents feel more confident and independent in managing their overseas lives. This greatly supports their social integration and adaptation process, which, over time, benefit themselves, their adult migrant children, and the host society.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Through examining the case of Vietnamese migrant grandparents, the salient role of ICTs in promoting life-course transitions is evidenced. Despite the changes and constraints faced in their transnational lives, including language barriers, lack of familiarity with their new living environment, limited digital skills and knowledge, differences in cultural beliefs and practices, visa restrictions and travel limitations applied by the receiving country, care burdens, loss of social connections and support from their homeland, isolation, boredom, depression, and difficulties in accessing social and aged care services, they have used digital technologies with the assistance of family members to address those challenges. Research findings indicate that not all grandparents are proficient with digital skills and knowledge before their migration. However, digital citizenship, which is developed through the migration process as a part of lifecourse learning, can help older migrants cope with their increasingly transnational lives. Longings for connecting with distant families, gaining new skills and knowledge for better adaptation

and integration into the host society, and finding out about global events are some of the main motivations that inspire grandparents to learn how to use these advanced applications.

In this way, digital citizenship facilitates grandparents' digital kinning processes, through which transnational SSNs and caregiving are sustained. Network maps illustrated with the pie model depict growing diversity, frequency and quantity of virtual and distant SSNs. This confirms the growing salience of ICTs in older migrants' transnational lives, in particular in times of crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, digital homing practices for place-making (van Riemsdijk, 2014) and home-making (Wilding et al., 2022) can help older migrants adapt to their new living environment. Consequently, migrant grandparents become more independent and confident to manage their overseas lives on their own. ICTs play a significant part in preserving grandparents' cultural and social identities through digital kinning and digital homing practices, aiding the reduction of their nostalgia, loneliness, isolation, and boredom. In particular, digital kinning and digital homing reduce the impact of family separation, enabling the continuity of transnational care exchanges. Despite long or short histories of digital engagement, through the lifecourse digital learning, Vietnamese grandparents prove that they can become "digital citizens" who can use the internet frequently and effectively on a daily basis to aid their late lifecourse transitions overseas.

What is highlighted in this article is the role of digital citizenship in facilitating older migrants' lifecourse learning despite existing stereotypes against their learning capacity in the literature (Lee et al., 2011). Empirical studies have identified numerous factors including availability, affordability, social and economic capital, education, motivation, marital status, technical interest, health, age, and gender (Lee et al., 2011; Peacock & Künemund, 2007; Schutter et al., 2017; Selwyn et al., 2003) that can influence older people's lifecourse digital learning. However, our research findings indicate that these constraints are not insurmountable barriers to older migrants' digital engagement. All grandparent participants possess at least a digital device and can access unlimited internet supplied by their family members. They also do not face interpersonal limitations (Friemel, 2016) as their family members and friends can provide ongoing support for them. Though some grandparents face functional constraints and lack of motivation (Schreurs et al., 2017) and need multiple support in their digital engagement processes, they are consistently using the devices for specific purposes, predominantly in practising transnational kinning to exchange transnational caregiving and maintain SSNs. Moreover, their lifecourse digital learning processes are not constrained by social and economic capital, gender disparity, age, marital status, and health as both male and female, married and widowed, young-old and old-old, high- and-low social-status grandparents are employing digital technologies in their own ways to cope

with the challenges posed by their late lifecourse transitions due to migration.

These findings appear to present a universally positive and optimistic account of the role of learning ICTs in the life transitions of older migrants. Indeed, they reflect the largely positive accounts of the participants in this study. However, we do note that some elements of a digital divide inform this primarily harmonious account. Our research findings identify some differences in motivation and educational and professional occupation backgrounds that influence Vietnamese migrant grandparents' lifecourse digital learning. Empirical studies indicate that older adults with higher educational attainments and professional occupations often have good digital skills and knowledge because they might have had a long history of digital engagement during their learning and work journeys (Peacock & Künemund, 2007; Selwyn et al., 2003). They are capable of acquiring new knowledge and skills because of their ongoing lifecourse learning habits and self-efficacy (Friemel, 2016). Our research findings support this evidence when comparing motivation, frequency, and purposes of using ICTs among grandparent participants. The grandparents with high educational attainments (tertiary and higher education) are better at digital engagement; they can use ICTs for diverse purposes, including entertainment, self-learning, information searching, and social interaction. These grandparents show greater eagerness to learn new digital skills and knowledge to keep up with rapid technological advancements. Meanwhile, the grandparents with general or vocational educational attainments are often less engaged with digital devices and online platforms. Several of them only began using digital technologies after their migration. They mainly learn to use one or two types of digital technologies to practise digital kinning and digital homing rather than searching for desirable information and using MAT and navigation applications. These grandparents have less motivation to continue learning complicated digital skills and to increase their knowledge than their counterparts with higher educational attainments.

Despite differences in digital engagement, self-efficacy, functional constraints, and educational and professional attainments, Vietnamese migrant grandparents all reported appreciating the role of ICTs in helping them cope with the challenges faced in their lifecourse transitions due to late-life migration. Learning how to use ICTs is a part of their lifecourse learning journey, in which family members play a crucial role in supporting them in terms of technical advice and emotional support. The research calls for more projects on transferring teaching and learning digital skills to diaspora communities. In addition, peer-to-peer and family support should be recognized as a key part of interventions promoting older migrants' engagement in ICTs for their wellbeing. Despite the research findings indicating no significant emotional ambivalence or instrumental barriers in migrant grandparents' digital engagement for lifecourse

transitions, we acknowledge the importance of further empirical research with transnational grandparents for comparison and contrast.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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