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**Understanding the lived experiences and identities of young rural to urban
migrant workers in Vietnam**

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Abstract

Internal migration is the migration from one location to another within a country. Migration from a rural to an urban area is typically part of the urbanisation process. It is considered a livelihood strategy and poverty reduction solution for many people in medium- and low-income countries such as China, Indonesia, and Vietnam to name a few. In Vietnam, rural to urban migration has increased steadily over the past few decades. Greater numbers of young people in particular have migrated out of villages to find jobs in towns and cities. There are growing concerns about the social life and working conditions of such young migrant workers, and how these experiences shape their emerging identities during early adulthood. However, there is little in-depth empirical understanding about the lived experiences of young internal migrants.

This thesis contributes to our understanding of the lived social and work experiences of young Vietnamese people who migrate from the countryside to the city for work. These experiences are important in themselves as well as an important contextualisation of how young Vietnamese migrants form and reconstruct their identities in the new urban context. Given the purpose of the study is to provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences and identities of young migrants, this research employed a qualitative research approach using three data collection techniques namely, participant interviews, adapted photovoice and field observation. Photovoice is an innovative research method developed by Wang and Burries (1997), which involves the participants taking photos and then discussing them with the researcher. The study was conducted in the city of Hanoi, Vietnam, with twenty young migrant workers, aged 18 to 24 years, who had migrated to Hanoi for work one-to-four years earlier. Thematic analysis of the data was undertaken applying three concepts of habitus, field, and capital from Bourdieu's theory of practice to analyse the data to enable an understanding of the themes of work and living experiences, and the identities of the participants.

The young people in this study left their villages for the city with a hope for better jobs, better incomes, and to build better lives and better futures; however, their lives also involved hardships and difficulties. Due to a lack of skills, qualifications, and work experience, most participants were employed in unskilled employment sectors that offered low pay and harsh conditions, and involved a lack of opportunity for career development and advancement. Social capital, in the form of social networks, was very important in connecting young people to their jobs, accommodation, and other opportunities in the city. In addition, their economic resources, together with social resources, played a prominent role in shaping the experiences and social and material

outcomes of their migration. Work constituted an important part of life for all participants, as it not only gave them money to cover their living expenses, but, more importantly, it enabled them to become socially and economically independent. Most participants experienced an improvement in their economic capital, resulting in an enhancement of their social and economic independence, autonomy, and social standing. Their working and living experiences as migrant workers in the city influenced the ways in which the participants constructed and reconfigured their self-identities, both strategically and unconsciously. They developed their sense of self-independence, self-esteem, and belonging, and shaped new worldviews in the context of ‘trans-local living’ between their rural home and the city.

This thesis contributes to the scholarship on internal migration in developing countries through its in-depth and detailed insights into the lives of young migrants: their living and work experiences, and changing identities as perceived by themselves. These insights help to give an understanding of their needs and challenges. Methodologically, it contributes a new approach to inquiry into personal experiences by combining traditional, qualitative participant interview and observation with the photovoice method. The adapted photovoice method used in this study provided more depth and nuance to the communicated experiences of the participants, and also helped to develop a rapport and connection with the participants during and after fieldwork. In practical terms, the results from this study provide useful information for future intervention programs and projects to promote a meaningful life and decent jobs for young migrants in Vietnam and other developing countries of similar context.

Declaration by author

This thesis *is composed of my original work, and contains* no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

I have clearly stated the contribution of others to my thesis as a whole, including statistical assistance, survey design, data analysis, significant technical procedures, professional editorial advice, and any other original research work used or reported in my thesis. The content of my thesis is the result of work I have carried out since the commencement of my research higher degree candidature and does not include a substantial part of work that has been submitted *to qualify for the award of any* other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. I have clearly stated which parts of my thesis, if any, have been submitted to qualify for another award.

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Publications during candidature

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Keywords

youth migration, identity, rural to urban migration, capital, experiences, employment, Vietnam

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Declaration by author	iii
Acknowledgements	v
List of Table	ix
List of Figure.....	ix
List of Abbreviation used in the thesis	x
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Rationale of the study	4
1.3 Research aims and research questions.....	6
1.4 Significance of the study	7
1.5 Research context.....	9
1.5.1 Internal migration in Vietnam: the historical and contemporary situation.....	9
1.5.2 Policy context of internal migration in Vietnam	11
1.6 Structure for the Thesis	13
Chapter 2. Literature Review.....	17
2.1 Introduction	17
2.2 An overview of rural to urban migration in Asia and Southeast Asian region	17
2.3 Rural to urban migration in Vietnam	21
2.3.1 Youth rural to urban migration in Vietnam	27
2.4 Approaches to understanding migrant identity	30
2.4.1 International migration and identity	30
2.4.2 Approaches to understanding “identity” in the context of trans-local migration	32

2.4.3 A youth framework to understand identities of young migrants	37
2.5 Conclusion.....	39
Chapter 3. Conceptual framework	41
3.1 Introduction	41
3.2 Bourdieu’s key concepts: habitus, field, and capital	43
3.2.1 Habitus.....	43
3.2.2 Field.....	46
3.2.3 Capital.....	49
3.3 Applying Bourdieu’s conceptual framework to understanding the lived experiences and identities of young migrant workers in Vietnam.....	52
3.4 Conclusion.....	55
Chapter 4. Methodology	57
4.1 Introduction	57
4.2 Qualitative research approach	57
4.3 Methods of data collection and their rationale	57
4.3.1 Phase 1. In-depth interview	58
4.3.2 Phase 2. Adapted photovoice.....	60
4.3.3 Field observation	62
4.4 Sample	63
4.4.1 Research site.....	63
4.4.2 Recruitment	65
4.4.3 Participants’ profiles.....	66
4.5 Data management	68
4.5.1 Data Transcription	68
4.5.2 Organisation of photovoice data.....	68
4.5.3 Field observation journal	68
4.6 Analysis	69

4.6.1	Analytical processes of the empirical materials	69
4.7	Rigour.....	71
4.8	Ethics.....	72
4.8.1	Informed consent	72
4.8.2	Ethical implications.....	72
4.9	Limitations of the research methods	74
4.10	Reflexivity.....	74
4.11	Conclusion.....	75

Chapter 5. The living experiences of young rural to urban migrant workers 71

5.1	Introduction	71
5.2	Housing conditions and their implications on social life and wellbeing of young migrant workers	72
5.2.1	Renting	73
5.2.2	Living at the employers’ residences	82
5.2.3	Living at work sites	84
5.2.4	Living with relatives.....	86
5.2.5	Implications of new accommodation arrangements	88
5.3	Social relationships.....	90
5.3.1	Friendships	90
5.3.2	Collegiality	94
5.3.3	Social interaction with local residents and local community	95
5.3.4	Discussion of social relationships of young migrants	96
5.4	Other leisure activities.....	98
5.4.1	Using mobile phones	98
5.4.2	Using computers and the internet.....	101
5.5	The emotional experiences.....	102
5.5.1	Freedom versus loneliness.....	102

5.5.2	Fun versus boredom.....	104
5.5.3	Nostalgia versus present and future focus	107
5.5.4	Discussion of emotional experiences of young migrants	109
5.6	Conclusion.....	109

Chapter 6. The working experiences of young rural to urban migrants..... 112

6.1	Introduction	112
6.2	Occupational profile of the participants	112
6.3	The lived experiences at workplaces.....	117
6.3.1	Conditions at workplaces.....	117
6.3.2	Working hours	126
6.3.3	Workplace safety and vulnerability	129
6.4	Income, Saving, and Remittance.....	131
6.4.1	Income and economic independence.....	132
6.4.2	Saving	133
6.4.3	Remittances	136
6.5	Conclusion.....	137

Chapter 7. The changing identities of young rural to urban migrants..... 135

7.1	Introduction	135
7.2	Embracing the new urbanity, yet the old remains	135
7.2.1	Bodily appearances.....	136
7.2.2	Adopting urban lifestyles.....	140
7.2.3	Local dialects and accents	144
7.3	Newly acquired cultural capacities.....	145
7.3.1	Vocational qualifications and skills.....	145
7.3.2	Learning new cultural practices and languages	147
7.3.3	Learning to use computers and the internet.....	148
7.3.4	Changes in personal qualities	149

7.4	Future aspirations	151
7.4.1	Vocational training to get better jobs.....	151
7.4.2	Entrepreneurial dreams.....	153
7.4.3	Further migration.....	154
7.5	Conclusion.....	157
Chapter 8. Discussion and Conclusion		159
8.1	Introduction	159
8.2	Summary of the findings	160
8.3	Synthesis of the findings	161
8.3.1	The role of social, economic and cultural capital in migration	162
8.3.2	Exercise of Agency.....	164
8.3.3	Changing identities, sense of belonging, and worldviews.....	168
8.4	Implications	173
8.5	Limitations of the study.....	178
8.6	Recommendations for future research.....	178
8.7	Conclusion.....	180
List of References		182
Appendices		195
	Appendix 1. Ethical Clearance form	195
	Appendix 2. Research project information sheet	196
	Appendix 3. Participant consent form.....	199
	Appendix 4. Interview Guide	202

List of Table

Table 2.1 Percentage distribution of type of activity of migrants by sex.....	22
Table 2.2 First work place post-migration by age group, education level and ethnicity	23
Table 2.3 Youth unemployment rate in Vietnam (2011-2014).....	27
Table 4.1 A summary of participants' profiles	67
Table 5.1 Housing arrangement of the participants.....	72
Table 6.1 The occupational profiles of the research participants	113

List of Figure

Figure 3.1 An example of field and subfields	48
Figure 3.2 Application of habitus and field in understanding migrants' experiences and identities.	53
Figure 3.3 The inter-relationships of capital and migration outcomes (experiences).....	54
Figure 4.1 The process of data collection	58
Figure 4.2 Map of Hanoi	64
Figure 4.3 Phases of thematic analysis	69
Figure 8.1 The inter-relationship between capital and migration outcomes.....	164
Figure 8.2 Newly formed identity as perceived by the young migrants	169

List of Abbreviation used in the thesis

ADB:	Asian Development Bank
GSO:	General Statistics Office
ILO:	International Labour Organisation
IOM:	International Organisation for Migration
MoH:	Ministry of Health
MoHA:	Ministry of Home Affairs
MOLISA:	Ministry of Labour and Invalid Social Affairs
SAVY:	The first Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth
UN:	United Nations
UNDP:	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA:	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
WB:	World Bank

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Migration has become an integral part of the modern world, with ever greater numbers of people migrating within and across countries (Castles & Miller, 2009). Though international migration has long been the focus of much attention, the number of internal migrants who move from one location to another within a country actually doubles the number of international migrants (IOM 2014). In particular, rural to urban migration has become an emerging trend over the past few decades in low- and middle-income countries in Asia and Africa (IOM, 2015). The two Asian countries with the largest number of internal migrants are India and China. India had recorded about 191 million internal migrants by the 2001 Census (Abbas & Varma, 2014);¹ and China has more than 220 million internal migrant workers (one sixth of its population) according to the 2010 census (IOM, 2015). It has been reported that internal migration is likely to increase at a faster rate than international migration, where the rural to urban migration stream accounts for the largest volume of migrants out of all the internal migration directions (Deshingkar, 2006).²

Internal migration, particularly rural to urban migration, has become central to economic, political and social debates in many less-developed countries due to its increasing volume, benefits, and problems (Deshingkar & Natali, 2008). Varied empirical evidences show the positive impacts of internal migration for both macro socio-economic development and for the migrants themselves. At the macro level, internal migration has been recognised as contributing to economic development, poverty reduction, and meeting the labour demand for development in urban areas. At the individual level, internal migration is considered a livelihood strategy and poverty reduction solution for many people in medium and low income countries such as China (Jacka, 2006; Laczko,

¹ Migration statistics based on the Census of India 2011 had not been released when this thesis was completed

² Internal migration includes four directions of movement: rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to urban, and urban to rural, where rural to urban migration accounts for the majority of all movements.

2008; Pun, 2005), Bangladesh (Haan & Brock, 2000; Naila Kabeer & Mahmud, 2004 ; Rao, 2013), and Vietnam (Dang, Tacoli, & Hoang, 2003; UNFPA, 2007) to name a few. The World Migration Report 2008 revealed that internal migration has a greater potential for poverty reduction, meeting components of the Millennium Development Goals, and contributing to economic growth in developing countries, than international migration (Deshingkar & Natali, 2008).

On the negative side, rural to urban migration is blamed for subsequent pressure on urban facilities and public services, urban over-crowdedness, and environmental problems (Deshingkar & Natali, 2008; GSO, 2005; Tacoli, McGranahan, & Satterthwaite, 2015). Seeing rural to urban migration as problematic, many governments in developing countries try to control or limit this flow (Tacoli et al., 2015). The World Population Policies (United Nations, 2013) reports that 80 per cent of governments of the 185 countries with available data in 2013 had policies to lower rural to urban migration, of which low- and middle-income countries in Asia and Africa had the highest proportion. At the micro level, migration is believed to have a significant negative effect on various dimensions of the migrants' wellbeing. For example, changing residence from familiar places to new and unfamiliar places requires an extensive investment of time and financial resources to find shelter and employment and establish new social networks.

Vietnam has embarked on rapid urbanisation and socio-economic development in its transition toward a market economy over the past four decades, which has seen an increasing number of people migrate across provinces for work and education opportunities. The country recorded 3.4 million inter-provincial migrants by 2009 out of a total population of 86 million, an increase from 2 million in 1999 and 1.3 million in 1989 (UNFPA Vietnam, 2010). It should be noted that these figures exclude millions of short term and circular migrants who are not counted in the Census, because it only considered migrants to be those who changed their places of residence for at least five years.³ Vietnam also has a young population. Young people, aged between 15 and

³ The Vietnamese Population and Housing Census, conducted every 10 years, provides a comprehensive survey that identifies crucial information on national and sub-national population structure, educational attainment, employment, migration, housing status, and living conditions (UNFPA, 2011, p. 6)

24, account for about one third of the total population of the country (GSO and UNFPA, 2011).⁴ This high ratio of young people in the total population implies greater opportunities for socio-economic development due to an abundant labour force; however, it also poses significant challenges, especially in creating enough jobs for young people. In reality, unemployment is the biggest challenge for young people in Vietnam (MOLISA, 2009). Statistics on unemployment in Vietnam over the past ten years consistently show that young people, aged 15-24, have the highest unemployment rate—about two to four times higher than the general working age group (GSO, 2014). In particular, the age group 20-24 years has the highest unemployment rate: 6.6 per cent by the third quarter of 2013 (MoHA & UNFPA Vietnam, 2015). In particular, rural youth account for a much higher share of unemployment than their urban counterparts, with 53.2 per cent compared to 38.3 per cent (Nguyen et al. 2015). This partly explains the increasing trend of rural youth migrating toward the cities. It was reported that by 2012 nearly half of all internal migrants were youth aged between 15 and 24 (GSO, 2012). In fact, many young people in rural areas are attracted to urban areas to seek employment because of the higher average salary. It shows that the average salary of workers in urban areas is about 63 per cent higher than that of rural workers (ILO, 2011b).

For young migrants in the cities, there are concerns about employment conditions, health risks, and challenges to their well-being, and also the issue that their identities as young people are at a cross roads as they transition to adulthood (Azaola, 2012; Clark & Cotton, 2013; McDonald, Utomo, Utomo, Reimondos, & Hull, 2013; Utomo, Reimondos, Utomo, McDonald, & Hull, 2013). For young people, moving residence and working in a new environment also poses the question of identity. When a person moves from one place to another, from one culture to another, they bring their cultural values and practices to the host community (Marshall & Foster, 2002). Such cultural values and practices of the migrants interact with that of the people and communities in the host society. These interactions bring about different outcomes for the identity of the migrant as an individual, as well as the migrant group as a collective, and in some cases, the host communities too. The relationship between identity and migration is usually discussed in relation to transnational migration (Barratt, Mbonye, & Seeley, 2012). This is due to international migration often involving more remarkable shifts in terms of socio-economic, political, and cultural environments. However,

⁴ With this proportion of young people in the total population, the country was reported as entering the ‘demographic bonus’ period by 2010, in which there are two or more economically productive persons⁴ for every dependent person (Giang, 2010).

this has also become a concern in the context of internal migration. Research on the identities of rural to urban migrants in less-developed countries has emerged recently, since the issue of discrimination against rural migrants in the urban area (in both policy and practice) has become evident and problematic. Such discrimination may cause social exclusion, lack of social protection, and lack of a sense of belonging, and has become a social issue that influences well-being, mental health, and the development of migrants in many countries (see Deshingkar & Start, 2003; Jha, 2013; Kam-Yee & Kim-Ming, 2006; Li, 2005; Liu, He, & Wu, 2008; Però & Solomos, 2010; Qian & Zhu, 2014; S. Taylor, 2013; Yang, 2013).

This thesis is a qualitative study which aims to develop an in-depth understanding of the identities of young migrants who migrate from rural to urban areas for employment. It focuses on developing insights into how young migrant workers live and work in the city after their migration, and how such new experiences shape the way in which they see themselves, in terms of who they are and how they want to be in the future.

1.2 Rationale of the study

This study is necessary because it seeks to better understand the significant phenomenon of youth migration in developing countries that has social, political and economic consequences, both negative and positive. By better understanding this phenomenon, actions can be devised to address problems and enhance benefits, not only for young migrants but also for the wider society.

Studying individual young migrants is important because it is an increasing phenomenon, involving growing populations with potential significant social and economic problems for migrants and migrating communities alike. The increase in the proportion of young people in a population in Asia is due to the high fertility rate and declining mortality rate between 1960 and 2002 which has doubled or more than doubled the current number of young adults in nearly every country in Asia between 1960 and 2000 (East-West Center 2002). This phenomenon is known as the demographic “youth bulge” (East-West Center 2002). These rapid changes in the number and proportion of youth populations have created challenges for Asian countries’ education and health systems and labour markets, as well as tensions for intergenerational dynamics. Research suggests that young adults in Asia face an increasingly complex and rapidly evolving society (Xenos et al. 2006). Although a higher proportion of young people in the region are surviving childhood and achieving better education compared to previous generations, youth unemployment rates in many countries are three

times higher than those for adults (International Labour Organization [ILO] 2012). Empirical studies on transition to adulthood in Asia indicate some common risks and challenges that people in their teens and early twenties faced in Asia including: high rates of unemployment, uncertainty and precarious employment (Yeung & Alipio, 2013). Understanding these dynamics is particularly important academically and for public policy purposes.

It is also important to understand how young people identify themselves, in terms of who they are and who they want to become. This is because self and identity are predicted to influence what people are motivated to do, how they think, how they make sense of themselves and others, the actions they take, their feelings, and their ability to control or regulate themselves (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012). Understanding the self is indispensable to understanding how people live in the world, make choices, and make meaning of their experience (Oyserman et al., 2012, p. 71). Research has shown that young people are more attuned than adults to issues of self-identity, both at the individual and the collective levels (Mansouri, 2009). This is even more pronounced among migrant youth, where ‘hybridity’, ‘hyphenated’ identities and notions of dual attachments are used to account for the complex social phenomenon of intercultural identity, as argued by Mansouri and Kamp (as cited in Mansouri, 2009).

Youth is a vital period of identity construction in which young people develop a sense of their selves through their interactions with others in new social relationships (G. Jones, 2009). The transition period from youth to adulthood is stressful as it entails many shifts: the development from childhood to adulthood, sectoral change from school to work, and role change from dependent child (on parents and/or guardians) to a more independent individual. Youth migration adds another layer of complexity as “it often involves a changing social and physical environment, often reduced oversight and guidance of kin and communities with respect to their behaviours, and resulting changes in their attitudes, aspirations and behaviours” (Júarez et. al 2013, p. 8). This is a particularly challenging period of time for young migrants because they try to gain independence from their parents while beginning to make decisions for themselves (Kloep, Hendry, Glendinning, Ingebrigtsen, & Espnes, 2003).

Leaving home to live and work on their own in the city is a new and exciting, but also challenging, experience for young migrants. For young people who migrate away from their parental homes to live and work in the city, it can offer them new opportunities, more freedom, autonomy from traditions and norms, the possibility to form their own identities, and opportunities

to establish new ways of behaving (Jones, 2009). Yet, simultaneously, the new environment is also a source of vulnerability: particularly, in the absence of parental guidance and support. We are living in a globalised, fast-changing world in which there are more opportunities but also many challenges, uncertainties and vulnerabilities. Contemporary societies are characterised by increased cultural and religious diversity, which pose a challenge for understanding and managing the process of settlement and integration of migrants (Skrbiš, Baldassar, & Poynting, 2007). In the context of a pluralist society, young people are both agents of social change and highly vulnerable, whose life chances are shaped not only by education, but also through school-life choices and realities. Therefore, the lives of young people at present are more complex and varied than ever before (Mansouri, 2009). Accordingly, the context in which young migrants live and work is important to know and understand in its own right, as it enables an understanding of their identities.

However, little research has been done in this area, as indicated in the literature review (chapter 2) of this thesis. The limited empirical work on this topic often portrays the identity of migrants from the view of others, such as urban residents, villagers, policy makers, and other commenters, not in the voices of the migrants themselves. Recent studies highlight the important role played by children and young people in migration processes and call for more research that explore migration from their perspectives (White et al, 2011; Coe et al. 2011). Addressing this gap will provide a better understanding of how young migrants see themselves from their own perspectives, to better understand their needs, challenges, and aspirations.

Furthermore, it is my own personal interest to learn more about this social phenomenon as I am myself a rural to urban migrant. I personally experienced a great deal of changes and challenges when I moved to study in the city of Hanoi when I was a teenager. In addition, during my years of study and work in Hanoi, I observed many young people who also came to the city to work and make their lives there, with all the associated hardships and joys. Therefore, I am interested in learning more about their lives, as part of the journey of understanding my own experiences.

1.3 Research aims and research questions

This research aims to understand the identities of young people who migrate from rural to urban areas for work. I seek to develop an in-depth understanding of how young migrants see themselves in the context of living and working in the city. This includes learning about and exploring their worldviews, their aspirations (who they want to become and what they wish to do in

the future), their values and concerns, and their thoughts and feelings about the events in their lives. Therefore, I aim to explore the research participants' subjective experiences of who they think they are rather than how they are viewed by others. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of habitus in relation to field and capital, this research explores how the participants construct their identities in the new urban social-economic field. Understanding the lived work and everyday experiences of young people is important in its own right as well, as it contextualises the identities of the participants (Parsell, 2010). Therefore, the second aim of this study is to explore how the participants organise their lives away from their parental homes, how much freedom and independence they have and what the obstacles are that they encounter in their everyday life. In addition, as work is the primary purpose for migration to the city, and it constitutes an important and majority part of their life, this study will also examine their experiences at workplaces.

Following on from the research aims, this thesis asks two research questions. The first question is: *What are the living and working experiences of young migrants in the city?* This research question explores two important aspects of their lives: the everyday living experiences and the experiences at workplaces. For the former aspect, it will examine how the participants organise their lives by asking, what are their housing conditions, and what are their social relationships? How is their emotional and recreational life? For the latter aspect, it will explore what type of employment do they have, what are the conditions at their workplaces, and what benefits (both economically and socially) do their jobs bring them? The second question asks: *How do the experiences of working and living in the city shape identities of young migrants?* This question aims to learn how the participants see themselves in the new living environment, which is very different from what they had experienced in their previous life in the village where they were born and grew up. Dimensions to be explored include, who do they think they are, and have their perceptions of themselves and their worldviews changed? If so, how much? Who do they want to be and what do they want to achieve in the future?

1.4 Significance of the study

This study is empirically, methodologically, and conceptually significant. Empirically, it is expected to contribute to the knowledge of youth internal migration in Vietnam in two ways. First, the study provides an in-depth understanding of the lives and work of young people who migrate from the rural to urban areas in Vietnam, which has become a popular phenomenon among the

youth. Second, the study offers knowledge on how the young migrants participating in this study perceive themselves, which is meaningful to understanding their behaviors and future actions. This study gives a nuanced understanding of the complicated social relationships and emotional experiences of the participants, as such aspects greatly influence the way in which young people see themselves and their changing perspectives of future life chances and choices. This will contribute to addressing the literature gap on youth rural to urban migration and identities. The findings will provide a good basis for comparing similarities or differences to other countries in Southeast Asia, and other developing countries in general. Moreover, the findings on identified problems will help lead to policy, practical actions, and interventions that either correct or improve the situation, or promote good practices. Practically, the results of this study will provide useful information for designing programs that support the career development of young people, and young migrants in particular.

Methodologically, this qualitative inquiry innovatively combines qualitative research methods to include participant interviews, field observation, and adapted photovoice. Photovoice, a relatively new research method combining participant photography and discussion, is commonly used in community-development action research. Photovoice is more participatory than orthodox research methods and has been argued to be particularly suitable for researching young people (Palibroda, Krieg, Murdock, & Havelock, 2009), because it leaves more room for active participation and self-reflection. This study's combination of adapted photovoice with individual interviews, along with field observation, offers space for young migrants to express their experiences more freely and vividly; hence, giving more nuanced understandings of their experiences.

Theoretically informed by Bourdieu's theory of practice, this study contributes to conceptual approaches to migration research through the way in which it applies Bourdieu's three inter-relational concepts of habitus, in relation to field and capital, in understanding the experiences and identities of the research participants. This conceptual framework potentially offers richer and more complex insights into the social world and practice, but so far it has not yet been widely applied in researching migration in the Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian contexts.

In what follows, I will provide an overview of the history and policy context of internal migration in Vietnam in which this study was conducted.

1.5 Research context

It is widely recognized that early adulthood must be understood in diverse socioeconomic, demographic, cultural, and policy contexts (Arnett & Tanner, 2006). This section provides a background context of internal migration in Vietnam. The first part provides an overview of the historical context of internal migration in Vietnam, from the French colony to the present. The second part reviews the country's policy context in controlling and managing population movement, and some important consequences of such policies on the patterns and outcomes of internal migration in the country.

1.5.1 Internal migration in Vietnam: the historical and contemporary situation

Vietnam has had a long history of internal migration since its settlement over four thousand years ago, but people mobility has increased since the French colony period, from 1895 to 1954. Historians and researchers summarise the contemporary history of internal migration in Vietnam in four periods (see Dang, Goldstein, & McNally, 1997; Dang et al., 2003; Desbarats, 1987; Forbes, 1996; H. X. Zhang, Kelly, Locke, Winkels, & Adger, 2006): the French colonial period; the civil and Indochina Wars (also known as the Vietnam War) from 1954 to 1975; the post-war reconstruction period, between 1975 and 1986; and the post-1986 reform period known as *Doimoi* (Dang et al., 1997; H. X. Zhang et al., 2006). The patterns of internal migration in each period are distinct.

During the French colonial period, there were relatively large flows of people moving across provinces in three directions: rural to urban migration, usually undertaken by people without land ownership; waged labour movement from rural villages to the plantation and mining zones operated by the French; and seasonal movement of peasants between rural areas during harvesting seasons for temporary, daily-waged jobs (Dang et al., 1997).⁵ Shortly after Vietnam reclaimed its independence from the French colony in 1954, the country was divided into two halves, the North and the South, at the 17 degree parallel. The Northern government adopted a socialist model while the South implemented a capitalist model with the support of the Americans. Because of the subsequent war, many people in the North were evacuated to the countryside to avoid bombing,

⁵ There are 63 provinces in Vietnam (GSO and UNFPA, 2011).

which resulted in reduced numbers of people living in the cities, while in the South, many people moved to the cities to avoid conflicts in the villages.

After the War against the Americans (also known as the Vietnam War) ended in 1975, when the country reunified, there was some decline in the urban population due to an emerging pattern of people mobility, and the new policy of reclassifying some urban areas to be rural areas in an effort to redistribute the population of the Communist Party government. However, shortly after, there was a rapid increase in the number of people leaving rural areas for the cities. From 1981 to 1991, the government of Vietnam tried to redistribute the country's population to the less populated areas, such as the central highlands, by organising a 'voluntary economic migration program' to the so-called New Economic Zones (NEZs). This act aimed to reduce population density and pressure on the plain areas (see Banister, 1993; Pham, 1986).

A remarkable economic reform policy was introduced in 1986, known as *Doimoi*, which was a vital political move that changed the country's socio-economic landscape. The reform policy launched four important institutional changes that affected labour force movement in Vietnam, including de-collectivisation (*phi tập thể hóa*); decentralisation of power (*phân quyền*); abolition of subsidy (*xóa bỏ bao cấp*); and removal of restrictions on the private sector (*xóa bỏ lệnh cấm khu vực kinh tế tư nhân*) (Tana, 1996). The land was distributed to individual households instead of collectively owned and operated by cooperatives (*hợp tác xã*). This elevated the productivity of agricultural production, which helped to dramatically reduce poverty. The decentralisation of power resulted in relaxation of the restriction on population movement, which facilitated people movement across the country. The abolition of the subsidy system made people movement more possible, as the regime that distributed food and other welfare provisions such as education, healthcare, and public services based on location of residence was dismissed. Removal of restrictions on private sector development facilitated development of transportation and communication systems. This made people's movement across regions easier and cheaper. Such structural reforms have accentuated the diversity of opportunities among regions and provinces (Dang et al., 1997), and facilitated economic migration across regions, especially from rural to urban areas in Vietnam in the past few decades.

By the 1990s, internal migration flow in Vietnam had been highly diversified with both highly educated and low-skilled workers coming to the cities for jobs (Philip Guest, 1998). While the former are often employed as civil servants or in formal jobs, the latter usually take up informal

jobs in the family business, or in the private sector that has mushroomed after the reform policy was introduced. In traditional Vietnamese society, only married people moved out of the villages to ‘earn a living’ (*đi làm ăn*), leaving their families behind. Therefore, male migrants used to dominate the inter-provincial migration before 1989 (Dang et al., 1997). However, the situation has changed dramatically since the middle of the 1990s, when the rapid urbanisation process and waged-job opportunities welcomed both male and female labourers. This was due to a number of newly opened, foreign-owned factories mainly located in urban areas. Waged employment in towns and cities has attracted increasing female and young migrants from rural areas (GSO, 2005). It was recorded at the 2006 census that female migrants slightly over-represented male in internal migration, and that young people dominate the rural to urban migration flow (UNFPA & GSO, 2006). The next part turns the focus on the policy context.

1.5.2 Policy context of internal migration in Vietnam

The government of Vietnam adopted the household registration system in 1955 to control and manage population movement.⁶ This is the most important policy tool that first aimed to ‘redistribute’ the country’s population after the war, and it was then used as an effective tool to restrict the movement of people from one region to the other. Under this system, each household is issued with a household registration booklet (*sổ hộ khẩu*) that records names, place and date of birth, ethnicity, religion, profession, and membership of all members of a household (Hardy, 2001). This household registration system serves two purposes: one is to provide the government with recorded information about the population, and the other is to regulate people’s access to goods and public services based on their registered residences. Under the household registration policy, only those who were recognised by the authority, through the household registration, as registered residents in the locality, had access to services delivered to that locality (Hardy, 2001).

The household booklet was extremely important to a family during the subsidy period in the 1960s and 1970s, when commodities such as food and other goods were distributed by the

⁶ Household registration is a measure of administrative management of the State to determine the citizens’ places of residence, aimed to ensure the existence of their rights and obligations, enhance social management, and maintain political stability, social order and safety. Each household is given a household registration booklet (*so ho khau*) which records the names, sex, date of birth, marital status, and occupation of all household members, and their relationship with the head of the household. The household registration system originated in China in the early 1950s.

authorities to citizens through coupons that used the household registration book as the only identity paper (see Le, Tran, & Nguyen, 2011). This meant that the *hộ khẩu* was also a means of access to rights and services for all family members registered in the booklet. Under this rule, migrants were not eligible to receive food distribution and other social services such as healthcare, education, and so on in areas other than their places of origin, without being re-registered as residents in new destinations. There were sets of requirements to be eligible to be re-registered and this acted as a barrier to cross-provincial migration. These requirements were particularly aimed at restricting people movement from disadvantaged socio-economic areas to wealthier areas.

However, after *Doimoi* in 1986, things have dramatically changed. The cooperatives were dismantled, land was de-collectivised and distributed to individual households, and the subsidised system was demolished, which gave people more choices (Hardy, 2001). This enabled people to move across regions freely, as they could register themselves at new destinations with ‘temporary residence’ (*giấy tạm trú*). Migrants can obtain two types of temporary registration to reside in the city: KT3, which permits migrants to live in the city for six months or less; and KT4, which permits migrants to live in the city for six months or more. Technically, migrants can then apply for permanent urban residency (classified as KT1 and KT2)⁷ if they meet set criteria. However, it is very difficult for most migrants to obtain permanent residency status in the city because of the high requirements such as having a legal residence through owning or leasing a home, having stable employment, and having resided in the place for a certain period of time.⁸ Other than wealthy migrants, who can afford to satisfy these requirements to obtain an urban household registration book, it is still a big challenge for the majority of migrants to obtain permanent residency.

There have been dramatic amendments to the household registration policy that have eased the government’s control over people mobility in the past decade. The household registration is no longer an instrument of the state to prevent mobility and allocate socialist capital provision in

⁷ KT1: registration of people in the district where they reside; KT2: registration of people who live in another district of the same province (UNFPA & GSO, 2006, p. 13).

⁸ The duration of residence required in an area varies dependent on the category of the urban destination that a migrant moves to. According to Decree 31/2014, effective from 15 June 2014, it requires individuals to have resided for one year if moving from a rural to outskirts district, two years if moving from a rural to a central district, categorised as ‘2 city’, and three years if moving from a rural area to Hanoi city.

Vietnam (Locke & Nguyen, 2014). However, the first function of the household registration policy, a population management tool of the government, still remains: the household registration book is still a prerequisite for many administrative procedures, such as registration of birth, marriage and death, buying or building a house, and other property registration. It has been suggested that while allowing for easier acquisition than before, the current household registration acts as a mechanism to control resources, limit social rights and expectations, and reinforce class and subject formation (Le & Khuat, 2008). For example, children of the rural migrants without the urban *hộ khẩu* can only be enrolled in an urban school if there is a vacancy after all local children have been accepted. On top of this, public schools charge exorbitant fees (*phí trái tuyển*) to enrol migrant children, or they have to go to private schools which usually charge even higher fees.

More recently, the government of Vietnam has introduced various programs to promote socio-economic development in rural areas, rather than focusing resources on building urban and town centres, in order to reduce rural to urban migration. This initiative aims at reducing the gap between rural and urban areas by creating more jobs and better opportunities for rural people, to encourage them to stay in their villages rather than migrating to the cities. However, the effectiveness of such programs is still limited. Therefore, the trend of rural to urban migration of the villagers is still on the rise.

1.6 Structure for the Thesis

This thesis is organised in seven chapters. An overview of each chapter is now provided.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

This chapter reviews the key body of literature on internal migration, and identities in the context of changing location of residency from one region to another. The first part of the review gives an overview of the internal migration situation around the globe, with a focus on developing countries in Asia, in which rural to urban migration has become an emerging issue in the past few decades. It then gives a more detailed account of the literature on rural to urban migration in Vietnam, where this study took place. The second part reviews the key body of literature on identities, with a focus on how identities are approached in the context of individuals moving across places. The literature review establishes that whilst there is a large volume of literature on drivers, processes, and impacts of rural to urban migration, both negative and positive, less attention has

been paid to the issue of the identity formation and reconfiguration of migrants, which is of particular importance for young migrants. Thus, the literature review demonstrates the knowledge gap and essentiality of conducting a qualitative study on the experiences and identities of young people who migrate from rural to urban areas. This chapter also locates the research in relation to broader literature, and strengthens the significance of the thesis.

Chapter 3. Theoretical framework

This chapter presents the conceptual framework adopted in this thesis. The study applies Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital in relation to the field to understand the social, work experiences and identities of the young migrants participating in this study. Each concept is explained, and the ways in which they can be useful to understand the phenomena this study focuses on are specified. Different forms of capital, including social, economic and cultural capital as conceptualised by Bourdieu, are explained. Finally, a framework is established regarding how these three inter-relational concepts are utilised in this study

Chapter 4. Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology employed in this study. This includes the methods and processes of data collection, ethical implications, and how data analysis was conducted. This is a qualitative study using three methods of data collection: in-depth interviews, adapted photovoice, and field observation. These methods complement each other in eliciting an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the participants, through which insights into their identities are developed. An adapted photovoice method that involved the participants taking photographs and discussing them with the researcher was used to give a different way for the participants to self-reflect on their experiences and identities in their own time. Thematic analysis of the data was undertaken, and concepts of habitus, field, and capital from Bourdieu's theory of practice were applied to the data to enable an understanding of the themes of work and life experiences, and identities of the participants. The chapter also discusses the rigour of the study, strengths and limitations of the research, and includes reflections on the role of the researcher and the research process.

Chapter 5. The living experiences of young migrants

This is the first of the three findings chapters. The chapter addresses the first query of the first research question, “*What are the living and working experiences of young migrants in the city?*” Three major themes are identified and discussed in this chapter: the housing conditions and arrangements and its implications for the social life and well-being of the participants; social interactions and entertainment life; and their emotional experiences of living independently in the city. The importance of economic and social capital in shaping such living experiences of the participants is established and discussed from such themes.

Chapter 6. The working experiences of young migrants

This chapter addresses the second query of the first research question. It looks at different aspects of work-related experiences of the participants. Work constitutes an important part of the participants’ everyday life, as it not only provides them with money to cover their living expenses in the city, but also, through jobs their labour values are shown and their social standings are strengthened as they become socially and economically independent. Four major themes are identified and discussed in the chapter: the type of employment and the role of social networks in getting jobs; the conditions at workplaces such as physical conditions, working hour patterns, and workplace safety; and the benefits and outcomes of the employment (both socially and economically).

Chapter 7. The changing identities of young migrants

This third and final findings chapter presents an understanding of the identities of the participants. This chapter addresses the second research question, “*How do the experiences of working and living in the city shape identities of young migrants?*” It can be seen from the findings presented in chapters five and six that the participants experienced multiple transitions, including from rural to urban, from school to work, and from dependent child to independent adult, and also experienced several changes in their life in the city after migration. Such changes had a strong influence on their identity construction and reconfiguration. Drawing on the concept of habitus in relation to cultural capital and field, the changing identities of the participants were observed and reported through three dimensions: the transformed bodily presentations and personal presentations

of the participants; their newly acquired capacities; and the ways in which they position themselves in society at the present and in the future.

Chapter 8. Discussions and Conclusion

This final chapter of the thesis provides a synthesis of some major findings of the study, before discussing the implications of such findings with reference to the theoretical framework and the extent of empirical literature. The chapter also highlights some important contributions of this thesis to knowledge of youth migration and identities, and in practical, methodological and conceptual terms. The chapter then highlights some study limitations and suggests directions for future research before providing some concluding remarks.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

It has been stated that internal migration is shaping urban growth and diversity around the world in different ways and that urbanisation goes hand in hand with migration (IOM, 2015). Given the aims of this study are to develop an understanding of the young migrants' experiences of living and working in the city and also their identity, this chapter reviews the body of literature on trans-local migration with particular attention on rural to urban migration and the issue of identity of the migrants. The chapter comprises three sections. The first section gives an overview of rural to urban migration in Asia with a focus on reviewing urban-ward migration in South East Asian nations to provide a broader understanding of internal migration in the region. The second section examines empirical work on internal migration in Vietnam since the country's remarkable economic reform that began in 1986, when rural to urban migration emerged and increased steadily.. The last section reviews different approaches to understanding the identity of migrants in the context of both international and internal migration. Since young people in between adolescence and adulthood, also known as "early adulthood", often experience multiple transitions including leaving their natal home to live away, from school to work, from being a dependent child to an independent and responsible adult, a youth framework approach to identity is reviewed in order to better understand how young migrants perceive their identities. By providing an overview of internal migration in Asia, Southeast Asian region, and Vietnam and by examining empirical work on identity in the context of migration, this chapter aims to position this study in the wider, regional and global context of internal migration.

2.2 An overview of rural to urban migration in Asia and Southeast Asian region

There has been a steady rise in the proportion of the population residing in urban areas in Asia and internal migration contributes significantly to this urban population growth, particularly in developing nations. It is estimated that about 47 per cent of the Asian population is now living in urban areas, a proportion that has almost doubled since 1970 (IOM, 2015). Urban population growth is contributed to largely by migration (both international and internal) of which rural to

urban migration within a country contributes a large part. Asia indeed has experienced a high level of rural to urban migration (Dang, 2003; Hugo, 2005) due to significant social and economic transformation in the region in the last few decades. It is evident that population mobility has increased at an unprecedented rate in many countries across Asia, with the majority of the migration flow coming from rural to urban areas (Deshingkar, 2006). In India for example, internal migrants account for some 30 per cent of the total population, with estimates ranging from 309 million, according to the 2001 census to 326 million according to the National Sample Survey 2007–2008 (Srivastava, 2012). China has more than 220 million internal migrant workers (one sixth of its population) according to the 2010 census (IOM, 2015).

In most less-developed countries in the South East Asian region have experienced rapid urbanisation and the growth of rural to urban migration with the continuous and rapid increase of population living in urban areas over the past four decades (Kelly, 2011). Rural to urban migration contributes a significant part of urban population growth, especially in poorer countries (IOM, 2015). Asian countries vary greatly in terms of social and economic conditions and political context, hence the characteristics of internal migration are different; however, there are some similar features of internal migration in the region, particularly among developing countries, that can be summarised as follows.

People move across the country in all sorts of directions: from urban to urban areas, rural to rural, urban to rural, and rural to urban, but the flow from rural to urban areas accounts for the majority of the total internal migrants in most Asian countries. Besides permanent movement, short-term and circular migration from the countryside to the cities is quite popular in many developing Asian countries. While the first type of movement can be and is often recorded in the official national statistical data base, the latter two are often missed out due to the sampling method of many national surveys. For example, the population censuses in China and Vietnam define migrants as people who move away from their places of residences for at least five years. This definition of ‘migrant’ in the surveys excludes short-term and circular migrants, who in fact account for a large proportion of the internal migrant populations.

In terms of composition, a general observation of the composition of rural to urban migrants in many less developed countries in Southeast Asia is that more women and younger people are joining the migration flow, especially young, unmarried women. Female migration streams have increased over the past decades (Hugo, 1993; Joachim, 1993). There are increasing numbers of

young, single, female migrants from rural areas moving to the cities for jobs in countries such as China, Indonesia, Lao and Vietnam, where the numbers of labour intensive jobs have increased rapidly due to the processes of globalisation and urbanisation. Research on labour migration to urban industrial factories in Southeast Asia has shown that feminisation of rural–urban migration to urban industries began on a larger scale in Thailand in the 1970s, in Indonesia in the 1980s, and in China and Lao in the early 1990s. Vietnam also has this trend of feminisation of internal migration and it has become obvious since late 1990s. Further details on the trends and characteristics of rural to urban migration in Vietnam will be reviewed in the next section of this chapter. The Population Census in China in 2010 shows that females account for 43.69 percent of the total inter-provincial migrant population in China (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011). Studies show that the increasing number of female migrants has resulted in important implications for gender roles. Females are becoming more socially and economically independent, while males are involved more in domestic work such as child-rearing and housework, which have traditionally been considered women’s work. In addition, there is evidence on gender-based bias in the labour market, such as female migrants being paid less than males despite doing a similar category of job.

In addition to the feminisation trend, research in internal migration in Asia also show that rural to urban migrants have become younger in many Asian countries (Hugo, 2005). The composition of young people in the rural-urban migration streams has increased dramatically in many Asian countries, particularly Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam, due to the sharp increase in labour demand in the labour intensive industrial and services sectors. Discussion on youth rural-out migration notes that urban migration is strongly linked with rural disadvantages and the resulting frustration of individual aspirations (Furlong & Cooney, 1990).

There are various factors that drive people to migrate from the countryside to the cities but some are common to several Asian countries, such as regional inequality, under-employment and unemployment in rural areas and the spread of labour-intensive industries (Deshingkar, 2006). Studies indicate that unequal regional development is one of the major reasons driving people to migrate from the less-developed regions to more developed ones in several countries in Asia (Deshingkar, 2006) such as China (Balisacan & Ducanes, 2005), Vietnam (UNFPA, 2007; UNFPA Vietnam, 2010), and Thailand (Pasuk & Isra, 2000), to name a few. The regional levels of absolute

poverty in developing countries in Asia were estimated to be much higher in rural areas than they are in urban areas (Guest, 2003) .

Internal migration has been recognised as a major contributor to social and economic development: for example, its significant contribution to poverty reduction, it is an important driver for the urbanisation process. It is evident from several available studies in Asia that the vast majority of migrants benefit economically from their migration. For instance, Guest (2003) suggests that migrants make more than they would if they had not moved. He demonstrates that migration provides an important supplement to the household income of the migrants and remittances helped to reduce the levels of intra-rural household income inequality in Thailand (1998). Similarly, Skeldon (1997, 2002) discovers that rural to urban migration is particularly beneficial as a means of alleviating poverty in rural areas. The level of net rural-urban migration in developing countries has been found to be positively correlated to the Gross National Product (GNP) growth, and is an indicator of social and health wellbeing (Chen & Zlotnik, 1994). In general, it has been argued that internal migration has greater potential for poverty reduction, meeting components of the Millennium Development Goals and contributing to economic growth in developing countries than does international migration (Deshingkar, 2006). However, contrary to the conclusions of the aforementioned research, there is also considerable evidence showing that rural to urban migrants experience a degraded quality of life, such as lower living standards due to costly living in the city; and worse housing conditions such as crowded urban lodging houses in China, Thailand, Indonesia, and urban slums in South Asia. Furthermore, some studies demonstrate migration significantly and negatively affects various dimensions of the migrants' well-being. Change of residence from familiar places to new and unfamiliar ones requires extensive investments of time to re-establish social networks and find employment. In a meta-analysis of previous studies across Asia, Skeldon emphasises that "mobility enhances economic growth and improves the lot of most, but not all, of the population" (2002, p. 79).

In short, many countries in Asian and Southeast Asian regions have gone through rapid and uneven economic growth, which in many cases, has created new inequalities within countries as well as between different social groups, including between men and women. Socio-economic differences combined with political, social, and/or environmental changes interact with new forms of gendered and younger compositions of migrants which in turn have created more complexities for internal migration in Asia in general and in South East Asian nations in particular. The next section reviews the situation of rural to urban migration in Vietnam where this study took place.

2.3 Rural to urban migration in Vietnam

Vietnam is an emerging, developing middle-income country in Southeast Asia whose economy relies largely on agriculture, with about 70 percent of its population living in rural areas. Due to the rapid urbanisation over the past three decades since the country launched its economic reforms, rural to urban migration has increased rapidly in Vietnam. Inequalities across regions, in terms of natural resources and social capital, have led people to move particularly from mountainous and rural areas to the lowland areas. In particular, major urban centres such as Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, and Da Nang are the most popular destinations for rural migrants in Vietnam, due to the high concentration of industries and businesses in such cities that offers more job opportunities and higher wages (GSO, 2004; UNFPA Vietnam, 2010).

Like many other less developed countries in Asia, in Vietnam there has been an increasing number of young people joining the urban ward migration flow with the vast majority migrating for economic reasons. The median age of the migrant population in the Vietnamese 2009 Census is about 25 years (GSO & UNFPA, 2011, p. 28). The Census also shows that young people aged 15–24 account for the largest share of internal migration in Vietnam while young migrants in the age group of 20–24 account for about one third of the total migration population. Rural to urban migration has the youngest group (compared to rural-rural; urban-rural; and urban-urban migration) with the median age of 23 years (GSO, 2011).

Economic disparity was identified as one of the most important factors that attracts the migrants (UNFPA, 2011), and thus migration is largely for employment reasons. The country's migration survey 2004 shows that most migrant workers have jobs in the city, with about 92 percent of surveyed male migrants working while slightly lower at 86.9 percent among female migrants. In terms of their types of work, most migrant labour are employed in elementary occupations due to their low level of educational attainment. It was reported that elementary occupations absorbed almost half the migrant labour workforce, seconded by craft and related trades which absorbed about one third of the migration workers. Only about 11 percent worked as plant and machine operators. Other occupations were relatively less evident among migrants (UNFPA & GSO, 2006). A small proportion of the migrants were studying, involving 6.2 percent of male migrants and only 3.7 percent of surveyed female migrants (see Table 2.1)

Table 2.1. Percentage distribution of type of activity of migrants by sex

Type of activity	Males (n=2,151)	Females (n=2,847)
Employed	92.0%	86.9%
Household work	0.4%	8.0%
Student	6.2%	3.7%

Source: Reconstructed from (UNFPA & GSO, 2006)

In terms of type of workplace, the research found that more than half of the working male migrants were working in private organizations after migration. Other important employers were private capital organizations, government and collective organizations, and foreign investment organizations. In the case of female migrant workers, almost half (45 percent) had their first jobs in private organizations and more than a quarter worked in foreign investment companies. In addition, private capital organizations and government and collective organizations were also important employers for females (see Table 2.2)

Table 2. 2. First work place post-migration by age group, education level and ethnicity

	Working after arrival		Where did you work					Total	Number
	Percent	Number	Government / collective organization	Private organization	Private capital organization	Foreign investment organization	Do not know/ NR		
Sex									
Male	93.2	2151	14.0	55.3	19.2	10.8	0.8	100.0	2,005
Female	90.2	2847	12.3	44.9	16.9	25.2	0.8	100.0	2,568
Age group									
15-19	82.2	577	7.2	32.5	25.7	34.0	0.6	100.0	474
20-24	88.4	1549	14.0	30.5	23.9	30.8	0.9	100.0	1,369
25-29	95.9	1075	15.9	48.0	18.3	16.9	0.9	100.0	1,031
30-34	97.7	701	11.4	62.5	14.6	11.0	0.6	100.0	685
35-39	96.5	401	11.1	74.2	9.8	4.7	0.3	100.0	387
40-44	95.6	338	11.2	79.0	5.9	3.1	0.9	100.0	323
45-49	91.6	215	16.8	73.1	7.6	2.0	0.5	100.0	197
50-54	86.9	84	13.7	75.3	8.2	1.4	1.4	100.0	73
55-59	58.6	58	20.6	70.6	5.9	-	2.9	100.0	34
Marital status									
Single	87.7	2051	14.5	26.6	25.5	32.4	0.9	100.0	1,799
Ever married	94.1	2947	12.1	64.2	12.9	10.1	0.7	100.0	2,774
Education level									
Illiterate	95.7	141	0.7	93.3	3.7	2.2	-	100.0	135
Primary school	96.3	489	1.5	79.0	8.7	9.6	1.3	100.0	471
Lower secondary school	95.5	2330	5.7	55.8	17.0	21.0	0.5	100.0	2,225
Upper secondary school	84.0	1689	19.0	34.6	22.7	22.8	0.9	100.0	1,419
College/university and above	92.6	349	59.4	9.3	22.3	7.7	1.2	100.0	323
Ethnicity									
Kinh	91.3	4514	14.3	45.4	19.6	19.9	0.8	100.0	4,119
Non-Kinh	93.8	484	1.5	85.9	2.2	9.7	0.7	100.0	454
Age at last move									
Under 20	84.4	1169	10.1	32.4	24.3	32.3	0.9	100.0	986
From 20 to under 25	91.8	1450	16.0	34.9	22.1	26.2	0.8	100.0	1,331
From 25 to under 30	96.6	932	13.3	55.9	16.4	13.9	0.4	100.0	900
From 30 and above	93.7	1447	12.0	71.8	10.0	5.4	0.8	100.0	1,356

Source: (UNFPA & GSO, 2006) pg 36

Considering young people in particular, 88.4 percent aged 20-24 reported working after arrival to their migration destinations with the majority being employed in private organisation and foreign investment companies, while government organisation and association were less popular employers for young migrants.

The rapid increase of rural to urban migration and its social and economic implications in Vietnam have received increasing attention from policy makers and academic research. Data and empirical studies on internal migration in Vietnam have emerged since the 1990s. Several studies based on large-scale national survey data have become available. For example, Dang et al. (1997) provide characteristics of longer-term internal migrants based on the Population and Housing Census in 1989 and 1999.⁹ Many studies based on surveyed data of the Vietnam Demographic and Health survey in 1997, such as White et al. (2000), look at how mobility influences the fertility of migrants; Dang and Le (2001) discuss the process of socio-economic integration of women migrants in the migration destinations; Goldstein et al. (2001) review how migration and the economic transitions have brought about change in occupations of the migrants; Nguyen and White (2002) report the health status of the migrants.¹⁰ Using the data of the first national survey on migration in Vietnam, the 2004 Migration Survey, Dang and Nguyen (2006) analyse the migration of individuals using life events.¹¹ Using the Vietnam Household and Living Standard Survey of 2004, Nguyen et al. (2008) suggest that migration is a highly selective process and is strongly affected by household and commune characteristics, although differently across types of migration and across urban and rural areas (Dang et al., 2003). A study of Phuong Nguyen et al. (2008) also suggests that migration has a strong impact on household expenditures but also increases the Gini coefficient of per capital household expenditures, which means that it does not help to close the income inequality gap.¹² In addition, this study suggests that migration will remain strong in the near future given that the population is young, increasingly educated and that non-agricultural economic opportunities are lacking in rural areas.

Besides studies based on large-scale surveys, there has been an increasing number of smaller scale, in-depth qualitative and quantitative studies addressing various aspects of internal migration in Vietnam since the 1990s. This emerging literature can be categorised into four major themes,

⁹ People regarded as migrants in this survey are those who have migrated five years previous or more. Therefore, these statistics exclude all short-term and circular migrants.

¹⁰ This survey questioned 2502 individuals in two rural provinces of Ha Nam and Thai Binh and four migration destinations including Hanoi, Danang, Daklak and Binh Duong.

¹¹ The Vietnam Migration Survey sampled 10,000 individuals in five migration receiving areas of large cities and economic zones.

¹² Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income (or, in some cases, consumption expenditure) among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution (Source: World Bank)

including migration and development, determinants of migration, impacts of migration (on the migrants themselves and on the sending and receiving areas), and gender and migration. Each theme is now considered in turn. Regarding the first theme, a number of studies show that rural to urban migration has contributed positively to the socio-economic development in Vietnam in the past few decades through remittances to rural areas and a sustainable labour supply for economic development in urban areas (Dang et al., 1997; Philip Guest, 1998; H. X. Zhang et al., 2006). At the individual level, it is evident that migrating to work in urban areas provides important supplementary income for short-term and circular migrants who take casual jobs in the city during the off-peak farming seasons (Brau & Harigaya, 2007). In general, migrants gain a higher income than before their migration, which is also higher than the income of the non-migrants in their hometowns. The standards of living of the migrants are hence improved. In addition, greater investment in their children's education and healthcare is also observed among migrants compared to non-migrants (Giang & Pfau, 2008; Le & Nguyen, 2011; Tacoli & Mabala, 2010). Furthermore, remittances sent home also help to increase the quality of life of their families who stay in the village. Remittances sent home by the migrants are also invested in businesses and other services in the rural areas that help to develop the rural communities (V. P. Hoang & Magnani, 2010).

It has been indicated that regional disadvantages of social-economic development and a lack of job opportunities are the major reasons why many villagers leave their farms to find work in the city in Vietnam. Conventional migration theories that emphasise the geographic-based cost-benefit analysis (Lee, 1966), expect income differentials (J. R. Harris & Todaro, 1970; Todaro, 1976), or push-pull understandings based on the weighing up of a series of considerations that motivate individual migration decisions, founded on the broad gains at the destination location and losses (or risks) suffered in the home area. The 'push' and 'pull' framework is still applicable to explain the economic motivations of people moving from disadvantaged regions to more developed ones. Besides, more recent studies show that non-economic factors are also important driving factors for people to migrate to the city. These factors include opportunities for greater access to goods, healthcare services and education. Particular to younger groups of migrants, several studies on youth rural-out migration reveal that besides the aforementioned reasons, young people also want to migrate in order to satisfy their curiosity, to see the world, and to avoid the feeling of being 'left behind' by their peers.

Besides addressing the question of why people migrate, research has also been concerned with the decision-making process behind choosing to migrate. It shows that people tend to migrate to the places where they have connections such as friends, relatives or other villagers who have already migrated. Migration networks play an important role in how migrants make decisions about where to go (Douglas Gurak, 1992; Haug, 2008; Shah & Menon, 1999). Furthermore, though rural-out migration can be individual, the decision to migrate is usually collectively made by the family and dependents of the migrants. Families usually choose 'who to migrate' and 'where to go', as migration is often a family's livelihood strategy (Dang et al., 2003; L. A. Hoang, 2011; H. X. Zhang et al., 2006). This process of decision making was theoretically conceptualised as the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) (Stark, 1991) which suggests that migration is a strategic collective decision of family for survival, risk minimisation, and improvement in quality of life, which may lead to differentiated degrees of social resilience. Using this framework, a study of Adger et. al (2002) point out that rural to urban migration is considered to be a form of social resilience for many poor families in Vietnam.

The third theme looks at the impacts of rural-urban migration on the migrants as well as on the receiving and sending communities. Migration not only impacts on employment and income levels, but it also influences social structures, family relationships and individual identities. A few studies investigate these issues, such as Dang (2003), Phuong & McPeak (2010), Le and Nguyen (2011), who point out the positive impacts of migration such as higher incomes for migrants compared to non-migrants; remittances that help the source communities; and the sustainable supply of labour for industrial production and services in cities. Conversely, negative outcomes of rural-urban migration are found at both macro and micro levels. The most frequently mentioned negative impact is the increasing pressure on urban infrastructure and urban public services due to rapid population growth. A commonly noted negative impact on the sending community is the shortage of labour for farming activities (Le & Nguyen, 2011). It is reported that the quality of life of migrants in the city does not improve as expected, but gets worse in many cases (Tran, 2003; UNFPA & GSO, 2006). Young migrants in particular encounter high levels of vulnerability and health risks (Bui & Kretchmar, 2008; Clatts, Giang, Goldsamt, & Yi, 2007; Johansson et al., 2007; T. L. Nguyen & White, 2002; Van Nguyen, Dunne, & Debattista, 2013). Such issues that the migrants face can be explained by limited access to healthcare services, job related hazards, and shortage of social protection (Le et al., 2011; UN Vietnam, 2010; UNFPA & GSO, 2006).

Given that there are higher and still-increasing numbers of female migrants in the rural-urban migration flow, and the different issues confronting female migrants (GSO, 2009a), the gender aspect of migration has been given considerable attention in recent research. Studies show that female migrants often have lower paid jobs, often work in the informal sector, and are more vulnerable compared to their male counterparts (Agergaard & Vu, 2011; L. A. Hoang & Yeoh, 2011; UN Vietnam, 2010; UNFPA & GSO, 2006). Other research also points out some negative consequences of migration for family relationships, such as a higher ratio of separation and divorce among female migrants who leave their families behind (Catherine Locke, 2012). The social cost of female migration has received attention in addition to the traditional focus on economic costs and benefits of migration. Migration has also contributed to changing gender roles; in particular, it empowers women because they have become more economically and social independent while men have taken on more domestic responsibilities.

2.3.1 Youth rural to urban migration in Vietnam

Vietnam has a young population, with people aged 10 – 24 accounting for almost one third of the nation’s total population (GSO, 2009a). A young population implies great opportunity for development of the country, as this means that the country has an abundant labour supply; however, it also poses many challenges of which creating enough jobs for young people is a critical one (Giang, 2010). Unemployment is one of the biggest challenges for young people in Vietnam (MOLISA, 2009). The unemployment rate of those aged 15 – 24 is much higher than that of any other age group. Statistics over the past ten years show that young people aged 15 – 24 continuously have the highest unemployment rate, fluctuating by about 5 percent which is about three times higher than that of the general working age group (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Youth unemployment rate in Vietnam (2011-2014)

Year	Youth (15 – 24 years) unemployment rate (%)	Adult (25+ years) unemployment rate (%)	Ratio of youth unemployment over general unemployment
Quarter 4, 2011	4.23	1.8	2.35
Quarter 4, 2012	5.29	1.81	2.9
Quarter 4, 2013	5.95	1.90	3.1

Quarter 4, 2014	5.09	1.84	2.8
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(Source: GSO, various years)

In addition to unemployment, underemployment is another challenge faced by young people in Vietnam.¹³ At a national level, 4.1 per cent of those aged 16 – 19 and 3.6 per cent of those aged 20 – 24 suffer from underemployment (MoHA & UNFPA Vietnam, 2015). Most of the underemployed live in rural areas. Despite a reduction in rural underemployment over the past decade, due to a transition of labour from farming to non-farm work and an increased diversification of agricultural activities, among others (ILO, 2011a; MOLISA, 2009), the underemployment rate in rural areas is more than double (at 5.8 per cent) the urban underemployment rate (at 2.1 per cent). Together, unemployment and underemployment become obvious risks and the most urgent challenges faced by young people in Vietnam today. Having no job or an inadequate job may result in various problems including financial dependence on family members, lack of confidence, low self-esteem, depression, substance abuse, crime, and so on.

Lack of employment and other opportunities in the countryside is one of the major driving factors leading young people to migrate-out to the cities. In addition, other non-economic factors are increasingly recognised as important motivators for people to migrate, such as opportunities for further education and a better quality of life. Young people aged 15 – 24 account for about one third of the total migrant population in Vietnam (the largest share of internal migration population by age group) with females slightly over-representing the male migrants (GSO and UNFPA, 2011). With low or no skills, the majority of young people who migrate to work in the city are employed mainly in unskilled and informal job sectors. A report by the International Labour Office (2015) emphasises the low quality employment among working people aged 15 – 29 in Vietnam and estimates that 76.4 per cent of them are involved in informal employment. The second Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth (SAVY2) (GSO & MoH, 2010) also reveals notably that 78.1 per cent of working youth aged 15 – 24 are engaged in unskilled labour, though this percentage

¹³ Underemployment means those who have jobs but are willing to work more hours, or who have jobs with less than 35 hours per week

decreases with age.¹⁴ Disadvantaged youth include ethnic minorities, those with lower education and untrained labourers, and young people living in rural areas, such as the North West, North Central and Central Highland regions (Ngo, 2010). Young people in rural areas are more likely to be engaged in the informal employment sector than their urban peers (49.7 per cent versus 20.7 per cent) (ILO, 2015). The high unskilled employment rate among youth raises serious concerns, as these kinds of jobs often have lower productivity, offer lower salary, and are less stable and rewarding than more skilled ones. As such, it does not enable youth or the country to make the most of their economic potential.

While older migrants, such as married women and men, have been well-documented and are more often discussed in the available literature, less evidence on young migrants is available. Among the few existing studies on young migrants, Dang, Le and Nguyen (2005) discuss employment of young people with emphasis on the problem of the high unemployment rate and a lack of skills and qualifications among young migrants. A small study by Bowen (2008) documents the situation of young female workers in the footwear, garment and textile industries in some factories in Vietnam. Duong (2007) gives insights into migrant domestic workers, showing their long working hours, low pay and the low status of young female migrants employed as live-in maids. Clatts et al. (2007) discuss the issue of young people and drug abuse and HIV. In addition, the challenging, vulnerable and difficult experiences of some young migrant groups are visually reflected in some recent photovoice projects (UN Volunteer, 2011; UNFPA, 2010). Given the literature gap and the importance of understanding the situation of young migrants and their changing identities, it is therefore necessary to have a more nuanced and evidence-grounded understanding of this emerging migrant group, in order to better devise policy and programs to support them. The rest of this review turns the focus to literature on identity in the context of migration.

¹⁴ SAVY2 was conducted in 2009 with the participation of 10,044 young people between 14 and 25 years old in 63 provinces/cities, from urban to rural and remote mountainous areas. SAVY 2 data provides a comprehensive picture of today's young Vietnamese as well as their changes compared with the same cohorts 5 years ago (in SAVY1).

2.4 Approaches to understanding migrant identity

Given one of the focuses of this thesis is to understand young migrants, it is essential to review literature on the area of identity of migrants after migration. The relationship between identities and migration is usually discussed in relation to transnational migration (Barratt et al., 2012). This is due to international migration often involving more remarkable changes and shifts in terms of the socio-economic, political and cultural environment than migration within a country border. The identity of migrants who move within a country border has been paid more attention lately: particularly in countries with large regional differences and disparities which cause more dramatic changes and impacts on identities as perceived by the migrants. Migrants usually need to readjust or adapt to ways of living, being, and other socio-cultural norms among many things at the places of destination, whether it is within or across national boundaries (Friedmann, 2005). This section first reviews identity of migrants in the international migration context. It then provides an empirical review of approaches to understanding identity in the context of internal migration which is one of the major concerns of this thesis. The final part takes into account youth in understanding identities of migrants as they are at the forefront of multiple transitions: from school to work, from family to living independently away from home, from rural to urban environment, from an independent child to a dependent and responsible adult.

2.4.1 International migration and identity

When individuals move from this place to another, from this culture to another culture, they usually bring their cultural values and practices to the host society (Marshall & Foster, 2002). However, instead of simply unpacking what they bring along in their 'ruck sack' so to speak, the migrants create new forms of cultural capital in the countries of residence through producing and reproducing (mobilising, enacting, validating) cultural capital (Erel, 2010). The cultural values and practices of the migrants interact with that of the people and communities in the host society. These exchanges and interactions bring about different outcomes for the identities of the migrants as individuals as well as the migrant group as a collective, and in some cases, the host communities too. Studies on the topic of migration and identity are often concerned with the consequences after the migrants leave home: whether they abandon their roots consciously, lose them through gradual assimilation, or seek to reaffirm them. Migrants usually need to readjust or adapt to the ways of living, being, and behaviours among many other things at the places of destination, whether it is within or across national boundaries (Friedmann, 2005). They have to learn many new things such

as new disciplines, regulations, a new rhythm of life, new behavioural norms, new languages, and new skills for their jobs. Cohen (1992) named this space in which the migrants' newly reconstructed identities are created as 'diaspora'. He emphasises that cultural outcomes resulting from international migration are fluid and complex (Cohen, 1999).

'Cultural identity' forms a popular approach to understanding the identity of migrants, in particular in the context of cross-countries migration. This is because cultural identity is best understood in terms of difference—through the juxtaposition of the identity of 'self' and 'other' in relation to the wider society, as well as in relation to the group in which individuals participate by subscribing to certain forms of behaviour and ways of thinking (Browne 2006, as cited in Mansouri, 2009, p. 46). Mansouri and Miller (2009) discover that "even limited cross-cultural contact can alter individual values, behaviours and attitudes" (p. 46). Migration usually makes migrants reflect on their identities, as being in a new place and often makes individuals think about their identities consciously or unconsciously (Bottero, 2010). Culture can be understood as a source of identity that "gives people a sense of who they are, of belonging, of how they should behave and what they should not be doing" (P. R. Harris & Moran, 1991, p. 12). This process is fluid and results in new forms of cultural transaction, social interaction and economic flows (Hannerz, 1992). With cultural interaction within a 'diaspora', hybrid identity is more often observed as one of the outcomes of migration (Cohen, 1999). As a process of merging cultural differences, hybridity opens up what Bhabha (1994) calls 'the third space' in which the possibility for the production, negotiation and re-articulation of 'self' occurs. Francis (2009) names this 'third space' as 'transnational social fields', in which exchanges occur between diasporic actors and between sending and receiving nations. One of the consequences of this process is that transnational actors are able to create a new form of cultural identification, an in-between space that enables them to challenge the dominant discourses of both the homeland and the place of settlement.

As a result of interaction with people and new socio-cultural and political contexts that are usually different from the origin areas the migrants are from, the 'weaving identities' of migrants have been variously conceptualised in a number of studies. In particular, the 'in-between-ness' of immigrants typically focuses on the contradictory tensions that migrants experience in modes of belonging (Cohen, 1997). Some studies examine identity of transnational migrants using the concept of 'habitus', as developed by Bourdieu (1977), to understand the process of resistance, rejecting and transformation of migrants' identities (in their ways of integrating and assimilating

into the mainstream society). For example, the ‘between belonging’ situation of migrants is discussed in Marshall and Foster (2002), in which the authors show the potential for a transformed habitus in forming the newly reconstructed identity of the migrants and the host community. Kelly and Lusic (2006) discuss ‘dualistic dispositions’ of Filipino migrants’ habitus through re-defining their identities in the diaspora in Canada, as these immigrants maintain strong links with their origins in various aspects: socially, economically, culturally and even politically. Guarnizo (2003) uses ‘transnational habitus’ as a particular set of dualistic dispositions that “inclines migrants to act and react to specific situations in a manner that can be, but is not always, calculated, and that is not simply a question of conscious acceptance of specific behavioural or socio-cultural rules” (p.311). Also using Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, Abdelmayek Sayad (2004) offers a different approach to immigrants’ identities by pointing out the ‘double absence’ of the migrants: they are neither present in their homeland nor visible in the host country. He names this as the ‘temporary’ that lasts, which produces a ‘double consciousness’ (2004, p. 74). Taking Sayad’s approach further, Noble (2013) shows the feeling of ‘being home but not home’ for Lebanese immigrants in Australia, referring to the transformed identities of the migrants that are not yet fully integrated into the host society due to the durability of their deeply embodied dispositions, which are formed in the early years of their life.

It can be seen that national or ethnic identity is often an anchor to understand the negotiation and reconstruction of identities of immigrants in the diaspora, who are then dealing with the question of integrating economically into the host society, assimilating culturally, and involving themselves in the community of the destination. In the migratory context, ethnicity and religion become especially important as identity markers and can be subjectively appropriated (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). This is particularly true in the immigration context. However, in the context of trans-local migration (the movement of people from one place to another within the same country), the identity of migrants involves different sets of issues and perspectives which are discussed in the following section.

2.4.2 Approaches to understanding “identity” in the context of trans-local migration

Research on identity of migrants in the context of movement within a country, particularly rural to urban migration in less-developed countries, has emerged only recently. Attention to this area of research has increased recently due to the issues of discrimination against rural migrants in urban areas (in both policy and practice), and negative impacts on the sense of identity of the

migrants, as imposed by the public, have also become evident and problematic. Discrimination against rural migrants in big cities causes problems of social exclusion and a lack of social protection and sense of belonging. This is a social issue that influences the well-being, mental health and development of migrants in many Asian countries. Identity of internal migrants is often related to senses of belonging and attachment (to the new settlement places), connections with the place of origins, social and economic integration, and assimilation into the receiving places. Regional disparity and particularly the implication of policy that restricts rural to urban migration have strongly influenced the way in which migrants reconfigure their identity in the city. This is evident in countries such as China, Vietnam, and Thailand, to name a few.

In China, the government exercises a strict people-movement control policy known as the household registration system [hokou], to control its large population of rural to urban migrants: approximately 260 million people were estimated to be living outside of their permanent residency by 2010 (J. Young, 2013). This system labels and maintains divides and differentiation between rural and urban residents to restrict people's movement toward the urban areas (Zhan, 2011; Zhao & Howden-Chapman, 2010). This legislative barrier causes discrimination against migrants by employers, managers, and other urban residents, leading to feelings of exclusion and a lacking sense of belonging that importantly influence the way in which rural migrants in the cities see their identities (Beynon, 2004; Jacka, 2005). A study of Zhang (2014) demonstrates that rural women in their migration to urban employment in contemporary China try to reject their peasant identity and at the same time draw up boundaries against other rural migrants in different contexts. This phenomenon, according to Zhang (2014), is because the rural women migrants in urban China actually have to expose themselves to the "vicissitudes of everyday symbolic struggle" (Bourdieu, 1991) to be seen as 'modern' and 'urban' residents. Young women migrant workers in urban China are called a 'floating population', 'peasant workers', 'maiden workers' or '*dagongmei*', and disposable labour (Gaetano, 2004; Pun, 2005; Wright, 2006; Yang, 2013). The identities-making process of Chinese rural migrants in the cities has much to do with the country's household registration system, a root cause of the rural-urban divide. Research shows evidence that though being rigidly bounded by the social structure, rural migrants demonstrate their strong agency to construct their identities as fluid, multiple and changing (Gaetano, 2004; Pun, 2005; N. Zhang, 2014). The Chinese household registration system maintains rural migrants as outsiders in urban areas where they are channelled to work in gender-segregated, low-paying jobs. Fan concludes that employment post migration may be empowering for young single women workers from rural areas

in the short run, but in the long run they are expected to return to the village, where they are to marry and uphold household and village responsibilities. The other Southeast Asian countries the rural-urban divide is also found a determining factor that influences the way in which urban-ward migrants perceive their identities and the way they are perceived by others. For example, in Thailand, seminal work of Mills (1997) on identities of Thai migrant women argues that Thai rural migrant women are being caught up in binary identity categories such as rural/urban and traditional/modern. Through her work on Thai women in Bangkok, Mills demonstrates that young women seek to construct new identities and contest their marginalisation within the wider society, albeit with conflicting and often ambivalent results, it is an ongoing process of negotiation and contestation between and within available “subject positions” (such as “good daughter” or “modern woman” in the case at hand)’ (Mills, 1997: 38). In addition, Gullette’s work on the topic of identities of rural-urban migrant in Thailand (2013) also demonstrates that material and symbolic differences between the rural and the urban are expressed within emergent identity and status divisions, which draw from both domestic social relations and structures of global capitalism.

A study of circular migrants from a rural Javanese village in Indonesia who were labouring in Jakarta indicates that women migrants feel caught between the ‘two worlds’, where they struggle to reconcile the clash of values between their home village and their aspired futures within the urban working sphere (Koning, 2005). Hancock’s research (2001) on migrant women in Indonesia also shows the women’s subordinated status in the factory, in the surrounding community, and sometimes also in their home communities, which put unfair and unjustified pressure on them. In Lao, Phouxay and Tollefsen (2010) document the changing roles and status of women rural migrants who work in urban factories, from being charged with domestic duties as wives and mothers to becoming more independent financially and socially after migration.. Such research commonly calls for attention to the consumption patterns of rural migrants in the city as Mills (1997: 54) emphasised that it is the area where in migrant workers can “mobilise dominant symbols and meanings to serve their own interests and to stretch, if only temporarily, the limits of their subordination within the wider society”.

The socio-economic structure that influences the making of identities of rural migrant labourers in urban Vietnam share many similarities to what has been observed in China and other Southeast Asian nations including Thailand, Lao and Indonesia, such as the rural-urban socio-cultural and economic divide, and the government control over people’s mobility by using a

household registration system. The people-movement control policy adopted in Vietnam (from China), and the historical philosophy that gives preferences and privileges to cities rather than the countryside, results in the rural-urban divide and uneven regional socio-economic development and in turn causes discriminative public perspectives and negative attitudes towards rural migrants in the urban areas. In contemporary Vietnam, labour migrants are labelled '*lao động di cư*' or '*lao động ngoài tỉnh*' (labourers from other provinces) which indicates their origins are from outside of the city and also their 'outsider' status (in opposition to the local urban residents, who are 'insiders'). Labour migrants are also called 'free/floating labourers' (*lao động tự do*), which implies the manual, temporary and instability nature of their jobs, as most 'free labourers' are often employed in 'free economic activities' (*nghề tự do*): that is, in informal employment without a labour contract, such as street vending, junk trading, and small household businesses (McGee, 2009). Such terminologies capture the transient situation of the rural migrant labourers in the cities. This contrasts with the permanent occupations of civil servants (*công chức, viên chức*) and other full-time permanent employees who are largely urban residents.

In Vietnam, identities of rural to urban migrants are discussed and reflected on in the media and in public discourse, but there are very few scholarly works on this topic and those that exist often focus more on female migrants than male. Rural migrants in the city have been portrayed in the media as poor, chaotic, non-disciplined, and of low quality or with low educational qualifications (*dân trí thấp*). They are also cast as "undesirable citizens, lacking in quality and potentially rebellious" (Locke & Nguyen, 2014, p. 863). The authorities have articulated quite negative views on 'free' migrants (*dân di cư tự do*) (Catherine Locke, 2008). The city authorities are often concerned about the image, hygiene and sanitation of the city, and blame rural migrants for bringing 'social problems' (*tệ nạn xã hội*) into the city such as gambling, drugs and prostitution. The views reflected in the media have been translated into regulations that try to reduce some informal economic activities which absorb a large number of low-educated migrant labourers in the city, such as street vending (Locke, Hoa, & Tam, 2008). This construction of rural migrants contrasts with urban dwellers who are often seen as high quality, civilised, modern, and sophisticated consumers, and who are able to self-cultivate with private resources (Schwenkel & Leshkovich, 2012). Historically, peasants, deemed backward and poor, have been the target of civilising (*văn minh hóa*) missions by colonial governments and nationalist movements before Vietnam has shifted to socialism.

A few recent academic works concerned with the identities of rural-urban migrants in Vietnam reveal construction of migrant identities around two important status markers: the ‘outsiders’ versus the ‘insiders’. Agergaard and Vu (2011) discuss the ‘in between-ness’ of rural female migrants in the informal sector in Hanoi as a livelihood strategy, straddling their hometown and Hanoi city for extra income, resulting in the changing identities of the women migrants. A qualitative study of Hoang (2011) shows how women migrants demonstrate their agency in re-affirming their identities on the move. Rigg et al. (2012) describe the process of ‘becoming’ and ‘being’ in Hanoi of a group of peasants who lived and worked in Hanoi as migrants but had yet to become ‘Hanoians’. Karis (2013) discusses the status of the ‘unofficial Hanoian’, referring to how the well-established rural migrants living and working in Hanoi for several years mobilise their networks to move ahead and go around their non-Hanoi resident status when dealing with the bureaucrats. Locke and Nguyen (2014) provide a more general discussion on the public discourses of rural migrants, with a focus on female migrants’ identities.

However, the current rural-urban division in Vietnam has been reconfigured (Locke & Nguyen, 2014), since rural poverty has declined while urban poverty has become more entrenched (Badiani et al., 2012). Recent evidence shows that urban residents are increasingly represented among the poor (Prota & Beresford, 2012); therefore, not all urban citizens are economically better off than rural citizens or urban migrants, a significant proportion of whom have become upwardly mobile (Locke & Nguyen, 2014)¹⁵. In addition, the rural-urban distinction has also become blurred due to the merging of rural districts into urban areas as a result of urban expansion and the re-classification of non-urban districts. Furthermore, diverse groups of migrants have become part of the urban society: with or without *hộ khẩu* (Koh, 2006; Rigg et al., 2012). Such changes strongly influence the ways in which migrants see themselves in the urban socio-economic domain. The rural-urban divide and regional inequalities are often the root causes of negative, imposed identities on rural to urban migrants, as well as feelings of exclusion and a lacking of sense of belonging among migrants due to discrimination from the urban population as the aforementioned studies show.

¹⁵ The 2009 Census data indicates that about two thirds of registered rural-urban migrants have ‘high living standards’, greater than the proportion of urban residents with the same living standards (GSO 2011).

As mentioned earlier, the transition between adolescence and adulthood is a special period of time when young people experience multiple transitions from school to joining the workforce, from living with parents to live alone; from dependent children to independent and responsible adults. This makes the process of identity construction and transformation in the context of migration different than adult migrants or those who migrate as families. Therefore, the next section reviews a youth framework in understanding identities of young people in the context of migration.

2.4.3 A youth framework to understand identities of young migrants

Youth is a vital period of identity construction during which young people separate from their families of origin and develop a sense of their selves through their interactions with others in new social relationships. Identity development is seen to be critical for social relations (G. Jones, 2009). This period of time is even more complicated for young, independent migrants, because young migrants are placed at a cross-road of choices, decision making and development. Jones (2009) argues that migrants construct different 'socio-spatial identities', adapted to changing circumstances and reference groups, built for example around age, gender, ethnicity and education. This is particularly so for adolescent migrants who are gaining independence from their parents while beginning to make decisions for themselves (Glendining et. al 2003). Unlike other groups of migrants, research on the identity of young migrants should be concerned not only with how the migration experience impacts on their identity formation and negation, but also with their transition to adulthood, which often includes multiple transitions such as from school to work and from dependent child to independent adult.

Adolescence is a difficult lifecycle period because it incurs profound biological, psychological, economic and social changes that define the transition to adulthood. While this is already a stressful period of life for many young people, migration adds another layer of complexity to the conditions of entry into adulthood, such as a changing social and physical environment, often reduced oversight and guidance of kin and communities with respect to young people's behaviours, and resulting changes in their attitudes, aspirations and behaviours (Juárez et al., 2013). Globally, the issues of youth migrant identities have been widely considered and researched. Punch (2007) documents the way that young migrants moving from Bolivia to Argentina shape their new identities as a result of their migration to earn a living. Crivello (2011) reports the transition to adulthood of young migrants in Peru, in which they and their parents connect migration with the

process of 'becoming somebody in life' and with their high educational aspirations. Yang (2013) indicates in her study on rural to urban migrants in China that the potential beneficial effects of migration on personal development and economic success of young people are compromised by institutional barriers that exclude migrants, particularly youths, from succeeding in city life.

Moving from rural to urban areas can be a massive change for young migrants, as they are expected to cope in a substantially different social, moral and economic environment. The challenges of identity assimilation for individuals who migrate from rural to urban areas in their own country are compounded by the tension between rural life at home and the realities of an urban existence. It is not that internal migrants are switching between two distinct identities, but that they must find a sense of identity that enables them to incorporate their idea of themselves as both urban and rural residents, as well as other identities they may hold. As Gabriel (2006) found in her study of young migrants from Tasmania, Australia, "young people drew on partial identities in different contexts in order to, at times, downplay emerging differences between themselves and their families and alternately to establish new points of connection" (p.43).

Similarly, Jones (1999) argued that rural-out migration is re-conceptualised within a complex of life choices and youth transitions; that is, from school to higher education, training and work, from the family home to the group shared house, and from being a dependent adolescent to an independent adult. Globalisation and migration magnify the challenges of adolescent development by undermining traditional expectations about work and family life that are associated with the transition to adulthood (Lloyd, 2005). Therefore, in order to understand how young migrants perceive themselves in relation to other people, and to the society as a whole, it is important to understand both the context of their origins, as this describes their early formation of identity, and the current context in which they live and work after migration.

In addition, a key issue which impacts on many youth transitions in the less developed economies is the what has been called the intergenerational contract (Kabeer, 2000) which involves cultural expectations of responsibility and care between generations in which parents care for children when they are young and in return children are expected to care for their parents in older age. She emphasises that the intergenerational contract tends to be stronger in countries which lack a state system of welfare benefits, 'where families are the dominant welfare institutions' (Kabeer 2000, 465). This is also found true in many countries across Southeast Asia such as

Vietnam where many young migrant labourers often remit to their parents from their waged employment after migration as an intergenerational bonding.

2.5 Conclusion

The literature review has demonstrated that internal migration, particularly rural to urban migration, has been an important issue in the social and economic development landscapes of many countries in Asia. Statistics and empirical evidence show that internal migration, particularly rural to urban migration, is on the rise, with more female and younger people joining the migration flow. Like many other developing countries in Asia, rural to urban migration has increased rapidly in Vietnam and youth rural to urban migration is expected to be on the rise for the years to come. Migration impacts various aspects of the migrants' lives, from their everyday experiences to their sense of identities. The consequences and impacts of migration on many aspects of life for young people are even greater. However, little research has been done on young migrants in Vietnam.

The empirical review shows that migrants, whether migrating international or within the same country experience ongoing identity changing through the process of negotiating, confronting, and transforming in the new socio-cultural context of the destinations. Research on the identity of migrants in the context of moving across regions of the same country is only recently established; scholarly work on this particular aspect of migration has only emerged over the past few decades and there is not much empirical evidence on the issue available. There is a knowledge gap in understanding how young migrants see themselves (their identities), which is important to understanding young people's perceptions and aspirations in their own future. The literature review also shows that identities of migrants are conceptually understood from various approaches such as identities as multiple, changing, fluid, and also fragmented in the contemporary pluralist and changing society under the rapid pace of globalisation and urbanisation.

It is evident that the nature and welfare of youth migration are distinct matters from those of other age groups, as the migration event overlaps with many other transitions, including transitions to work, sexual maturation, marriage and childbearing, and citizenship. Migration is an integral part of the transition to adulthood (Juárez, LeGrand, Lloyd, Singh, & Hertrich, 2013). Migration adds another layer of complexity to the conditions of entry to adulthood, including changes in social and physical environments and often reduced oversight and guidance from kin and communities with respect to young people's behaviours, resulting in changes in attitudes, aspirations, and behaviours

(Juarez et al, 2013, p.8). Work and consumption are part of growing up in the area of globalisation (in which migration is a part of this process) (Thorsen, 2014), It was evident in Thorsen (2014) that the ability to work and to buy signals the transition from being dependent children to becoming independent adults and successful migrants and that migration increases the opportunities to become consumers of global goods, and through consumerism, children and young migrants gain higher status in their communities of origin (Thorsen, 2014: 84).

This provides some basis for further exploration of a conceptual approach to understanding the everyday lives and the identity of migrants, and this will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 3. Conceptual framework

3.1 Introduction

This study aims to address two research questions. The first research question aims to explore the experiences of young migrants at work and in everyday life. The second research question asks how young migrants see their identities in the new context of living in the city and away from their families. As already stated, in order to understand the lived experiences and the identity of young migrants, this study adopts Bourdieu's conceptual framework of 'theory of practice'. Bourdieu (1984) conceptualises a theory of human social practice based on the notion that individuals act in the context of a structured framework of evaluations and expectations, which lead to the conscious or intuitive prioritising of certain dispositions and practices. This framework draws attention to the dynamic transformations of social actors' values, orientations, beliefs and behaviours in relation to the field in which individuals become and are a part (Nowicka, 2015, p. 8). The theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977) comprises three key elements: habitus, field, and capital. For Bourdieu, practice is the result of the interplay between one's disposition (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital). In other words, social actors' dispositions and practices change according to the shifting positions they take in the field(s), dependent on how valorisation of capital(s) is (re)negotiated in the field. Thus, in order to understand the practices of actors, it is crucial to understand their habitus and the nature of the fields they are active in. Therefore, the dialectic relationship between field and habitus is conceptually helpful in examining the living and work experiences of young migrants, and how they live and act in the new urban environment.

The second research question is concerned with the identity of young migrants as they encounter the new living environment. Identity is a broad term and is conceptualised differently in various disciplines. However, the 'identity' discussed in this thesis is from a sociological perspective. There are multiple views of identity in sociology (Stryker, 2000); Stets and Burke (2003) argue that three of these approaches have been popularly taken by sociological researchers. The first view sees identity as cultural or collective, in which identity represents the ideas, beliefs, and practices of a group or collective. This view is often seen in the work on ethnic identity and has been popularly applied to understanding the identity of immigrants. However, this view does not allow examination of individual variability in behaviour, motivation, and interaction. Another view, developed from the work of Tajfel (1981) and others (e.g Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, &

Wetherell, 1987) on social theory, sees identity as embedded in a social group, or category. According to Stets and Burke (2003), this view often collapses the group/category distinction and misses the importance of within-group behaviour, such as role-relationships among group members. A third view of identity grows out of the symbolic interaction tradition, especially its structural variant (Stryker, 1980). This view takes into account individual role-relationships, and identity variability, motivation, and differentiation. Within the scope of this study, I am concerned with both individual identity, which means the way in which people see themselves and the world, their values, aspirations, and worldviews; and social identity, which emphasises seeing the identity of the young migrants as members of a collective (group) of young migrant workers in relation to other people and the social structure. The approach to identity taken in this study is that identity is how we situate ourselves within the social world (P. Jones & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 40).

In order to understand the identity of young migrants in the dialectic relationships of internal-external processes, this study draws on Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Understanding identities through the concept of habitus is challenging, as Bourdieu himself does not discuss identity directly. However, his scholarship, in particular the concept of 'habitus', has been used by migration study scholars to understand identities of migrants/immigrants as they encounter new fields at migration destinations. The recent scholarship on migrant identities recognises that adaptation processes of the migrants are non-linear, and that they involve personal stress, ambivalence, rejections and contradictory outcomes (Tabar et al. 2010), as migrants incorporate into a host society without losing their ties to the society and culture of origin (Glick Schiller et al. 2006). The concept of habitus emphasises the ability of transforming of individual dispositions on encountering new fields, as habitus comprises a system of dispositions that generate perceptions, appreciations and practices (Bourdieu 1990: 53). In addition, habitus is embodied, collective yet individual, and is both strategic and unconscious. Scholars using the concept of habitus to understand social identities, such as Jenkins (2008), argue that embodiment - such as the way of speaking, behaving, postures, and so on - of individuals is key in social identity. Furthermore, "identities are acquired, claimed, and allocated within power relation" (Jenkins, 2008:45). This study considers identity as engaged in a continual process of 'becoming' (Hall, 1996), through social practices, and in relationship to others (both other individuals and the social structure) (Bourdieu, 1977).

Having provided some reasons why Bourdieu's framework is appropriate for this study, the following sections will explain the three concepts of habitus, field, and capital, and show their relevance and application in this study.

3.2 Bourdieu's key concepts: habitus, field, and capital

The theory of practice centrally deals with the relationship between the individual and society (Swartz, 1997). Bourdieu particularly sees action as the outcome of relationships between habitus, capital and fields (Swartz, 1997). He shows the interconnected relationships among habitus, field, and capital through a formula in his seminal work, *Distinction*, as [(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice (1984, p. 101). This formula explains that individuals' practice as constituted by their habitus in conjunction with their (economic, social, cultural and symbolic) capital within a certain field. In his Theory of Practice, Bourdieu attempts to overcome these dualities. He explains strategy or practice by the complex interplay of his main concepts, namely field, habitus and capital. He attempts to reconcile the relationship between structure and agency, structuralism vs. constructivism, determinism vs. freedom or macro vs. micro (Bourdieu, 1977). He sees structure and agency as complementary forces - structure influences human behaviour, and humans are capable of changing the social structures they inhabit through the concept of habitus. Bourdieu's concepts are highly complex and need careful examination before use (Friedmann, 2005; Hillier & Rooksby, 2005; Noble, 2005), and that they should be used as thinking tools in empirical work (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In what follows, an explanation of each concept—habitus, field, and capital—will be provided before showing how they are applied in this study.

3.2.1 Habitus

Habitus is a key concept in Bourdieu's theory of practice that has been widely used in research in sociology, anthropology research and beyond. Bourdieu defines habitus as,

... systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations (1990, p. 53).

Habitus can be understood as the dispositions that internalise our social location and which orient our actions. In this sense, habitus offers an invaluable tool for exploring the interdependence of social determination and human agency, the structured and generative capacity of human action (Noble & Watkins, 2003, p. 522).

Expanding on the idea of dispositions, they represent 'master patterns' of behavioural style that cut across cognitive, normative, and corporal dimensions of human action (Swartz 1997, p108). Such dispositions are expressed through language (in the forms of dialects and accents), nonverbal communication (body gestures, manner), tastes (for example taste in the arts), values (for example, individualism), perceptions, and modes of reasoning. Habitus signifies not just how we think about the world, but the bodily 'system of dispositions' we bring to a field, such as "a way of walking, a tilt of the head, facial expressions, ways of sitting, ... a style of speech" (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 85-87). In this sense, disposition represents an embodied way of being deeply shaped and constructed by habitus. For Bourdieu, the habitus as the social "is inscribed in the body of the biological individual" such as gender, class, ethnicity and so on (as cited in Reay, 2004, p. 433). For example, a woman from a rural village in Punjab, Northern India may often wear her traditional colourful suits, prefers to eat vegetable curries, and speaks Punjab and some Hindi with her Punjab accents. Such elements are her embodied dispositions that she have developed since her birth and growing up in the village.

Habitus results from early socialisation experiences in which external structures are internalised. As a result, internalised dispositions are shaped through socialisation within a stratified or class constructed social world (Swartz, 1997, p. 103). Bourdieu emphasises the importance of early formation of the habitus during the early years of a person's life (childhood), and makes the habitus quite 'durable'. By this, Bourdieu indicates resistance to change of habitus as people grow up, and he states that "primary socialisation is far more formative of internal dispositions than subsequent socialisation experiences" (Swartz, 1997, p. 107). Bourdieu names this character of habitus as 'defensive strategies' which means habitus tends to select for action those terrains that are consistent with its original dispositions, because habitus is a product of our upbringing, and more particularly of class. Of significance sociologically habitus is also understood as a class-culture embodied adaptation to objective circumstances. This makes a 'virtue of necessity' through encouraging our tastes, wants and desires to be broadly matched to what people are realistically able to achieve (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 175).

Though being quite durable, "the potentiality for innovation or creative action of habitus is never foreclosed" (McNay, 1999, p. 103). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) indicate that, "[habitus] is an *open* system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforce or *modifies* its structure" (p. 133). This means that there is an ongoing adaptation process as people encounters new situations such as

resulting from migration. In other words, habitus is not only structured structure, but it is also dynamic (or structuring structure) (Swartz, 1997). Bourdieu acknowledges the destabilising and potentially subversive effects that might arise from movement across fields (McNay, 1999, p. 106) because “habitus is durable but not eternal” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 133). Hence, habitus predisposes actors to select forms of conduct or dispositions that are most likely to succeed in light of their resources and past experiences. For example, imagine the Indian woman mentioned earlier moves to work and live in Chandīgarh city, a modern city in Northern India and home to people from many different regions of India. She gradually changes her way of dressing, tries out new foods, and speaks more Hindi than Punjab in order to communicate with people from different backgrounds in the city. In addition, she does not wear the traditional suits everyday like before but takes up more casual, modern styles of dress. This means that though her habitus is a product of early childhood experience and in particular, socialisation within her family and the community where she grew up in the rural village, her habitus is being continually and gradually altered as she encounters the new social worlds.

When discussing the dynamic of habitus, Bourdieu views the adaptation process of the habitus as “slow, unconscious and tends to elaborate rather than alter fundamentally in the primary dispositions”(Swartz, 1997, p. 107). As already stated, the dynamic nature of habitus suggests room for individual agency. When individuals enter a new or different field, habitus goes through a process of learning, changing, adapting, and transforming. This involves learning a new set of rules, a process that is slow and painful and which we experience, as Bourdieu insists, as a kind of ‘second birth’ (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 68). In fact, when interacting with a field, two possibilities occur. If changes take place gradually in following already anticipated pathways, habitus and field is well matched and change is homeostatic. The individuals then feel like ‘fish in water’ in the field. However, if changes occur abruptly or even catastrophically, with corresponding consequences for the participants in the field, habitus might lag behind this change and might misfit the field. In this confrontation, habitus operates as a structuring structure, able to selectively perceive and to transform the objective structure according to its own structure while, at the same time, being re-structured: transformed in its make-up by the pressure of the objective structure. By this Bourdieu means “in rapidly changing societies, habitus changes constantly, continuously, but within the limits inherent in its original structure...” (Bourdieu, 2005a, p. 47). What are the consequences of this ‘limit’ and ‘misfit in the field’? The concept of field (reviewed later in this chapter) adds to the possibilities of Bourdieu's conceptual framework and gives habitus a dynamic quality.

Importantly, though one's habitus is acquired as individuals through experience and explicit socialisation in early life, it is also a *shared* body of dispositions, classificatory categories and generative schemes. Individuals who internalise similar life chances often share the same habitus. Bourdieu (1977) explains, "the practices of the members of the same group or, in a differentiated society, the same class, are always more and better harmonised than the agents know or wish" (p. 86). This means that habitus is also the outcome of collective stratified history "in accordance with the schemes generated by history" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 54). Being collective in nature, habitus allows the development of individual identity as a reflection upon and influence of the group or in interaction with other agents in a field. This demonstrates that identity is not only a set of individualised dispositions but also is reflexive in the form of responses to "calls to order from the group" (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 14-15). Though inscribed in the individual human body, habitus has a collective phenomenon in the sense that a certain habitus is and, indeed, must be, shared; or, at least, implicitly understood and accepted by all the 'players in the game' (Bourdieu, 2005a).

Habitus is thus a result as well as a cause for an individual's way of being, acting and thinking. It accounts for the 'practical knowledge' of social actors in the sense that they 'know', through socialisation, how to act, feel, talk, and so on. (Nowicka, 2015). Habitus refers to the principles of generating and structuring practices and representations, subsequently producing identity through particular dispositions and structures of perception, which are associated with a sensory environment. The socialised subjectivity of habitus is increasingly used in discussion of 'identity' to indicate the limits to reflexivity, situating 'identity' in tacit practice (Bottero, 2010). As Hiller and Rooksby (2005) argue, it offers a tool for exploring the interdependence of social determination and human agency; the individual idiosyncrasies of the socialised body; the inertia and malleability of corporeal capacities; and the relationship between the field-specific nature of competence and the fact that bodies travel across diverse contexts.

For early adults, their habitus is in the process of development and accomplishment, which is more sensitive to changes and transformations compared to adults. It is therefore more open and flexible to changes rather than being durable, or in Bourdieu's word, it is more dynamic and adaptive to the changing environment.

3.2.2 Field

The concept of field provides a way to analyse research question one where the economic, social and cultural fields capture the space for living and working in the urban space.

Field is defined as the socially structured space in which actors play out their engagements with each other (Hillier & Rooksby, 2005, p. 22). Bourdieu defines field as a relatively autonomous network of objective relations between positions; as a particular social space of institutions and forces (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97). Field is formally defined as,

a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation... in the structure of the distribution of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other position... (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 39).

By definition, a field is a structured system of social positions occupied by either individuals or institutions, the nature of which defines the situation for their occupants. Positions stand in relationships of domination, subordination or equivalence (homology) to each other by virtue of the access they have to the goods or resources (capital) which are at stake in the field (Swartz, 1997). The field is the site where social practice occurs. For Bourdieu, a field is also a particular social space that involves a network or configuration of relations between positions. He explains this as follows:

... the social world can be represented as a space (with several dimensions) constructed on the basis of principles of differentiation or distribution constituted by the set of properties active within the social universe in question, i.e., capable of conferring strength, power within that universe, on their holder. Agents and groups of agents are thus defined by their relative positions within that space (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 724).

A field is thus constituted by the relational differences in the position of social agents where this is a space of contestation, involving struggle or tension as Wacquant and Bourdieu (1992) emphasise, “the field is also a *field of struggles* aimed at preserving or transforming the configuration of these forces” (p. 101).

An example of field is the hospitality field. There are many subfields such as accommodation (hotels, guest houses, resorts, apartments, etc.) and catering services (such as restaurants, food stalls, pubs, etc.). There are different suppliers or service providers (actors/agents) in this field and its subfields who compete with each other to gain customers in order to maximise their profits by utilising their resources. The hospitality field exists in relationship with other fields

such as the tourism field, transportation field, and so on. In a broader sense, it is under the service field, and more broadly it is under the economic field. This example of field is illustrated in a diagram in Figure 3.1.

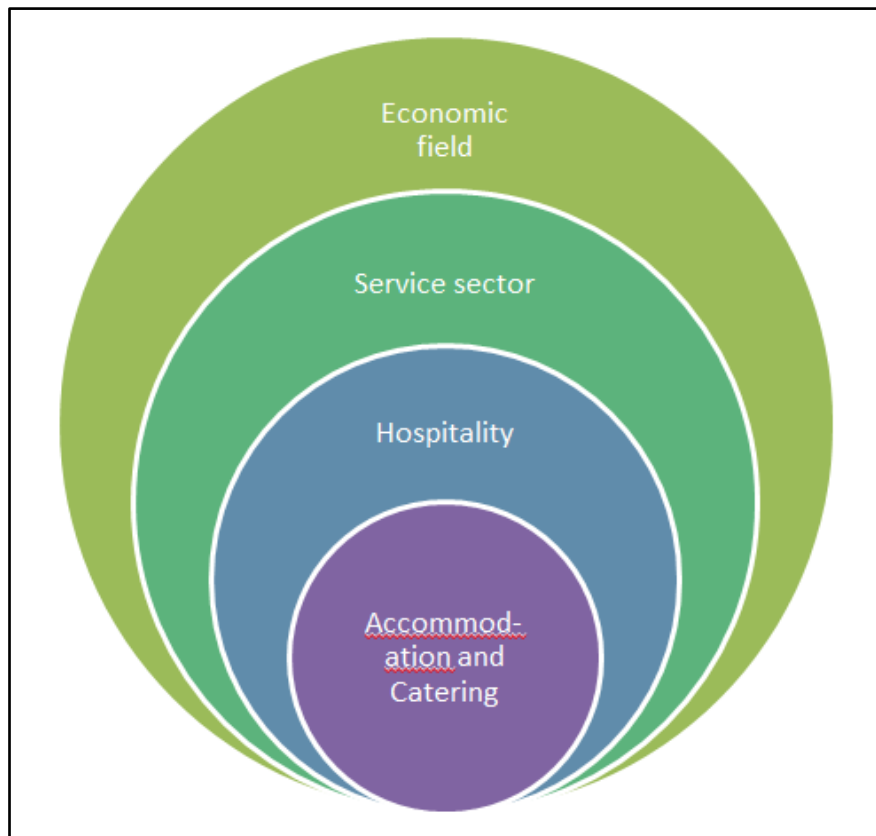


Figure 3.1 An example of field and subfields

In addition, there is competition in those fields, such as in the accommodation and catering, with different providers competing with each other to get customers so as to increase profits. Such competition to gain positions in the hospitality field is dependent on volume of capital they have such as economic capital in a form of financial investment in having high quality of hotel's rooms, food and drink, and other entertainment facilities; social capital, in the form of relationships with tour companies, sales websites; cultural capital, in the form of quality of services through capabilities of operation and management staff; and importantly, symbolic capital in the form of prestige and the trust of customers. The extent to which participants are able to make effective use of the resources they are endowed with is a function of the adaptation of their *habitus* in this specific field.

Agents' strategies are concerned with the preservation, or improvement, of their positions with respect to their capital they own in relation to the field. Therefore, habitus offers an insightful way of understanding social interactions, as actors' behaviours will be in related to their position in the field. Their behaviours will also be related to the resources available to them, and to their view of the field (Hillier & Rooksby, 2005, p. 23). In other words, what positions agents or institutions within a field is their possession of capital and power that is relevant to the purposes of a particular field. Positions in the field then produce in agents and institutions particular ways of thinking, being and doing.

There are many fields as well as subfields in the social world. However, boundaries between fields are not clearly drawn by Bourdieu (Jenkins, 2002) as he argues that any effort to establish precise boundaries between fields derives from a 'positivist vision' rather than the more compelling 'relational' view of the social world (Jenkins, 2002). While each field represents a relatively distinct social space such as occupational, institutional, and cultural, in which more or less specific norms, values, rules, and interests apply, there is this relational element in which there are links between the fields. Therefore, societies can be understood as composing of a large number of relatively autonomous, linked, and overlapping social fields, and it is these fields that, Bourdieu believes, should be the principal focus of a reflective, self-critical sociology. Some fields are broad, for example, the economic field, but some are narrow, like the example above of the hospitality field.

3.2.3 Capital

Bourdieu defines capital not solely in economic terms, but in broader sense to include non-material capital. In his seminal work entitled *The forms of capital*, Bourdieu refers to three fundamental types of capital: economic, cultural, and social capital (1986). Economic capital is defined as money and property, which are "immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). Cultural capital refers to the symbolic assets that a person possesses (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249), such as the accumulation of manners, credentials, knowledge and skill, acquired through education and upbringing. Bourdieu clarifies three states of cultural capital, including the embodied state (such as dancing skills); the objectified form (such as books, musical instruments); and the institutionalised form (such as a university degree). Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources that are linked to possession of a durable social network of more or less institutionalised

relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, which can be mobilised to generate advantages or benefits.

In addition to the three mentioned forms of capital, symbolic capital was added later in this theorization. Symbolic capital is related to honour and recognition. It is not an independent type of capital, but it consists in the acknowledgement of capital by the entirety of the peer competitors on a specific field (Bourdieu, 1997). For example, a Grammy Award is a recognition of outstanding achievement in the music field. This award is not economic or cultural capital in itself but it is a symbolic recognition that makes the winners of the award being recognized of as talented persons (cultural capital), increase sales of their recorded CDs, tickets of their shows resulting in more income (economic capital), being known to more producers and being invited to more performances (social capital- which then again converted into economic capital). Therefore, symbolic capital is a powerful resource.

All forms of capital (economic, social, cultural, and symbolic) are important to agents in the ‘struggle’ for power and positions in any field, but Bourdieu particularly emphasises economic and cultural capital. He sees the former as the ‘dominant principle of hierarchy’, and the latter as the ‘second principal of hierarchy’ (Swartz, 1997, p. 137). One of the most important features of different forms of capital as conceptualised by Bourdieu is its convertibility into other forms. For example, economic capital can be converted into cultural capital by paying tuition fees to attend university and acquire a degree. Social capital can be converted into economic capital such as when an individual gets a waged job through the introduction of friends. Bourdieu emphasises that “the different types of capital can be derived from economic capital, but only at the cost of a more or less great effort of transformation” (1986, p. 248). Economic capital can be readily converted into money and it is important primarily because it provides access to the other forms of capital. Symbolic capital can be converted into others form of capital as explained in the previous example of the Grammy music award. The volume of social capital of an individual is dependent on their volume of economic capital and cultural capital. The convertibility of different forms of capital makes Bourdieu’s concept of capital particularly useful in this study in analyzing the experiences of the young migrants in the social and economic field in the city.

In migration literature, social capital is thoroughly discussed and seen as one of the most crucial resources for migrants during their migration process, settlement, and trajectory. Social capital is important for understanding the ways in which individuals are positioned in fields (Erel,

2010). Given the important role of social capital in understanding migration, it is now examined in more detail. For Bourdieu, networks and relationships are the keys to social capital, and they are among the most useful resources for agents to compete in the social world. He states:

The volume of social capital possessed by a given agent... depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilise and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural, symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249).

As such, social capital refers to those resources that are available via one's social networks, and describes the extent to which individuals can extract such resources in order to achieve certain goals. Thus, social capital is concerned not only with 'how many people I know' (the quantity of the network) but also 'who I know' (the quality of the network). For migrants, knowing someone who can introduce them to jobs and accommodation at the migration destination is crucial. In addition, it is worth noting that the existence of a network of connections is not a natural given or a social given, but is a product of an endless effort (Bourdieu, 1986). It means that networks need to be established and maintained by agents. In other words, the network of relationships is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247). These are the resources which generate the ability of the individual to get on or get ahead in life and which give 'value' to social capital.

In modern differentiated societies, access to sources of income in the labour market depends upon both cultural capital (in the form of educational credentials) and social capital (in the form of networks). Cultural capital plays a significant role in defining the structure of an individual's social capital as well as their chances of creating significant extended social networks. Cultural capital can be seen to extend an individual's non-economic social assets, such as educational achievement, which might help to promote their social mobility beyond economic means. Cultural resources and knowledge can enable or preclude an individual from accessing more lucrative networks. Like all forms of capital, cultural capital is unequally distributed and available to differing classes in different forms and composition (Bourdieu, 1986). For young people, the amount or volume of their capital would be typically limited, especially young people from disadvantaged social-economic families often short of economic capital as they yet to have paid employment.

In short, the different forms of capital, economic, social, cultural, and symbolic, and their convertibility into each other are useful in understanding the living and working experiences of the young migrants in this study. Both capital and habitus can only be understood and validated in a relation to a field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Having provided an explanation of the three concepts, habitus, field and capital, and their relevance to understanding the everyday life and identities of individuals, I now focus more on their particular relevance to this study.

3.3 Applying Bourdieu's conceptual framework to understanding the lived experiences and identities of young migrant workers in Vietnam

The young migrants' experiences of working and living are conceptually understood through their habitus and capital (in the forms of social, economic and cultural) and in relation to the economic, social and cultural fields in the urban setting (see Figure 3.2). In the case of this study, young people migrate from rural to urban areas in which there are various broad interlinked fields that can be named as social, cultural, and economic. There are many similarities but also many differences in these respective fields in the rural and urban settings. For example, in the economic field, there are many more industrial production factories and service-based enterprises in the city (such as restaurants and shops) while production is more agriculturally based in the rural setting (such as growing vegetables, fishing). The act of moving from the rural to urban areas means that individuals move across such fields. It is assumed that a person's habitus is established and developed from their early childhood through a process of ongoing acquisitions within their rural fields. On entering the new urban fields the habitus of young migrants are expected to undergo a process of transformation as they encounter these new fields as they encounter different experiences at work and in the everyday life.

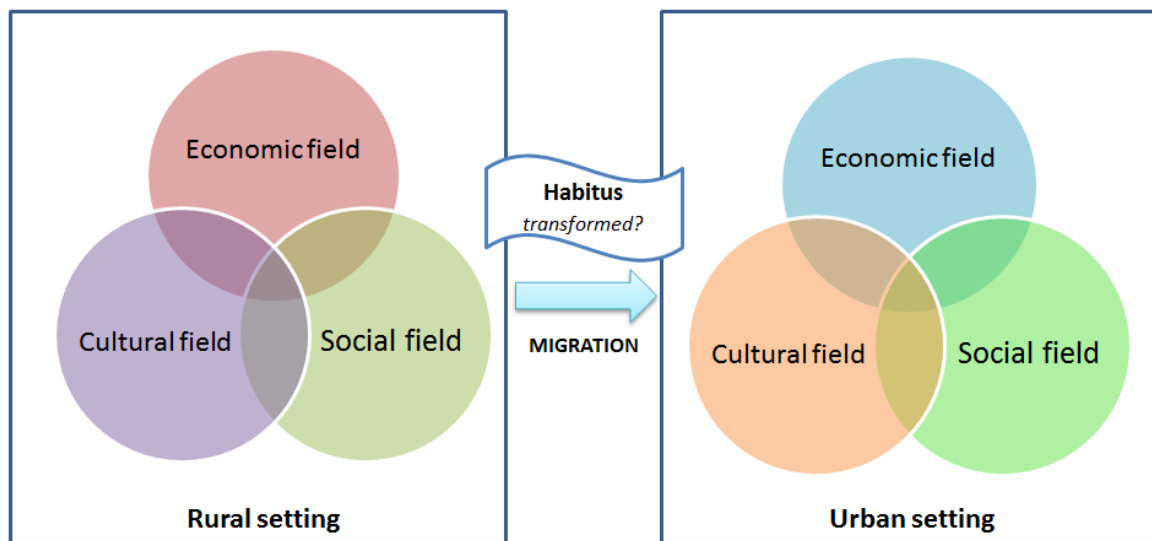


Figure 3.2 Application of habitus and field in understanding migrants' experiences and identities

Migration usually requires individuals to utilise all forms of their capital as they move to new fields at the migration destinations. They need to use money (economic capital) to finance their migration to cover the costs of transportation to the destination, accommodation, food, and so on. Being young migrants, they might not yet have significant financial savings, so this initial economic capital usually needs to be given or loaned by their social networks of relatives, friends, villagers or other people (social capital). At the new place of settlement, the migrants also may need help from their social networks (social capital) to find jobs and accommodation, among many other things. In order to find jobs, they often need skills and qualifications (cultural capital). Clearly, a strong inter-relationship among these three types of capital (social, economic and cultural) that are convertible into each other might be expected. Different types of capital are carried forward from the places of origin (rural areas) to the migration destination (the city).¹⁶ These could be used and validated in the new social, economic, and cultural fields in the urban setting. The inter-relationship between capital and migration outcomes (or experiences) and the intra-relationships among different types of capital are visualised in Figure 3.3.

¹⁶ Symbolic capital is not a focus of this study.

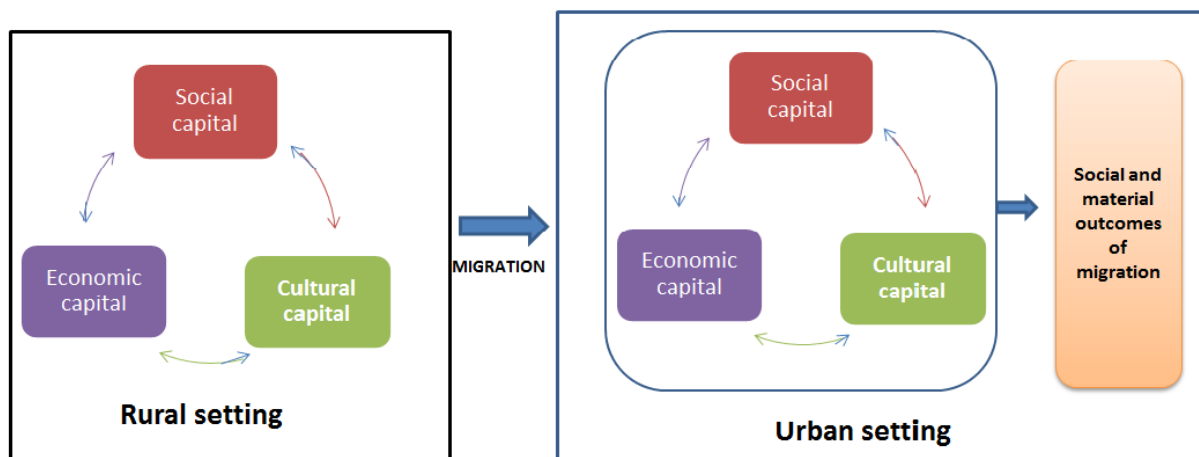


Figure 3.3 The inter-relationships of capital and migration outcomes (experiences)

As capital is unevenly distributed among agents in the social structure (Bourdieu, 1986), some migrants might come from wealthier families with more economic capital, while others come from poor families with less money; some migrants might have had more years of schooling than others. These result in them taking differentiated positions in the fields, which mean different types of jobs, different levels of income, and varied quality of living conditions, dependent on both the volume of capital they own and how they employ their capital in achieving their goals (positions) within the social structure.

Young migrants' established habitus and associated dispositions are understood to be carried forward with them as sets of how to live, how to behave in the new urban social field, and how to do things in the economic field. However, as mentioned previously, there are differences between the social and economic fields of their homeland and those of the city. Therefore, young migrants may be expected to learn and acquire new things, such as new ways of presenting themselves, different ways of behaving and acting in the social field, and new knowledge and skills in order to operate in the economic field. This would mean that their habitus is to go through a complicated process of negotiation, re-generation, rejection, and adjustment in the new urban fields (see Figure 3.2). As Veale and Dona well summarise from a number of studies on child and youth migration across the global, "through movement, young people are learners and carriers of culture between one local and another ... their mobility and presence are a cause and also an outcome of the changing local and global condition." (Veale & Dona, 2014, p. 8). Therefore, it is expected that the reproduction of habitus can constitute a new and different sense of identities within the migrants.

Entry into a new field can be seen as providing the opportunity for habitus to change as individuals are confronted by the unfamiliar (Davey, 2009, p. 277). The habitus of the migrants will be understood in the context of the urban economic field of the city, which is characterised by rapid development and high competition, and in the social context (field) of quick transformation, busyness, crowdedness, increased choices of employment and entertainment, a high level of anonymity, a diverse population, and a high concentration of commercial, educational and cultural institutions. Such fields in the city might be very different to those in the rural context; this difference is anticipated to bring about many new experiences for the young migrants and, therefore, it is expected that a mixture of re-creations and consequences will be seen in their habitus when they interact with those new fields. The possibility of change and adaptation of habitus makes the transformation of individuals' identity in the new context possible.

In summary, this section has shown how the lived experiences and identities of the young migrants are conceptually understood through the concepts of habitus and capital in relation with social, economic, and cultural fields in the city. The concept of capital and its conversion is utilised to understand their differentiated everyday experiences both in and outside of work, or in other words, the social and material outcomes of migration.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter explained why Bourdieu's theory of practice as a suitable conceptual approach for this study; how the three key elements of habitus, field, and capital are relevant; and how they are applied to understanding the lived experiences and identities of the migrants. It demonstrates that these three concepts are conceptually useful to understanding how young migrants take their positions in the social and economic fields, dependent on their volume of capital and how they utilise their different forms of capital (social, economic and cultural) to re-position themselves in the urban setting. The conversion of different forms of capital and their relation to the social and economic fields provide useful conceptual tools to understanding the differentiated social and material outcomes of migration, or in other words, the living and working experiences of the migrants. The ongoing, becoming identities of the young migrants can be understood using various elements of habitus as framed by Bourdieu (1977) including embodiment, individual versus collective, durability versus dynamic, and strategic versus unconscious in relation to the social, economic and cultural fields. It seeks to explore and understand how the dispositions of young people are preserved, changed and adjusted in the urban context as they enter new fields in the

urban environment; how their transposable rural habitus gives direction and mediates their actions in the city; and how different fields in the urban setting enable or constrain them from doing what they desire to do: whether the individual habitus responds in harmony or discord with the new social and economic fields.. It is noted that the targeted studied population of this study are young people from late teens to early twenties whom are in the peak period of individualisation, formation and comprehension of their social identities and expect to experience multiple transitions from school and home to work; from a dependent child to an independent and responsible adult; and from rural to urban living and working environment.

Having provided an explanation of the conceptual framework adopted in this study, the next chapter will provide a detailed description of the research methodology used in this study

Chapter 4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology of this study. It first outlines the rationale underpinning why a qualitative research approach is suitable for this research. It then provides details on the three qualitative research techniques used: namely, participant interviews, adapted photovoice, and field observation. It also explains the rationale for using each of the methods. By providing detailed descriptions and rationales on how the research was carried out, the reader is better able to understand and evaluate the credibility of the findings presented and discussed in subsequent chapters. The chapter then provides details on the research sample, how the research participants were recruited, and how the collected data was managed, organised, and analysed. Furthermore, research rigour and ethical issues are addressed. Issues of reflexivity, the role of the researcher, and methodological limitations of the study are also discussed before concluding the chapter.

4.2 Qualitative research approach

It is established that research which focuses on understanding meaning, often the lived experiences of those researched, is usually qualitative (N. Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Schwandt, 2000; Snape & Spencer, 2003). Denzin and Lincoln explain, “Qualitative research attempts to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (2003 p.5). Given that this research aims to understand the lived experiences and identities of the research participants, a qualitative approach is the appropriate means to obtain accounts of research participants’ experiences, to understand the meaning they ascribe to their lives, and to ascertain how they see themselves, the world and their places within it. The study employs a qualitative research approach involving in-depth interviews, adapted photovoice, and field observation. These methods are explained in detail in the following.

4.3 Methods of data collection and their rationale

This section describes in detail the three methods of data collection adopted in this study, and explains the rationale for using such methods. The process of data collection was divided into two sequential phases: Phase 1—in-depth interviews; and Phase 2—adapted photovoice. The first phase, involving in-depth individual interviews with twenty participants, was conducted first. The

second phase comprised three steps: step 1—orientation; step 2—photograph production; and step 3—photograph discussion. Throughout, field observation was conducted to contextualise and add depth of understanding to the collected data. The process of data collection is illustrated in Figure 4.1.

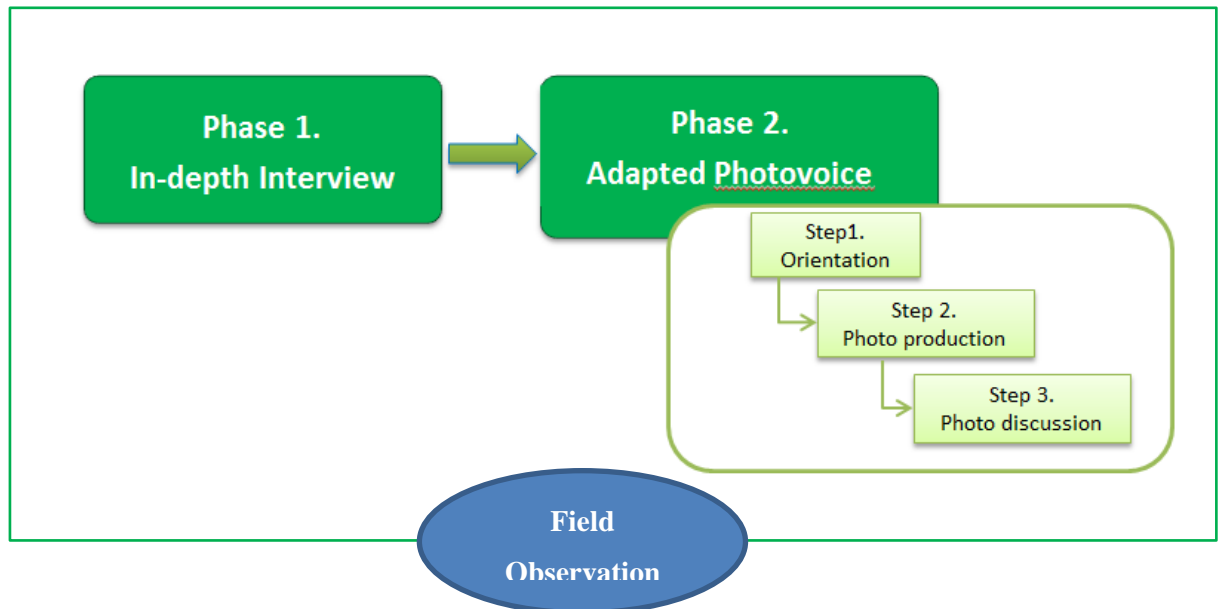


Figure 4.1 The process of data collection

How data was collected in each phase of data collection is now described in detail.

4.3.1 Phase 1. In-depth interview

In-depth interviewing is usually used as part of an exploratory study where the researcher seeks to gain an understanding of the field of study (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995). Taylor and Bogdan (1984) define in-depth interview as “repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants’ perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words” (1984 p.77). In order to explore different aspects of the social and work experiences of the participants, such as how they organise their lives, the conditions at their workplaces, their social relationships in everyday life and at work, their perspectives about themselves and their worldviews, their thoughts and feelings, and so on, an individual in-depth interview was conducted with each participant. The in-depth individual participant interviews were conducted in order to obtain as much understanding as possible regarding these aspects of the participants’ lives in the city. A total of twenty young migrants who were living and working in the city of Hanoi participated in the interviews. An interview guide was used as an aid while conducting the interviews, to remind all involved about

themes pertinent to the study. The interview guide mapped out three major topics to be explored: experiences in everyday life, work-related experiences, and perceptions toward self-identities of the participants. The first topic, living experiences, was concerned with the housing arrangements and conditions of the participants; activities they did outside of work; who they interacted with and for what purposes. The second topic, work experiences, included questions about what their jobs were, the conditions at their workplaces, concerns and issues that they had at work, and benefits that they received from work. The third topic concerning self-identities included questions on how the participants thought about their self-identities, if they had changed or remained unchanged since they moved, and if so, in what aspects (thoughts, feelings, appearances, characteristics, and so on). The interview guide is attached in Appendix 1. It was not referred to very consistently, and when it was referred to, it was not in any specific order. This was to allow new themes and topics of interest to be raised and shared by the participants. The interviews usually started with an informal conversation with the participants, about topics such as how their day was, whether or not they had eaten, whether or not they had any siblings, the weather, and any other topic that arose.

All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of every participant. The length of each participant's interview varied, ranging from the shortest at 45 minutes to the longest at 120 minutes. Most interviews were conducted in a relaxed and informal environment; however, some participants expected a list of short-answer questions to respond to. The participants were given time and space to tell their stories. All interviews were conducted at the place and time selected and preferred by the participants, in order to make it most convenient for them. Many interviews were conducted in public places, such as a café, a restaurant, or a tea stall near the participant's workplace or accommodation. A few interviews occurred at their workplaces or accommodation. In particular, two interviews with domestic workers were conducted at the residence of their employers, as the two participants were not allowed to leave the family residences. Most interviews occurred in the evening or during the weekend: that is, outside of participants' working hours.

Some participants were very open and shared their stories and experiences at length; however, some others did not articulate as much, maybe due to it being the first time that we had met. The photovoice method, which involved the participants taking photos in their own time and then discussing them with the researcher, was adopted after the first in-depth interview. Details of this method are explained next.

4.3.2 Phase 2. Adapted photovoice

Photovoice was designed as a participatory-action research strategy to contribute to youth mobilisation for community change (Wang, 2006). It is based on the concepts that “images teach, pictures can influence policy, and community people ought to participate in creating and defining the images that shape healthful public policy” (Wang, 2006 p.148). Photovoice is a recognised process by which people identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique (Wang & Burris, 1997) According to Wang and Burris (1997), as a practice based in the production of knowledge, photovoice has three main goals: (1) To enable people to record and reflect their community’s strengths and concerns; (2) To promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussion of photos, and (3) to reach policy makers. The photovoice method originated from the idea of providing people with cameras so that they can photograph their everyday realities. The technique’s application has expanded to many other areas of social research, including education, environment, and culture.

Photovoice as a visual research method has been recognised as an effective way to gain knowledge of human behaviour and social practice. Spencer (2011) suggests at least two reasons why social science researchers should use visual research methods. First, because visual data is recognised as central to the human condition and to expressions of humanity, which pre-date language and affect our emotions, identities, memories and aspirations in a most profound way. Second, visual methods have the potential to provide a deeper and more subtle exploration of social contexts and relationships, allowing researchers to see the everyday with new eyes. In addition, Sontag (2003) emphasises the effectiveness and different angles that pictures might bring about for social research: “Narratives can make us understand. Photographs do something else: They *haunt* us” (Sontag, 2003, p. 80). The photovoice method has been recognised as a more participatory research method that enables voices, and is recognised as suitable in researching young people as it encourages and empowers the research participants (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004; Warne, Snyder, & Gillander Gådin, 2012; Wilson et al., 2007).

In order to enable the young migrants in this study to have more freedom and space to talk about their living and working experiences as migrants in the city, and their thoughts and feelings about their identities, the study adopted the photovoice method in addition to the in-depth interview method. In particular, the visual research tool of photos enables the capture of visible aspects that are sometimes difficult to articulate in words, such as the way one dresses, living spaces, atmosphere, and posture, among many other things. In addition, discussing the photos taken was

also a process of meaning-making that the participants did together with the researcher; sometimes the participants did not even think of or discover particular meanings until they were discussed.

There were some adaptations to the original photovoice method to suit the purposes of this study as well as to protect the confidentiality of participants; therefore, it was named ‘adapted photovoice’. The first adaptation was that photos were taken by individual participants, and discussed with individual participants, not in a group as was originally conceived by Wang (2006). This was not only to ensure confidentiality for the participants, but also to provide each participant full authority in the process without being influenced by any other participant. Second, there were three steps adopted instead of four, including orientation, photograph production, and discussion of the photos. The usual fourth step, public exhibition of the photos, was omitted so as to maintain confidentiality for the participants. The third adjustment was that the participants could choose to use pre-existing photos as part of their storytelling when they came to discuss photos with the researcher. This is not usually done in the original photovoice method. The use of pre-existing photos was introduced because of the relatively short period of time—about two to three weeks—that the participants were given to take photos, while what they had experienced in the city extended much further than this time frame. The steps in the adapted photovoice are now presented.

Step 1. Orientation

At the conclusion of each participant in-depth interview in phase 1, the participant was invited to participate in the photovoice phase. Fifteen out of twenty interviewed participants agreed to take part in photovoice. One of the fifteen later asked to withdraw, so that fourteen out of the twenty interviewees completed this activity. Each participant was given a disposable camera and instructions on how to use it. The participants also practiced taking random pictures in order to become familiar with the camera. In addition, a few prompts on the purpose and content of the photos were given. They were encouraged to capture things that happened in their everyday life, such as what they do at home, what their room looks like, what they do at work, who they interact with, what they like or dislike in the city, what they do in their spare time, where and what they eat, what they wear, and so on. Though suggestions were provided as examples, I also emphasised that any photo ideas were welcome and it was up to them to decide what they wanted to capture to reflect their experiences in the city. Additionally, participants were advised of some important ethical points to consider when taking pictures of places and people, such as asking for verbal permission from people if taking their photo, and not taking photos where it was not allowed. All

participants were given a project information sheet and my contact details in case they or anyone involved in the photos should have any questions or want to know more about the project.

Step 2. Photo production

In this step, the research participants took photos on their own and at their own convenience for a couple of weeks. During this photo production period, there were a few conversations between some of the participants and the researcher about their progress, difficulties, and technical issues with the disposable camera, and about arrangements to meet again for discussion of the photos. When each participant had finished taking photos, the camera was collected and the photos were printed. Individual appointments were made with each participant to discuss their photos.

Step 3. Photo discussion

A second meeting with each participant took place about three to four weeks after the first interview to discuss their photos. Most participants were excited to see their photos and talked about them at length. They explained what happened and who was in the pictures, when they were taken and why. There were a few participants who did not take many photos or did not talk much about the photos that they had taken. In addition to discussions of the photos taken with the given camera, participants were also asked if they wanted to share and talk about other photos that they had taken before, and many of them showed and explained their own photos taken on their mobile phones before the project.

The photo discussions were designed as an opportunity to have a discussion beyond the photos themselves. Many participants expanded to discuss other things related to their migration: the stories in their work and everyday life that were not told in the first in-depth interview. The photo discussion sessions were also audio-recorded, but not transcribed fully. Important explanations and elicitations were noted on each photo. At the end of the photo discussion, the photos were offered to the participant to keep. A few participants could not undertake this photo discussion in person, so it had to be done over the telephone.

4.3.3 Field observation

Field observations were conducted during the whole fieldwork period. Attention was paid to both participants and their surrounding environments, such as the conditions of their housing and work places (in the cases where interviews occurred at such venues). Given the first research question of this study is to understand the lived experiences of young migrants, observations were

used to contextualise knowledge on the living and working conditions of the participants. The second research question involves understanding participants' identities, of which some aspects are observable, such as style of dress, manner, posture, hairstyle, accessories, and so on. Such aspects were also noted in field observation journals. However, observations of the participants living and work places were limited, because the majority of interviews were conducted in public places. Therefore, field observation data was limited and so is its use in the analysis of the thesis findings.

4.4 Sample

4.4.1 Research site

This study took place in Hanoi, the capital city of Vietnam. Data was collected from November 2012 to February 2013. Four districts in Hanoi were purposively selected: specifically, two central business districts named Ba Dinh and Hoan Kiem, a newly developed district, Cau Giay, and a suburban district named Dong Anh. The research sites are marked in the map in Figure 4.2.

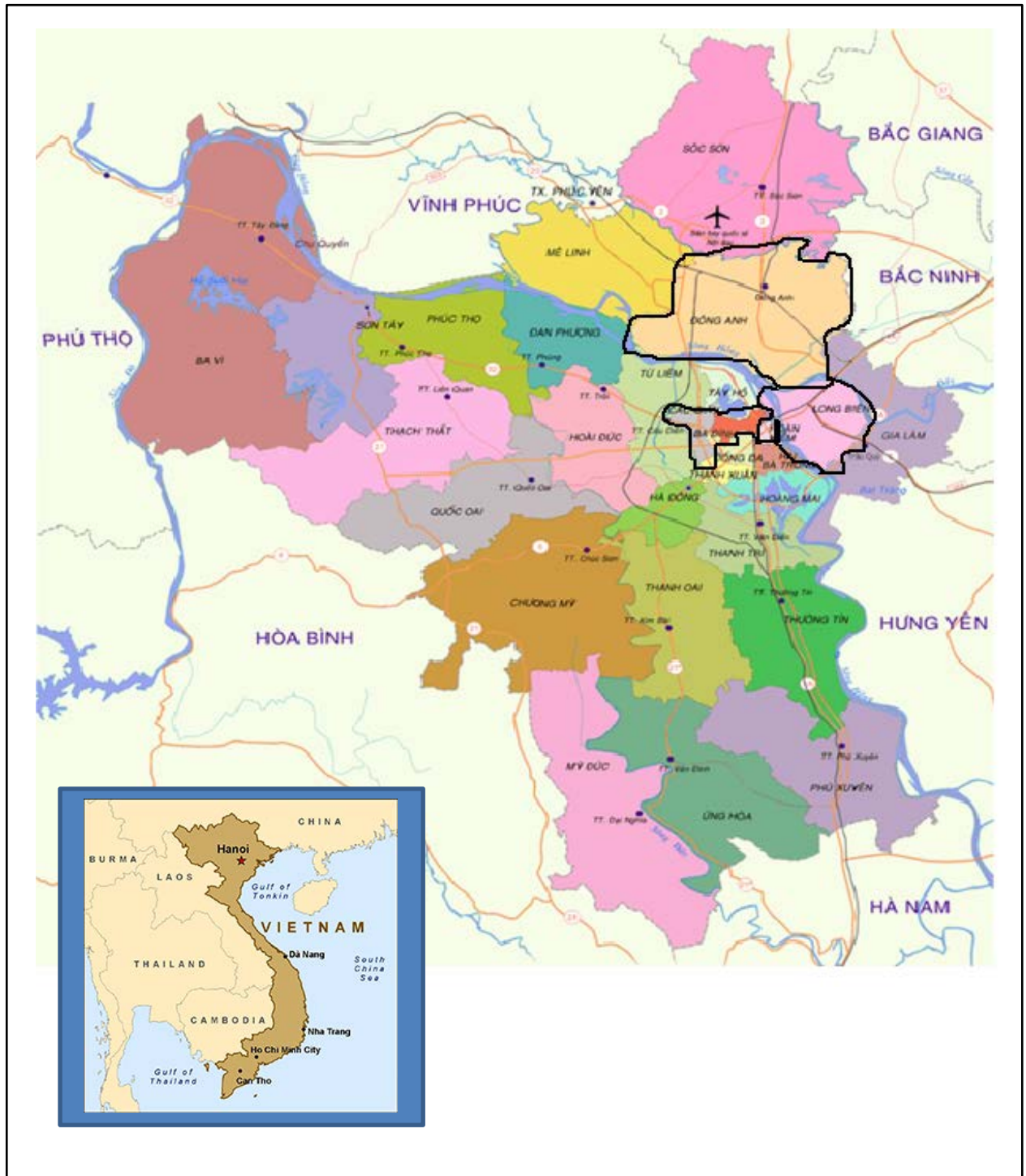


Figure 4.2. Map of Hanoi (Source: <http://www.thudo.gov.vn/hnmap.aspx>)

The research sites were purposively selected in order to capture different types of migrants, as well as a variety of work and living experiences. Each of the districts selected provides different types of jobs for the migrants, due to its development profile and availability of jobs for migrant workers. The two inner districts, Hoan Kiem and Ba Dinh, offer more jobs in tourism, hospitality, and other commercial services, while Cau Giay, as a newer development area, has more construction work and is a popular location for family businesses, newly established shops and restaurants. On the

other hand, Dong Anh is a suburb on the outskirts that has a high concentration of manufacturing industries, because it accommodates two industrial zones that employ many inter-provincial migrants. This sampling approach was used to reduce the homogeneity of the participants, which can result from 'chain migration'. This refers to the phenomenon where people from the same village tend to move together, do the same or similar jobs, and live in the same or nearby neighbourhoods.

4.4.2 Recruitment

The research used non-probability purposive sampling, employing a total of twenty participants who migrated to Hanoi city from different provinces, had various types of job in different employment sectors, and lived in different neighbourhoods. As a purposive sampling method, the research participants were recruited based on the following criteria:

- (i) Young male and female migrants aged 18-24 years old;¹⁷
- (ii) Young migrants must have migrated to Hanoi independently for work purposes. This means that those who migrated to Hanoi for educational purposes as students or as dependent children or spouses were excluded from this study;
- (iii) Young migrants must have moved to Hanoi at least one year earlier and for no more than four years at the time of participating in this study. This was to ensure that they had relocated long enough to have settled in and been exposed to various experiences of city life, but not too long, so that their transitional experiences could be clearly remembered.

The participants in this study were identified and recruited through two ways. First, my relatives and acquaintances who knew some young migrants helped me to identify and recruit potential participants. The potential participants were approached and selected through this channel first. Those who participated in this study then introduced me to more potential participants from their networks of friends, colleagues, and villagers. This snowballing technique helped me to approach and recruit more participants, and also made it easier to penetrate the network of young migrants because they were referred to me by their peers.

¹⁷ This study adopted the World Health Organisation's definition of youth as people aged 15 to 24 years. However, due to ethical considerations, this study did not recruit youth of less than 18 years

4.4.3 Participants' profiles

A total of twenty young migrants living and working in Hanoi participated in the in-depth interviews. All participants of this study were Kinh (Vietnamese). No person from any of Vietnam's 54 ethnic minorities (Ta, 2014) were included. As, Kinh- Vietnamese account for 85 percent of the population in Vietnam and most migrants in cities are Kinh people (GSO, 2004); therefore, it is not surprising that minority participants were not involved, though the candidate did not intend to exclude them in this study. Fourteen out of the twenty interviewees participated and completed the photovoice phase. An effort was made to keep a balance of male and female participants. In total, the number of female participants was slightly higher than that of male participants, at 11 to 9. This reflected wider gender representation in different types of occupations in the migrant population. For example, the construction sector participants were exclusively male, while the services sector was over-represented by female.

All participants were working fulltime at the time this study was conducted. Their occupations varied to include factory workers, construction workers, hairdressers, shop assistants, and domestic workers. Based on the nature of their work, the occupations of the respondents can be categorised into three employment sectors: (1) the manufacturing sector, which included workers in factories and workshops; (2) the construction sector, which included brick layers, builders, and plumbers; and (3) the services sector, which comprised shop assistants, hairdressers, and domestic workers. A summary of the participants' profiles is provided in Table 4..

Students and young professionals were not included in this research from the outset as they are very different groups from the group studied because of their migration purpose and background as well as the segment of employment that they are engaged with (migrant students are usually financially supported by their parents during their studies; young professionals are employed in higher skilled employment segment and usually have higher incomes and better working and living conditions). Students and young professionals can be studied in a separate research. In this research, only low income young migrants were examined due to their greater disadvantages, large population size and different types of changes and challenges they encounter as spelt out in the literature review (chapter 2) and in part of the introduction chapter (chapter 1).

Table 4.1 A summary of participants' profiles

Name ¹⁸	Gender	Age	Occupation	Education level	Original hometown	Participated in photovoice (Y/N)
Son	Male	18	Iron worker	year 8	Hung Yên	N
Lâm	Male	25	Iron worker	senior high school	Thanh Hóa	Y
Tâm	Male	21	Construction worker	junior high school	Ninh Bình	Y
Trung	Male	20	Manufacturing worker	senior high school	Bắc Ninh	Y
Linh	Female	23	Restaurant cashier	senior high school	Thanh Hóa	N
Ly	Female	18	Manufacturing worker	year 8	Hải Dương?	Y
Thoa	Female	24	Manufacturing worker	senior high school	Phú Thọ	Y
Hải	Male	24	Manufacturing worker	senior high school	Phú Thọ	Y
Minh	Male	20	Manufacturing worker	senior high school	Phú Thọ	Y
Vui	Female	21	Manufacturing worker	senior high school	Hải Dương/Ninh Bình	Y
Hồng	Female	20	Manufacturing worker	senior high school	Yên Bái	Y
Nam	Male	24	Manufacturing worker	senior high school	Ninh Bình	Y
Nga	Female	20	Hairdresser and make up	primary school	Phú Thọ	Y
Đức	Male	24	Iron worker	senior high school	Bắc Ninh	Y
Mai	Female	22	Hair dresser	junior high school	Hà Tây	Y
Hoa	Female	20	Handicraft worker/shop assistant	year 8	Thanh Hóa	Y
Hùng	Male	21	Sales and marketing	senior high school	Phú Thọ	Y
Cường	Male	21	Construction worker	junior high school	Phú Thọ	Y
Xuân	Female	23	Shop assistant	primary school	Thanh Hóa	Y
Hằng	Female	18	Domestic worker and nanny	primary school	Nghệ An	N
Hà	Female	18	Domestic worker and nanny	year 7	Thanh Hóa	N

¹⁸ All names are changed to protect identity of the participants

4.5 Data management

4.5.1 Data Transcription

All twenty recorded participant interviews obtained from phase 1 were fully transcribed by the researcher in the language spoken. The transcripts include all spoken words as well as non-verbalisms such as pauses, cries, laughs, exclamations, or phone ringtones. Most recorded interviews were transcribed while in the field. A couple of early interview transcripts were translated into English in order to consult with the advisory team with regard to improving the following interviews. All transcripts were de-identified and pseudonyms were used. All interview transcripts were stored in two forms, electronically and in print.

4.5.2 Organisation of photovoice data

All photos taken by the participants with the provided cameras were printed and filed in a photo album. Each participant's photos were kept together with captions and a summary of the discussed texts on that photo. A photo caption attached to each photo in the album includes information such as what is in the photo, where the photo was taken, what is happening in the photo, and the date the photo was taken. When used for the purpose of analysis, the photos were sorted by themes, such as places where the photos were taken, for instance, at work or at home; or activities in the pictures, such as entertainment, rest, or work. In addition to a printed album, all photos were stored electronically on a password protected computer at The University of Queensland.

4.5.3 Field observation journal

Field observation notes were entered in field journals during fieldwork. Entries in the field journal were made after each in-depth participant interview (in phase 1) and after each photo discussion with the participants (in the photovoice phase). The field journals include different information: a short description of the context in which each interview was conducted, such as date, time, venue, names of the participants, and brief biographic information of the interviewee; observation notes about the participants, such as their appearances, presentations, reactions, manners, and expressions of their feelings; observation notes about the conditions of their housing, in cases where the interview/meeting took place at their accommodation, or the conditions of their workplaces if the interview/meeting was conducted at their work. In addition, my own reflection on the interview/meeting was recorded, such as how it went, my overall thoughts about it, points to be followed up, and lessons learnt for the following interviews.

4.6 Analysis

4.6.1 Analytical processes of the empirical materials

The collected data of this study includes three sets: interview transcripts, photos and discussions of the photos, and field observation journals. Overall, thematic analysis of the data was adopted using the thematic framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Data relevant to the analysed themes were utilised accordingly, meaning that some themes were based only on interview data, while some themes used all three data sets. The emerging themes for analysis were initially identified through the in-depth individual interviews (phase 1). Those initial themes were analysed based on the interview data, with reference to the photovoice data (which includes both the photos and discussions of the photos), and field observations. In general, the data analysis process followed the six phases in thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), and is illustrated in Figure 4.3.

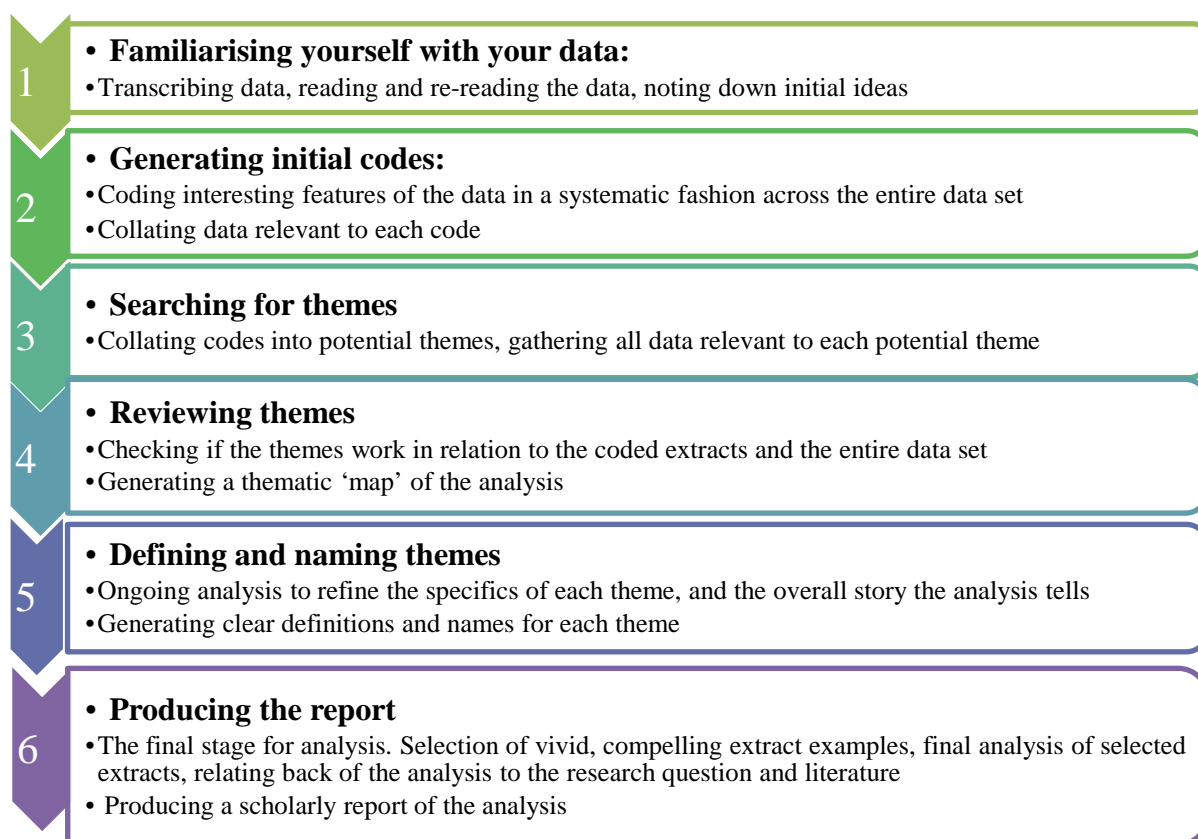


Figure 4.3 Phases of thematic analysis (reproduced from (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

During the data analysis process and reporting of the research results, these six steps of thematic analysis were applied as follows:

- 1. *Familiarising myself with the data:*** I read all the interview transcripts several times to develop familiarity with the data (also listening to the audio-recorded interviews). Notes were made on the margin of the electronic transcripts to capture some initial impressions and understanding of what each participant said. A field journal entry of each interview was referred to both before and while reading each interview transcript, for contextualisation and some clarification. Additionally, after reading the interview transcript, I looked at all the photos from that participant and read the photo discussion notes attached to each photo. This process of reading interview transcripts, referring to observation notes, and seeing photos and their notes was applied to every participant's data set.
- 2. *Generating initial codes:*** A list of initial codes corresponding to emerging features of interest in the data was established, first based on the interview data set. The whole interview data set was read and screened to set up coding.
- 3. *Searching for themes:*** Codes were then classified and organised by themes and subthemes. A matrix table of themes and sub-themes containing corresponding codes was established and then discussed with the thesis supervision team for advice and feedback. The in-depth interview data scripts were primarily relied upon during this theme-searching step. Extracts across interview transcripts that supported the themes and sub-themes were identified and collated under each theme and sub-theme using an Excel spreadsheet. Emerging themes were categorised into the social, economic, and cultural fields. In addition, attention was paid to search for similar and different patterns between male and female participants.
- 4. *Reviewing themes:*** After a table of themes and subthemes had been established in step 3, I reviewed the codes to see if they responded to each sub-theme and theme. In addition, I searched for meanings and illustrations for themes and sub-themes from the photovoice data (which included participants' photos and photo discussion notes), and these were allocated under the themes and sub-themes established in step 3. Explanations and meanings recorded in the observation journals were also referred to and taken to add under each theme and subtheme.
- 5. *Defining and naming themes:*** An initial analysis was conducted on the established themes to see if the themes corresponded with the research questions, to see if they were

relevant, and how they would help toward answering the research questions. A title of each theme and a name of each sub-theme were developed and a short description of each theme and sub-theme was written. This step involved identifying the 'essence' of what each theme was about (Braun & Clarke, 2006) At the end of this step, a clear organisation was established in terms of which themes and subthemes corresponded to which research question or which part of the research question.

6. ***Reporting and writing of the research findings*** was a highly engaging process of initial drafting and then discussing the first draft with thesis advisors for feedback and comments. At this stage, Bourdieu's theoretical concepts that were adopted in this study, including habitus, capital and field, were explored to understand and interpret the themes identified. Based on comments and feedback from supervisors and further thinking on the report, I re-wrote and revised. During the writing process, further understanding, refining and interpretation of the themes and sub-themes were developed and enhanced. Therefore, the final report of the research results presented in the thesis is a result of the clinical process of writing, rewriting, learning and refinement.

4.7 Rigour

Qualitative research is commonly argued to be limited in terms of reliability, validity and generalisability (Babbie, 2010 p.150-153; Bryman, 2004 p.70-78). However, Babbie and Bryman argue that validity and reliability may be achieved through rigorous research design and execution that may in turn produce rich data suitable for in-depth analysis (N. K. Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). To enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of this study, the research data was triangulated through utilising different qualitative techniques, including in-depth participant interviews, photovoice, and field observations. To ensure its validity and reliability, all interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent. The recorded interviews were transcribed by the candidate in the original Vietnamese language that was spoken in the interview, in order to ensure comprehensive, nuanced understanding of the content (Bryman, 2004; Neuman, 2006). As most of the recorded interviews were transcribed while conducting field research, any points that needed clarification or following up had been addressed in the second meeting with the participants when we discussed the photos. On top of this, field observation journals were kept to contextualise and add meaning, and to note different things observed at meetings and interviews. Such triangulation is seen as both a mechanism for enhancing understanding of participant experiences and a means of reducing the study's limitations (Neuman, 2006).

It is acknowledged that generalisability of this research finding is reduced given the limitations of the study methodology itself and the necessity for purposive sampling as a consequence of the nature of the subject group. It is suggested, however, that the intention to draw participants from various occupations and places of origin may increase the likelihood of identifying themes of commonality and difference that may enhance the level of generalisability of findings across other urban areas (Alston & Bowles, 2003), at least in the context of Vietnam and other developing countries with a similar socio-economic context.

4.8 Ethics

4.8.1 Informed consent

Informed consent is very important in this research. Before conducting the field research, ethical issues were taken into serious consideration. An ethical clearance application was approved by the Human Ethics Committee of The University of Queensland before proceeding with fieldwork. When approaching potential participants, I first introduced myself to the participants and explained orally the objectives and processes of the study. In addition, I also provided each participant an information sheet that included a brief description of the research project, and my contact details. Every participant was asked for his or her consent to participate in the study both verbally and by signing a written informed consent form (the consent form and the project information sheet are attached in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3). In addition, audio-recordings of the interviews were only done with the consent of the participants. At the end of each interview, the participants were again assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they no longer wanted to participate in the project, without being asked for an explanation. There was one case where a participant first agreed to participate in the study but then changed his mind when we met for the interview, so he was not included in the project. Also, there was one participant who took part in the in-depth interview, but she did not want to be involved in photovoice. With her consent, her interview data was still used.

4.8.2 Ethical implications

Ethical practice is central to social research (Bryman, 2004). Ethical research is predicated on the expectation that the participants will at least suffer no harm as a result of the research process or its outcomes, and this is particularly important while researching young people and children (Alderson & Morrow, 2011; Ennew & Plateau, 2004; L. Young & Barrett, 2001). This 'do no harm' expectation was ensured by giving attention to three aspects: namely, anonymity, confidentiality,

and power relationships. I was governed by the ethical standards of the university's ethics committee during the entire research process. Competence in all aspects of the research process is essential to ensure ethical principles are met, as argued by Alston and Bowles (2003).

To protect the participants' anonymity, all hard copy data is secured in a locked drawer at the School of Social Science, The University of Queensland. Electronic data is stored in the university's computer with a password and username log in. The safety of participants is protected by ensuring that confidentiality is maintained throughout the research and in the writing of the thesis, as pseudonyms are used throughout and certain geographical details are altered.

Moreover, academic research in general entails a confrontation between the powerful and the powerless, a relationship fraught with possibilities of misunderstanding and exploitation, in particular in researching young people (see Ennew & Plateau, 2004). Researchers usually have more education, status, income, experience and skills than their subjects, so it is possible that research participants try to provide the answers they anticipate the researchers are 'wanting' to hear (see Alderson & Morrow, 2011). This issue was partially addressed by the method of triangulation and reflexivity of the researcher. 'Participant information statements' and 'consent forms' were used together with proactive measures taken to ensure potential participants were informed of the nature of the research, the consequences of participating, and that participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw their participation at any time.

No participant was provided with honorarium in monetary form, but most were offered drinks, snacks or food at the interviews and meetings, paid for by the research, as these occurred in cafés and restaurants. For interviews that happened at other places such as at the accommodation of the participants, the research participants were provided with some snacks and drinks as an act of appreciation of their time and participation.

Some ethical issues relating to the photograph activities were carefully explained to each participant. For instance, some ideas were provided about what should not be taken, and they were informed about asking for verbal consent before taking photos of other people. In addition to a disposable camera, each participant was provided with a project information sheet and the business card of the researcher in case they or anyone who was involved in the photography should want to contact me. The photos used in the thesis were agreed upon by the photo takers and persons appearing in the photos. Usually, as an ethical practice, close-up face shots are digitally blurred to avoid recognition; however, all the participants of this study did not want this to be done. They

preferred to have their faces show clearly, explaining that “I did not do anything bad that I have to hide my face”. Therefore, the close-up face shots being used in this thesis or in other forms of publication are not blurred.

4.9 Limitations of the research methods

This study was designed to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the young migrants and the process in which they construct and reconstruct their identities in the context of multiple transitions, from a dependent child to an independent adult, from school to work, and from a rural to an urban setting. Moreover, the sample only included Kinh people, who are the major Vietnamese cultural group. No non-Kinh people were included in the studied group. It is acknowledged that this is one of the limitations of this study and it is suggested that future study might examine non-Kinh ethnic groups. In addition, due to time and resource constraints within the scope of a thesis research program, this study acquired information from twenty participants. As it is based on a relatively small sample, generalisations about the results of this study should be cautious. However, the insights might be broadened in terms of similar literature or similar contexts.

4.10 Reflexivity

Though trying to report the research participants’ lives from their perspectives, the documentation of their perspectives is partly influenced by how I understand them; therefore, reflexivity is essential. Reflexivity demands the researcher to consider how the lens through which he or she sees the research participants and the relationships that the researcher and participants form plays an important role in the perspectives the researcher reports (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). According to Davis (1998), researchers inherit two sets of identities; the first is influenced by their academic orientation; and the second by other life experiences, which in the field, “are open to constant interpretation by the people they study” (Davis, 1998, p. 331). These differences located in academic and personal identities allow for reflexivity, reflection, critique and dialogue not only with the self but with the reality of the context and respondents (Davies, 2007).

In my situation, reflexivity is played out at two interrelated levels. First, between my status both as an ‘insider’- as a Vietnamese and also a rural to urban migrant in Hanoi; and as an ‘outsider’- as a researcher coming from an Australian education institution. Second, between this

positionality and the research context that embodies ethics, roles and strategies for data collection (Davis, 1998). In considering these issues I am constantly alerted to Hertz's suggestion (1997) that as a researcher I need to understand my positioning "within power hierarchies and within the constellation of gender, race, class, and citizenship" (Hertz, 1997, p. viii). In my research context, this means being conscious of my attitudes, my manner, how I dress, and the information I provide and share with participants, when engaging the participants. I am an 'insider' to the context of study in the sense that I am a Vietnamese woman who lived and work in the city of Hanoi for several years before conducting this research. This helps to give me insights and directs me to approach the site and potential participants more quickly; however, it also poses the risk of taking everything for granted and not digging deep enough into the research issues with a more objective perspective. Therefore, while conducting this research I tried to be an 'outsider' in order to have an 'objectivism without objectivity (as Bourdieu framed it) and look into things more carefully, with as little prejudging or the influence of prior knowledge as could be possible.

Reflexivity occurred during the data collection process, through jotting down notes and reviewing each interview in phase 1 and the photo discussions in phase 2. I did this immediately after an interview to note lessons learnt for improvement of the subsequent interviews and discussions. In addition, online discussion with supervisors to report on the happenings in the field and seek advice was also a very helpful reflection on what I have done, and helped to timely improve the quality of data collection tasks.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter has provided detail on how the data collection of this study was conducted, and how the data corpus was managed and analysed. It has also discussed some important ethical considerations of this study and how they were addressed: in particular, how the participants were approached, how their anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process and afterward, and the secure management of data. Three methods of data collection were employed in this qualitative study, including participant interviews, photovoice, and field observation. While participants' interviews provided in-depth understanding of the experiences of the migrants, the photovoice method provided another channel of expressing their experiences through images. Field observation was complementary to the first two methods, with high effectiveness in observing the embodied habitus of the research subjects. Three different sets of data were managed differently, and the thematic analysis was conducted based on one, two, or all data sets depending on the theme analysed, and the relevance of the data for that theme. The thesis

adopted thematic data analysis using a thematic analysis framework suggested by Braun and Clark (2006) and details on how this thematic analysis tool was applied in reporting the findings of the study have been provided. The rigour of the study and its methodological limitations have also been described and reflected upon. The next chapter presents the first of this thesis's three results chapters. The chapter will report on the living experiences of young migrants in the city.

Chapter 5. The living experiences of young rural to urban migrant workers

5.1 Introduction

This is the first of three findings chapters. This chapter addresses part of the first research question: *What are the living and working experiences of young migrants in the city?* This chapter presents findings on the living experiences of the young migrants and as such is largely structured around the participants' experience of the urban social field. The following chapter (chapter 6) provides results on the working experiences of the participants. The social experiences of the respondents discussed in this chapter together with the economic experiences presented in chapter 6 will help develop an understanding of how the young migrants shape their identities, a topic presented in the third and final findings chapter, chapter 7.

This chapter is informed by three sets of data: participant interviews, photovoice data, and field observation journals. It first looks at the accommodation conditions and arrangements that the participants had and their implications on the participants' social experiences. It then reports on social interactions and recreational activities of the respondents, before discussing the emotional dimension experienced by the young migrant workers while living in the city. Theoretically, this chapter draws on Bourdieu's conceptual notions of capital and field. The migrants were located in the social field of Hanoi city, which is characterised by some key features, including fast-paced development, flourishing business, a wide range of employment and entertainment options, a high level of anonymity, diverse population compositions, and a high concentration of commercial, educational and cultural institutions. These features of the social field of Hanoi city are very different from the social field in the countryside that the participants came from. This provides the participants with new and different experiences to what they had encountered in their hometowns. In addition, the notion of capital will shed light on how the participants' volume of different resources influenced their living experiences and vice-versa; that is, how such new living experiences affected their volume of capital. The chapter comprises of four sections. The first section presents the housing conditions and how they influence on the social life and well-being of the participants. The second section discusses diversified social relationships of the participants, which covers both the newly established friendships and collegiality in the city and the old ties with friends and families that they maintained in the village. Various other leisure activities that the participants involved in the city are reported in the third section. And the final section concerns with

their emotional experiences as transitioning from living in the villages to a new living environment in the city.

5.2 Housing conditions and their implications on social life and wellbeing of young migrant workers

Settling down in a new place is very important and is one of the first things that needs to be addressed before one can focus on other things. Before migration, all of the participants lived with their parents at their family home; however, after moving to the city, the respondents had a variety of housing arrangements. The housing options that the participants lived in, as identified through participants' interviews, were renting, living at work sites, living at the employer's residence, or living with relatives. Table 5.1 summarises the typology of housing arrangement and the number of participants accommodated in each housing type at the time of interview.

Table 5.1 Housing arrangement of the participants

Types of accommodation	Number of participants	Occupation of the participants	Accommodation liability
Renting	9	Factory worker (7) Service sector worker (2)	Paying rent and utilities monthly
Living at the employer's residence	6	Service sector worker (4) Construction worker (2)	Free of charge (accommodation and food are provided by the employer)
Living at worksites	3	Construction workers	Free of charge (accommodation and food are provided by the employer)
Living with relatives	2	Factory worker (1) Service sector worker (1)	Free of charge (provided by relatives)

As can be seen from Table 5.1, rental accommodation was the most common housing type among the participants, with almost half of the participants staying in rental rooms. Seven out of the nine participants who had this type of housing were factory workers; the other two were retail assistants.

Most factory worker participants (seven out of eight) lived in rental accommodation. Living at the employer's residence was the second most popular dwelling arrangement, with about one third of the participants living with their employers after working hours. Three participants lived at work sites; all of these were construction workers. Staying with relatives was the least common housing option, with only two participants being housed this way at the time of interview. Each type of accommodation was distinct from another and the type of housing had a variety of influences on the social experiences of the respondents, such as how and with whom they socialised, the types of recreational activities they enjoyed, and their feelings. Details on such issues are discussed in the following sections.

5.2.1 Renting

The participants who lived in rental accommodation chose to lease in areas close to where they worked, to make it easy, convenient and safe for them to travel to work every day. Living close to work was of particular importance for female participants who had night shifts. Some photos in figure 5.1 illustrate what their rental accommodation looked like. These pictures were taken by the participants who lived in such rental accommodation. This kind of rental property is called '*nha tro*' (lodge house) in Vietnamese. Lodge houses are often privately owned by a landlord and can be easily found outside of the industrial zones or in the outer suburbs. These lodge houses usually come in the form of blocks with multiple rooms for rent (see photos from 5.1 to 5.4). Each block accommodates a large number of tenants. Usually, two, three or even four workers share a room of about nine to twelve square meters. There are about five to ten rooms in a block that share a common bathroom and toilet, which means that about 15 to 20 tenants share this common facility (making it very crowded and unhygienic). In general, this type of accommodation is popular for migrant workers and students from other provinces who come to Hanoi for work and study. The renter participants in this study usually shared their rooms with two to three other persons, with the exception of three participants living on their own.



Photo 5.1. An entrance to a rental property complex (photo by Thoa)



Photo 5.2 Multiple rooms in a lodge house (Photo by Nam)



Photo 5.3. A cooking corner in a rental room (Photo by Thoa)



Photo 5.4 Inside a rental room (Photo by Hoa)

Most rental participants shared a common view of the condition of the rental rooms, through interviews and photo discussions, that their rooms were very small, narrow, and congested. For example, Hong, a female renter, commented that her room was very tight and that it could accommodate only a double bed, a small wardrobe, and a cooking corner (see photo 5.5 and 5.6).



Photo 5.5 My room (photo by Hong)



Photo 5.6 A kitchen corner in my room (photo by Hong)

There is no designated common kitchen area in these kinds of rental blocks, so Thoa, like many other renters, said that she had to cook in a corner of her room (see photos 5.7 and 5.8). Xuan had to cook in the corridor outside her room because there was no space in her room where she could squeeze in a cooking table.



Photo 5.7 A kitchen corner inside my room
(photo by Nam)



Photo 5.8 “My friend is cooking dinner in
her room” (photo by Nam)

On top of this, there was no separate parking lot to keep their vehicles, so they also had to keep their bikes in the room at night, making it even more congested and suffocating. Hong showed a picture of her roommate’s motorbike being kept in the room by the bed at night (photo 5.9). She shared this room with two other people.



Photo 5.9 Inside my room (photo by Hong)

Due to many tenants sharing a common toilet and bathroom, rental participants reported having to wait in long queues to use the bathroom and toilet. This was especially so at peak times of the day, such as the mornings when they were getting ready for work, and in the evening when most tenants had come home from work. Xuan explained about the bathroom facilities at her place, while showing the pictures 5.10 and 5.11,

Usually there is a long queue for the bathroom in the evening when most people are back from work... After work, I usually have to rush home as quickly as I can to avoid the long wait for using the bathroom... Sometimes when coming back late from work, I even have to use the bathroom at the same time as my housemates so that I can go to bed quicker.

(Xuan, 23, female, retail assistant)



Photo 5.10. Inside a bathroom (Photo by Xuan)



Photo 5.11 Washing clothes in the bathroom (Photo by Xuan)

It was observed through many photos taken by the rental participants that the bed was the center of most things that happened in their living space, as it served multiple functions. It was not only used for resting and sleeping (see photo 5.12) but also as a dining seat (see photo 5.13), a seat for guests (see photo 5.14), and a work and entertainment station (see photo 5.15) to name a few.

Most of the renters' daily activities at home required the bed, as their rooms were too small to fit in any other functional furniture or allow any other vacant space to sit on. When I came to interview two participants in their rooms, we sat on the bed.



Photo 5.12 Resting and talking with roommate on the bed (photo by Xuan)



Photo 5.13 Having dinner on the bed (photo by Nam)



Photo 5.14 Receiving a guest (Photo by Hoa)



Photo 5.15 Bed as a work station (Photo by Nam)

Not only was the room small and narrow, there was very limited open space outside of these blocks for rent, because the owners of such rental flats often tried to make use of the space to build as many rooms as possible. Therefore, the corridors between the blocks were often very narrow and

there were rooms without windows for air circulation. Two respondents reported on rooms with no window or inadequate windows: either that there was no window in the room, or that the window was almost blocked by the opposite building, making the room dark and cramped. Nam, one of the few renters who lived alone, demonstrated this in photos 5.16 and 5.17. He said:

My room is always very dark and humid. There is a very narrow corridor in front of my room. It gets worse on rainy days when people hang their laundry in the corridor.

(Nam, 24, male, factory worker)



Photo 5.16 Room corridor (photo by Hong)



Photo 5.17 Narrow dark corridor gets even worse with laundry lines (photo by Nam)

For the renters who lived alone, like Nam, their housing conditions were very similar to other renters, with the exception of Hai's room that had an ensuite bathroom (see photo 5.21). These three renters living alone had also stayed in shared rental rooms before, but they moved out in order to live alone after two to three years of working in the city. Though it was more costly to live alone, these participants explained that they were willing to trade higher rent for more privacy, freedom, and relaxation time.

The renters had their own ways of decorating their rooms, which reflected their characteristics, likes, interests, wishes, and dreams. Apart from furniture, participants shaped their living environment to some extent within the confines of their space. Most rental rooms were decorated with the renters' own pictures of their family members and friends, and posters of celebrities they liked. Some also brought teddy bears and other small decorative items from their

hometown, or displayed gifts and postcards given to them by their friends to decorate their rooms. They tried to personalise their living spaces. Pictures from 5.18 to 5.21 show various types of room decorations. Such decorations and the display of personal items also reflect individuals' personal interest such as the consumption and taste of music and dramas through displaying posters of singers and celebrities that they liked. The display of photos of their families and friends also showed who were important to them and the strong linkage that they remained with their hometown in their daily lives.



Photo 5.18 A wall covered with celebrities' pictures (photo by Hoa)



Photo 5.19. Posters of singers and movie stars and their own photos on the wall (photo by Thoa)



Photo 5.20 Teddy bears, their own pictures and celebrities' posters on the wall (photo by Nam)



Photo 5.21 Wall covered with wall paper and celebrities' pictures cut out from magazines (this is an ensuite room) (photo by Hai)

Living in rental accommodation was a totally new experience for all renters. They all said it was very different to how they had previously lived in the village with their parents. Some shared a room with friends or villagers, but many others lived with someone who was not related to them, or who they had only known for a short period of time. For the first time, they each lived without the direct daily guidance and supervision of their parents or another senior person in their families.

Such changes required them to make considerable adaptations and adjustments, as well as impacting on their routine, practice, thoughts, and feelings, both in positive and negative ways. In addition, they all had to pay rent and utilities, which became a new burden and concern that they did not have to think about when lived with their parents.

5.2.2 Living at the employers' residences

Living at employers' places was the second-most common type of housing, with six out of twenty participants staying at their employers' places. These participants were employees of small family businesses such as hairdressing salons and small shop assistants, as well as live-in domestic workers. In addition, two construction workers were also housed this way. The condition of housing at the employers' places varied greatly. While the two domestic workers reported having much better housing conditions, those who worked in small stores and workshops reported being more crowded and having fewer facilities. From my observations at the family home, both houses were spacious and fully-equipped with good furniture and modern household appliances. The domestic workers were allocated a separate room in the home of the family they worked for.

In contrast, the rest had to live in more cramped conditions, as the shops or workshops where they worked during the day were turned into sleeping quarters at night, or bedrooms were just a small corner to share. For example, Mai, a hairdresser, shared a small corner on the upper floor of the hairdressing salon with her workmate, where they rested and slept after working hours (see photo 5.22). The shop owner's family lived in the rooms in the rear of the shop.



Photo 5.22 My sleeping corner (photo by Mai)

All respondents in this group revealed that although the housing conditions were not that great, they did not have to pay any contribution for the rent because it was covered by the employers. In addition, they were provided with daily food. They ate together with the family. These live-in participants also acknowledged a social advantage of living with their employer's family, as they did not feel lonely, as they might if they had to live alone, because there was always someone around the house. Nevertheless, the disadvantages of this housing arrangement were significant. According to many participants in this group, some of the disadvantages were a lack of freedom and independence, inconvenience because of crowdedness, and the devotion of time to employers. For example, Nga, a hairdresser participant who lived with her employer's family, shared that she was not happy with having to do a lot of housework such as cooking and cleaning for her employer's family outside of her work hours. Having to spend all of their time at their employer's place was a recurring complaint among participants in this group. It was particularly draining for the domestic workers who were implicitly expected to be ready to work at any given time of the day. For instance, Hang one of the domestic workers, said:

I got up early to prepare breakfast for [my employer's] son because he left for school very early in the morning. I then prepared breakfast for [my employer] and her husband. They go to work, then I stay home and play with the little one. Sometimes grandma comes to play with the baby, so I can do some housework when she is around. When [my employer] comes back from work, she takes care of the baby [and] then I cook dinner and clean the house. I

clean dishes after dinner and find time to do laundry.... I often go to sleep around ten or eleven.

(Hang, 18, female, domestic worker)

Work hour patterns of the participants will be discussed in further detail in chapter 6, which focuses on the working experiences of the young migrants.

5.2.3 Living at work sites

Only the construction workers lived at their work sites. All three participants who had this kind of shelter were construction workers. They lived, ate, rested, and slept right at the construction sites where they worked. Usually a temporary tent was set up next to the construction site to accommodate all workers employed on the site, or sometimes they lived inside the building being constructed. Tam, one of the construction worker participants, said that he lived with ten other workers inside the unfinished building, in which they joined some wooden pallets together on the ground to make rooms for sleeping and eating. In this site, there was a cook who took care of buying groceries, cooking and cleaning dishes for the whole team every day (see photo 5.23). When talking about his current living condition at the work site, Tam recalled with laughter:

Oh, one time when it rained at night, I was sleeping and feeling something wet on my face. I thought there was something there but it was actually the rain water that leaked through the roof... [laugh]...”.

(Tam, 21, male, construction worker)

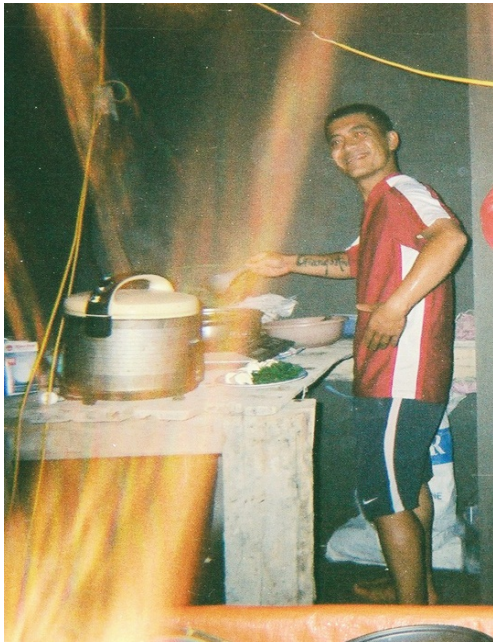


Photo 5.23 He is cooking for us every day
(photo by Tam)



Photo 5.24. My workmate is resting at night in
the tent (photo by Tam)

Tam did not seem to be bothered by the fact that his shelter was not good enough to protect him from the weather, among other things. Instead, he accepted that it was part of his occupation to live in such temporary, onsite accommodation. In addition, he enjoyed the companionship of his workmates very much. He said that they often had good chats, went out for a drink or ate out together, played cards, watched videos, or listened to music together at night in the tent (see photo 5.24).

The housing at the construction workers' sites was the most temporary, and short of basic facilities, such as a proper bathroom and toilet. In addition, there was limited access to clean water. However, the participants who had this type of accommodation did not seem to be bothered by it, just as Tam was not. For instance, Cuong commented that he got "used to it" and considered it part of his job as a construction worker. On finishing one job, they moved to another site and continued staying in this kind of accommodation. Instead of resenting this, they seemed to enjoy the collective living with their workmates, and the freedom. Similar to Tam, Duc said he went out with his co-workers almost every night after dinner to have some tea and a chat before going to bed.

5.2.4 Living with relatives

Although a greater number of participants reported being accommodated by their relatives on their initial arrival in Hanoi, only two participants were living with their relatives at the time of the interviews. Hung and Ly, who lived at their uncles' places, said that the housing conditions of their relatives in the city were much better than in their rural homes, and they were also much better than the housing conditions of their friends and workmates who were renting. Living with their relatives, both Hung and Ly did not have to pay the rent or contribute to utilities and food. These things were covered by their relatives, because Hung and Ly were considered to be like their relatives' own children. Both participants praised the benefits of living with their uncles and aunties, such as reducing their costs of living, and having the company of their relatives which eased feelings of homesickness and loneliness, especially when they were new to the city and did not know anyone.

Ly expressed her gratitude for being accommodated by her aunty and uncle. She described herself as a shy and fearful girl, and she cherished the protection and safety of the living environment in her relatives' houses. She thought that she could not work and live in this city if she were not accommodated and supported by them. Moreover, she was able to save most of her income, as she did not have to pay for the rent, bills, and food. She photographed her room, which she shared with one of her cousins at her uncle's family home (see photos 5.25 and 5.26).



Photo 5.25 My uncle's house - photo by Ly



Photo 5.26 My room, [shared] with my uncle's daughter (photo by Ly)

While respondents who lived with their relatives acknowledged numerous advantages of living with their relatives, there were also several drawbacks. For example, Hung revealed that he would still prefer to move out to live on his own rather than being dependent on his uncle's family. He said:

Sometimes, I want to move out to live on my own to have more freedom, but I think twice about it and realise that I am living here (with uncle) now, [and] I do not have to pay for the rent, dinner, water and electricity bills. But if I lived outside, how much would I have to pay each month? Also I do not want to share accommodation with many others, but I prefer to live on my own.... I can see it is inconvenient to live with my uncle sometimes but it is okay.

(Hung, 21, male, sales and marketing assistant)

In summary, on leaving their parents' home in the village for a new life in the city, young migrants had various types of housing arrangements. Many lived in rental accommodation sharing with their friends or colleagues, or lived alone; some resided at the site where they worked; others stayed with their employer's families; and a few were accommodated by their relatives who had previously migrated to the city. In general, the housing conditions of the migrants varied greatly. While a few participants, who lived with relatives and domestic workers, had better living conditions than in their villages, those living in rental and worksite accommodation were shown to be worse. Rental accommodation was often crowded and expensive, while living at a worksite was

very transient and fraught with harsh conditions. Each type of accommodation had its own pros and cons and had a variety of social implications for the participants' social and emotional lives, which will be discussed in the following section.

5.2.5 Implications of new accommodation arrangements

Leaving the family home to live away for the first time is a significant event for young people and it is even more remarkable for young people in this study as they would otherwise have grown up in the village and would continue to live at their parents' home until they get married. For many cases, married couples remain living with their parents. . Regardless of the type of accommodations that the participants had after migration, leaving their parental home was a remarkable turning point in their lives. The various types of accommodation described above had various implications for the social life of the participants in different ways. . Unlike their parental homes in rural areas, which were more stable and free of charge, on relocating to the city-in the new social field-the participants mainly lived in somewhat temporary types of accommodation that were relatively unstable, as they had to move every now and then. The conditions of the rental accommodation were not great and were more expensive compared to being housed at an employer's or relative's place. However, many respondents who were housed by relatives and employers expressed interest in being able to afford a rental room rather than being dependent on the employers and relatives. This means that in general the participants seemed to value a living space that provided them with more freedom, independence, and autonomy.

The renters and those who stayed on worksites reported enjoying the highest level of freedom, independence and autonomy among all participants, as they were not under the supervision of any one and were not restricted by anything after their working hours. They were free to use their spare time to socialise and enjoy any type of entertainment activities that interested them after working hours. In fact, these two groups of respondents reported having more diversified social networks through interacting with their co-tenants and neighbors, or by participating in social occasions such as birthday parties, going out with friends and colleagues, and so on. Through these kinds of interactions their informal connections were gradually extended, thus increasing their social capital which in the long term might be very helpful for them to find other jobs, accommodation, and so on.

In contrast, the participants who resided at their relatives' and employers' places shared experiences of having limited free time outside of working hours. They experienced a high level of

restriction, and a lack of autonomy and freedom because they had to either ask for permission to do things or they had to report to their employers or relatives about what they did outside working hours. Living with relatives and employers resulted in supervision and reporting that made those participants feel a lack of freedom and autonomy. In addition, their socialising activities were also somewhat surveilled and restricted by the relatives with whom they lived, as they acted as their guardians. Consequently, in the long term living this way might slow down the process of reaching out for more diversified external social connections, compared to those who lived in rental accommodation and onsite. All respondents in this group, except for Ly, said they would prefer to move out and live on their own or with friends in rental accommodation, and that they would do so as soon as they could afford it.

It was further observed that the type of occupation played an influential role in shaping the type of housing that a respondent was likely to have. Most service worker participants in this study were offered accommodation at the residences of the service owners, while all factory worker participants arranged their accommodation by themselves, with most opting for rentals. On the other hand, most construction worker participants were housed at the construction sites. On the whole, the participants wanted better housing conditions in which they could enjoy better facilities, more freedom, and privacy, but they were tempered by financial constraints.

In short, it shows that the young migrant workers who participated in this study had limited choices of housing: rather it was a matter of what options were available to them. Types of jobs and financial resources were among the important factors that affected how they made choices about where and how they lived in the city. In particular, being young and with only recent employment, young migrant workers could not afford to live in what they preferred to (namely, in rental accommodation). Instead they needed to take the option which was most viable. The transition from parental home which was more stable, free of charge, and more secure compared to living in a new place in the city, to living away from home was a totally new social experience for all participants, which made many participants realise and value the taken-for-granted benefits of living with parents. Their new situation also motivated them to work harder to earn more in order to afford to live in a proper rental dwelling that offered more autonomy and freedom.

5.3 Social relationships

This section discusses the social relationships that the young migrants had developed after migration as well as maintained their relationships with hometown ties. It also concerns with their interactions with the local residents and community.

Most participants in this study spent a large portion of their time working hard to earn a living, leaving them little free time for social and leisure activities. Their long working hours will be reported in the next chapter as a part of their working experiences. When discussing their pastimes, two thirds of the respondents said they often slept or just stayed at home to relax and recover. Leisure and social activities were reported to be very limited, both in terms of the amount of time allocated to them and the variation of activities. Gathering with friends was the most frequently mentioned pastime by the participants, followed by using multi-media devices for entertainment, such as mobile phones, television, computers and the internet, and listening to music. Another form of social interaction included engaging with local residents and community, but this was reported by very few participants.

5.3.1 Friendships

Most participants said they often met up with friends in their free time. The circle of their friends included co-workers, co-tenants who they got to know after migration, and old friends and villagers who also migrated to the city for work like themselves. It was very common among the participants to gather with their friends to go out, go on a picnic, or go shopping, or just simply gather at a friend's place to chat, cook and eat together when they had a day off from work. Male participants often reported going out to have drinks and meals. Trung, a male participant, said:

When meeting my friends, we often [go] out for tea/coffee or go here and there. Even when I catch up with my friends in [my] hometown on my home visit, we also [go] out for tea, eating out, and go to sing in a karaoke bar.

(Trung, 20, male, technician worker)

Duc and Trung, both male construction workers, showed in pictures their tea and coffee time with their workmates after dinner (see photos 5.27 and 5.28).



Photo 5.27 Having a coffee with my friend after work (photo by Trung)



Photo 5.28 Tea time with my workmates (photo by Duc)

Female participants said that they often gathered at someone's place to have a chat, and to cook and eat together on their day off. Thoa depicted her good time cooking and eating with her friends (see photo 5.29) at a friend's rental room:

At the end of the month when we receive our pay, we gather with some friends to eat and drink together or something like that, not much [other] than that kind of activity. Just [on] one day off in a while like that we could do it. We then go back to [our] normal daily work routine the next day. We do not go out much. I am from a poor family so I often tell myself that I need to work hard and go out less.

(Thoa, 24, female, factory worker)



Photo 5.29 Gathering and eating with friends on a housemate's birthday (photo by Hoa)



Photo 5.30 Cooking and eating with friends on day off (photo by Thoa)

Most participants demonstrated that they enjoyed this, as it provided them a relaxing time together after working hard. At such gatherings, they shared their hometown memories, personal stories, concerns, happiness and sorrows, to feel emotional support and sympathy from each other. Meet-ups with friends was a popular way that participants maintained their existing connections with their village friends and also developed new social connections. It was a form of social capital that was meaningful to their mental self-satisfaction as well as socially and financially beneficial in the long run. Most participants acknowledged the importance and value of this kind of social activity and they tried to maintain seeing their friends regularly whenever they could make time.

In addition, there were many other activities that participants did with their friends, which were captured in a series of photos by various participants. For example, going to a park, as shown in photo 5.31; going to shopping centres, as shown in photo 5.32; eating out, as shown in photo 5.33; wandering around in the city (photo 5.34); celebrating a friend's birthday (photo 5.35); and having a fun night out, singing and drinking with friends at a karaoke bar, as shown in photo 5.36.



Photo 5.31 Visiting a park (photo by Thoa)



Photo 5.32 Shopping (photo by Hai)



Photo 5.33 Eating out with co-workers (photo by Son)



Photo 5.34 Wandering around in the city (photo by Hoa's friend)



Photo 5.35A friend's birthday party (photo by Hong)



Photo 5.36 Singing at a karaoke bar (Photo by Hai)

The participants undertook various activities in their free time together with their friends such as going shopping, going to public parks, eating out, and so on. This indicated that they had gained the ability to buy, to consume new life styles and new material goods that were not possible when were in the villages. The daily consumption of urban living styles were seen clearly among the participants through not just their social activities but through consumption of other material goods such as new phones, computers, motorbikes, and through remittances to their parents, the latter of which will be discussed in later sections.

It was observed that the participants' housing arrangements significantly shaped the types of social activities they were more likely to be involved with. Renters and those who lived at their work sites reported having much more frequent catching-up and going-out time with their friends, compared to those who lived with their employers and relatives. Moreover, only renters could host dinner at their own places with their friends, while those who lived with employers and relatives never did this type of social gathering. This also partly explained why those who were living with their relatives or employers expressed their desires and preference to live in rental accommodation.

5.3.2 Collegiality

As already described work constitutes a large and important part of life for the young migrant workers. Relationships with colleagues at work therefore formed an important part of their social lives. In general, most participants commented that they had good workmates, and many had developed good friendships and companionships. A few worked at the same place and shared accommodation. They had become good friends with each other. Hoa commented that:

We are all in the same situation of being migrant workers, living far away from families, so we care for each other.... We chat at work, making the working atmosphere more cheerful. Experienced workers often show new comers how to do the jobs....

(Hoa, 20, female, retail assistant)

Construction workers, for instance, often provided good company for each other during after work hours. Tam explained:

We get on well with each other, we brothers often go out to have coffee or some drinks together after work... or just stay in the tent talking with each other, listening and texting to friends, and so on.

(Tam, 21, male, construction worker)

This companionship between workers was a good source of mental support, and helped them to get through long, hard, working days. Most participants had harmonious relationships with their colleagues, but there were a few participants who experienced conflict with their workmates, ranging from verbal fights to the physically violent fights that occurred for one of the participants:

I was new so they bullied me. One day, when I had just finished some morning deliveries, it was close to 12 o'clock noon and I was about to have my lunch break but they (one of the Nghe An workers) asked me to go for another delivery and I responded to his request, "You did not finish your delivery task; it is your responsibility, not my job". Soon after, at night on that day he called his friends (who also come from his hometown, Nghe An) who came and stopped me on my way to beat me up...[laughs].

(Cường, 21, male, brick layer)

Good relationships at work not only helped participants get through their long working days, but they also provided emotional support and made them feel more attached and committed to their jobs. Having good relationships at work also gave the participants better opportunities to excel in their careers, as co-workers can introduce better jobs to each other. On the other hand, conflicts in the work place, whether with employers or with colleagues, usually brought about a deterioration of the passion and commitment to work. In some cases this led to resignations and losing the employment network support, which was very important for the pursuit of future jobs. The interaction with local residents and local community of the participants will now be discussed.

5.3.3 Social interaction with local residents and local community

In contrast to the frequent socialising with friends, villagers or colleagues, very few participants had interactions with local residents or engaged in the local community life in which they lived. Most respondents said they did not know any local residents other than their landlords, a couple of neighbors, and a few nearby family store-owners from whom they sometimes bought their necessities. None ever participated in any local community event or activity. They said that they

either did not know about what happened in the community or that they were too busy with their work to care and join in, as Tam commented:

I never attend any event here. I do not have information about any event to join. At home I know everything happening in my village and attend all of them.

(Tam, 21, male, construction worker)

It was the opposite situation when he was in his hometown. He explained:

I did not miss any event in my village. As long as there is one, I attend. Any upcoming event in the village we certainly know about. Everyone talks about it.

(Tam, 21, male, construction worker)

Vui, a female factory worker, also shared the same perspective that the community life in the city was very different from that of her hometown, where everyone in the village knew one another. She said:

It is complicated here. People know only their own families. I am more familiar with living in my hometown where everyone knows everyone in the village. [It is] very well-connected and sentimental there. Here, it is very different, a very pressured life.

(Vui, 21, female, factory worker)

It can be seen that those young migrant participants experienced a shift from a collective, open living style with a high level of connectedness in the countryside to a more individualised and closed urban living style. Often, the participants saw themselves as young countryside peasants coming from the villages and distinguished themselves from the urbanites. In other words, they saw a distance or barrier between themselves and the local urbanites, which made them feel uncomfortable and uneager to interact and integrate with local urbanites and the local community in general. They either totally immersed themselves in the urban socio-cultural field, or they felt the “rule of the game” (Bourdieu, 1990) but were unsure how to ‘play with those rules’.

5.3.4 Discussion of social relationships of young migrants

It was observed that the participants had developed and extended a variety of new social relationships in the city after their migration. Besides maintaining previous friendships with their old friends and villagers who were also migrants, most of them expanded on these to make new

friends both at residences and workplaces. Unlike being in the village, in which kin relationships dominated their social relationships, new and diversified relationships with non-kin people had developed in their social lives. In general, this is often observed among young adults where familial and kin-tie relationships ease while other social relationships such as friendships tend to grow. The expansion of extended social relationships is also a marker of growing up, finding a social standing in society and becoming an independent citizen. In the context of living away from home, the expanding of these types of social relationships (friendships and colleagues) was taking place even more obviously and substantially.

Gathering with friends was obviously important and was the most popular social interaction. All participants mentioned hanging out with their friends as the most frequent activity that they did outside of their working hours.

Despite conceptually drawing on Bourdieu, according to Putnam (2000) (another social capital theorist), these informal social connections, such as chatting with friends, drinking with workmates, and cooking and dining out together with friends, are ways of maintaining and building social capital. Some respondents revealed that they found jobs due to the introductions of their friends and workmates. Such informal relationships and interactions formed an important channel of reciprocity to help them get by during hardship, such as borrowing money from each other before payday or in between jobs. Being in the city, friendships appeared to substitute, to a greater extent, familial ties for the participants. Friendship relationships represented for most participants their most important social resources. Their friendships with new people developed over time, from work places to residential areas. Such extended social and friendship relationships developed what Putnam calls 'a social glue' (Putnam, 2000) for the young migrants, which helped them to feel a sense of belonging and attachment to the city. For most participants, new friendships became crucial emotional as well as practical support when living far away from their families. In addition to establishing social relationships with new acquaintances in the city, connecting with co-villagers (usually in a similar age-range) who had also migrated to work in Hanoi formed a large part of the social network of the participants. There was usually a higher level of trust among migrants from the same village rather than between the migrants and their new urban acquaintances, due to the fact that the villagers had known each other and their respective families for a long time. This practice led to a phenomenon of same-village migrants clustering together, such as doing the same or similar jobs, and living in the same neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, there was very minimal interaction

between the participants and the local community and local residents. This might be partly due to the fact that most participants were relatively new to the city, and also because of the anonymous nature of the urban life style. The next section will examine the recreational life of the participants.

5.4 Other leisure activities

In general, the participants saw themselves as having few recreational activities due to limited free time and money. For example, Hong said:

Living here we have to buy most necessary things. However, there is usually no entertainment device because we do not have time for it. When the work shift is over, we just want to go home and rest, sleep, [and] not bother [with] any kind of entertainment...I do not see it [as] necessary.

(Hong, 20, female, factory worker)

Some popular pastimes, as revealed by participants through interviews, included watching television, using mobile phones for listening to music and watching videos, and using computers and the internet. Some other activities, taken up by a small number of participants, included reading and playing games.

5.4.1 Using mobile phones

'Using mobile phones' topped the list of activities the participants did in their spare time. Each participant owned a mobile phone. They used their phones not only for conventional purposes such as talking and texting, but also for entertainment in their spare time, such as listening to music, watching videos, or playing games. Hoa noted:

We live in rental accommodation. We do not have a television. Most of the time we all just stay in the room. All of us have a mobile phone each so after dinner we each play with our phone, texting, listening to music, or playing games before we go to sleep.

(Hoa, 20, female, retail assistant)

A few participants said that they also used their phones to go on the internet for online socialising and to read the news. Figure 5.5 shows a few moments when the participants used their mobile phones as entertainment devices. These pictures were taken randomly by the participants, without any prior intention to reflect their usage of mobile phones, but when discussing their photos

with the researcher it became evident how frequently both they and their friends used the phones. As examples, Hai is resting at his friend's place and using his phone to go online, as shown in photo 5.37; Trung is texting and listening to music on his phone while resting in the work tent at night, as shown in photo 5.38; a Xuan is talking with her parents on the phone (see picture 5.39) and is playing games on her phone (see picture 5.40).



Photo 5.37 Online with mobile phone (photo by Hai)



Photo 5.38 Listening to music on phone (photo by Trung)



Photo 5.39 Talking with parents on phone (photo by Xuan)



Photo 5.40 Playing games on mobile phone (Photo by Xuan)

Mobile phones have become increasingly popular in Vietnam over the past decade. A recent survey (NAME 2015) shows the very high mobile phone subscriber rate in Vietnam: more than one

mobile phone per person. The fast increase of mobile phone subscription in Vietnam is due to lower costs of the devices and telecommunication service charges. Owning and using a mobile phone is common even in the rural areas, however, most participants did not own and use mobile phones before their migration. At the time of this study, all participants had a mobile phone as they needed to communicate with their families and friends and they also could afford to do so. Watching television

Besides using their phones watching television was reported to be the second most popular recreational activity among the participants. Before talking with the participants, it was anticipated that watching television might be the most popular pastimes; however, only around half of the participants said that they often watched TV, usually at night after dinner. All participants who lived at their employers' residences or with their relatives had TV sets at their accommodation. They watched TV almost every night. However, only two renters had a TV set in their rooms. None of the workers who lived at the worksite had a TV there. Therefore, the two latter groups watched TV the least. When they wanted to watch a TV program, they had to go to their neighbours' homes, as Vui and Hoa sometimes did. Vui said,

I go to Ms Hang's store to chat with her and watch TV there every now and then. But I actually hardly [ever] go there, very rarely, only once in a blue moon when I have [a] day off.

(Vui, 21, male, retail assistant)

Hoa, who did not own a TV, explained that her housemates and herself could afford to buy a TV, but they were not willing to pay for its running costs. She articulated:

Hmm, we do not know where to buy the TV. Also, my roommates and I do not know for sure yet how long we will be living together, so we do not buy one. In addition, if we did get one, we [would] also have to pay for the monthly cabled programs, plus more payments for the electricity bill. So we said to ourselves that [because] we do not use it, [we would] not purchase one. Though we are interested in seeing the programs, we also told each other that having a TV [would incur] some [greater costs] on top of the bills every month, so we left the idea. Everyone felt the cost. We all have a similar, economical mindset.

(Hoa, 20, female, retail assistant)

In addition to not being able to pay the electricity bill of the TV, a few participants added that they did not want to buy many assets or furniture because they were not sure how long they would be staying in that place. This illustrates viewpoints of young migrants to urban lives. Many participants saw their lives in the city as temporary and that they might settle in the long-term somewhere else or return to their hometown even though they might stay for many years in the city or never live permanently in their village of origins.

5.4.2 Using computers and the internet

A few participants owned computers or had access to one and had the skills to use it. About a quarter of the participants reported that they used computers with an internet connection, but the frequency of usage varied from one to another. Nam and Hung both owned a computer each and used them on a daily basis for entertainment and work purposes. However, other participants had less frequent access to computers and the internet. For instance, Hang, a live-in domestic worker, only had access to a computer on an irregular basis, as she would only use the computer of her employer's son when he was not using it. Similarly, Hai sometimes used his brother's laptop to watch movies and videos online. Other participants who did not have a computer went to paid internet cafes every now and then.

These computer users said that they used computers to go on the internet for news, online movies, online social networking, and playing online games. In particular, online social networking was noted as a new and emerging activity among the young migrants, with five participants having Facebook accounts and who reported being frequent Facebook users. Friends and colleagues helped each other to learn to use a computer and the internet in their free time. For instance, Nam who owned a computer, taught some of his friends and neighbours to use the computer and internet at his place. Picture 5.15 (shown in the previous section) shows his girlfriend logging onto Facebook, using his computer at his place.

The internet-based social media are new and emerging ways of communicating and socialising, especially among young people. A proportion of the participants in this study had access to the internet and had sufficient skills in using the internet for this purpose, making social connections not only in real-life but also in cyberspace.

In summary, most participants had limited recreational activities due to their limited free time, affordability and access. It was noted that using mobile phones for entertainment had become

very popular recreational device among the young migrants. Watching TV was also a popular activity, but only around half of the participants watched television regularly due to limited access and time. In addition, quite a few participants used computers and the internet for entertainment, which is new and quickly emerging among the youth, particularly in urban areas. Affordability to own computers and internet access and the ability to use these new information and communication technologies is also associated with the symbol of modernity, well connected, and trendy. Some participants in this study, especially the male participants showed their special interests and their mastery of using such technologies while fewer female participants had high frequency of using computers and the internet. This ‘modernity’ and ‘globalised’ consumption of young migrants in Vietnam mirror what Mills (1999) indicated in her studies of Thai young migrants in Bangkok, and Thorsen’s (2014) findings of young migrants’ consumption of jeans, bicycles and mobile phones in Burkina Faso as a symbol of globalised consumption.

5.5 The emotional experiences

The feelings that emerge as a consequence of dwelling within and moving through places are complex (Davidson et al. 2005). The happiness, sadness, frustration, excitement and ambivalence that accompany mobility are central to social life, shaping our experiences of the world and relations with others (Conradson & McKay, 2007, p. 169). The participants of this study shared a mixture of complex feelings that they experienced in their city life, ranging from positive feelings, such as happiness, satisfaction, excitement and fulfillment through to more negative feelings, such as disappointment, sadness, and loneliness. Some participants enjoyed their urban life while others showed disappointment with a “boring” life, frustrations with the lack of social interconnectedness and so on. This section discusses the emotional dimension of the participants’ experiences. Their emotional feelings are grouped into three dichotomous pairs that capture the ambivalence of their emotional experiences, including freedom versus loneliness; fun versus boredom; nostalgia versus present and future focus.

5.5.1 Freedom versus loneliness

Embarking on a life away from home, most participants were no longer under the direct supervision and control of their parents. This was also a time when most participants gained freedom and developed their independence, both socially and financially. The majority of the respondents valued the greater freedom, independence, and autonomy that they had as a result of

living on their own in the city. This was mentioned more frequently by male rather than female participants. Duc said that he could now determine the use of his own time, without the strict supervision of his parents:

When I was in the village, my parents, they were very strict in monitoring my schedule. They [would] set a time when I had to come back home, when I [went] out at night. But living and working here, I can go out till as late as I want without any problem.

(Duc, 24, male, iron worker)

Similarly, Minh, a 20-year-old male factory worker, also appreciated the freedom of his life away from home:

Being here is certainly more relaxed and free....Living far away from my parents is not my preference in some aspects, but it is also partly enjoyable because no one tells me when to do what.

(Minh, 20, male, factory worker)

Away from parental guidance and supervision, some participants reported that they did some things that they had never done before in the village. For example, Hoa never went out late at night when she lived with her parents in her hometown, but now she sometimes wanders around with her friends in town late at night. Photo 5.41 was taken by her friend on a night out, in a street in the city centre.



Photo 5.41 Wandering in the old quarter of Hanoi late at night
(photo by Hoa)

Though enjoying freedom and independence made possible by distance from home, about one quarter of the participants said that they felt lonely and homesick at times. Hoa explained how she felt:

Living far away from my parents, many times I feel sad. Many times I have thought to myself that it is so lovely for those [friends] who are still living with their parents in the village while I am living here (away from them). I call and talk to them sometimes when my roommates all go out. I feel very sad and cry in my heart. I still like being with my parents at home... I can talk to my parents if I am home, but I am all alone here... no one to talk with. Yes, freedom is here, but [there is a] lack of affection. It is much more free here, but there is a lack of parental affection so I feel sad.

(Hoa, 20, female, retail assistant)

In the same vein, Vui revealed that she was very emotional when she had idle time alone in her rental room. She often thought of her family and felt homesick when she was alone. Feelings of homesickness and loneliness were reported more by female than male participants.

5.5.2 Fun versus boredom

Changing living locations and environment meant changing from a quiet and slow pace of life to the fast-paced, modern, urban life that is material and consumption oriented. This was an

overwhelming experience for quite a few participants. Ha, a domestic worker, shared her impression:

I find life here is busier and more vibrant compared to my hometown. There are many new and exciting things to see, for example, there are many more beautiful places to go and visit compared to my home town. It is more crowded and busy, more vibrant and fun. In my hometown, people go to sleep very early, it's quiet and boring. When I was home I [would] talk to my parents for a while, but they sleep early, at eight o'clock, so I [would] become bored. It is more interesting and dynamic here.

(Ha, 18, female, domestic worker)

In addition, a few participants showed their excitement and eagerness for exploring the city. For example, rather than being overwhelmed, Hung, a male participant, enjoyed embracing the new urban lifestyle. He eagerly talked about how he explored different places in the city:

...happy and fun! I have been to almost every corner of the city. I even [go] into the very small and narrow alleys which I think for [certain] not many Hanoians [have] been to.

(Hung, 21, male, sales and marketing assistant)

In the same vein, Xuan, a female sales assistant, added that she enjoyed the convenience and many other things that the big city offered, such as pre-prepared food, lots of goods, and convenient services. In photo 5.42, Xuan is having dinner in a street-side restaurant after work. She explained that she buys take away food from street vendors on the way home from work or eats in small street-side food stalls every now and then, especially when she finishes her job late and does not have time to cook. Xuan commented:

It is very convenient here in many aspects. We have money, we can get whatever we need. In the village, we cannot always buy what we need even if we have money.

(Xuan, 23, female, sales assistant)



Photo 5.42 Having dinner in a noodle store after work
(photo by Xuan)

Though claiming that there were lots of fun activities to do and new things to explore, many participants, including both those who expressed excitement and those who revealed they felt lonely and homesick, shared a view that living in the city is boring at times. The boredom of life in the city was revealed by more than half of the participants, with more female than male participants experiencing this feeling. Vui, who complained about the busy work schedule, also said that she was bored with the city life. She emphasised that the only thing keeping her in the city was her monthly wage. Otherwise, she did not see any value in being in the city. She preferred to live in the countryside where she was surrounded by her family and friends. Vui commented:

Every day, working from morning till late evening! Leaving home in the morning and not returning home till night. If I have a night shift then [I] return home in the morning, I spend the day sleeping, then on waking up [I] continue going to work again. There is no time for going out, only on [my] day off.

(Vui, 21, female, manufacturing worker)

Sharing a similar perspective with Vui, Hoa noted that she rarely went out or became involved in any social activity after work, and she felt bored being home alone. She said:

In general, we do not go anywhere. Many times my roommates go out, leaving me home alone so I feel very bored; [I] just listen to music then sleep. Like last night, my housemates all went out. I stayed alone in the room, just listened to music and then slept.

(Hoa, 21, female, retail assistant)

5.5.3 Nostalgia versus present and future focus

Living in both rural and urban spaces, it is natural to have feelings about both places. In fact, most participants said that in the conversations they had with their friends and villagers, they usually recalled and shared their memories about past times in the village. In individual interviews with the participants, at times they talked about the joy and carefree nature of their past life in the village. They described their villages as strongly connected communities where everybody knew and cared for each other. By contrast, there were numerous changes and new things in daily life in the city: some were exciting, but others were also discouraging.

Most participants felt as though they were caught between two worlds: their village life in the past and their current life in the city. In particular, many participants saw their past life through quite a positive lens, recalling all their good memories, compared to their current, tough life in the city. Photos 5.43 to 5.46 are snapshots of the villages that Hung and Hoa—two participants of this study—took when they visited their hometowns. Photo 5.43 is a corn farm near Hoa's village; photo 5.44 is the seashore close to Hoa's parents' house. She said she liked visiting these places whenever she visited home. She enjoyed the fresh air from the sea and the smell of the farm. She felt relaxed and carefree whenever she was at home. In picture 5.45, Hung is helping his parents to clean up the house. He explained that it was a tradition of his family to clean up the house and repaint the walls at the end of the year, to welcome all the good spirits in the new year with a hope of wiping away the hardships of the previous year. He visited home very often and was happy to help his parents with anything he could. Picture 5.46 shows a bird that Hung kept as a pet, but that he had to leave at home when he moved to Hanoi. He said there was no place to hang the bird cage in his new home and he could not take good care of the bird because he was at work the whole day.



Photo 5.43 A corn farm near Hoa's village
(photo by Hoa)



Photo 5.44 Hoa is visiting the seashore
close to her home (photo by Hoa)



Photo 5.45 Hung is helping his parents to clean
up the house (photo by Hung's sister)



Photo 5.46 A pet in the village (photo by
Hung)

There were recurring themes of the past lives: the stories and events of the villages and the link between them and the current life of the participants. Nevertheless, some participants were very positive about their current life in the city: particularly those who had developed social connections and/or had accumulated good financial capital. A few participants demonstrated firmly that they would prefer to live in the city in the long term and would not go back to their villages.

5.5.4 Discussion of emotional experiences of young migrants

It can be seen that the participants experienced a complexity of feelings: excitement at embracing numerous new things such as modernity and advanced facilities; disappointment with low quality housing and employment conditions; enjoyment of freedom, the autonomy of being away from home and out of parental control, building up their social and financial independence, and growing to be independent adults; and loneliness and homesickness at being away from the relatives and friends they grew up with. It was observed among quite a few participants that there were some contradictions and tensions in their thoughts and attitudes. On the one hand, they enjoyed the more vibrant and dynamic side of the city, and on the other, they found it boring at times. On one side, they preferred the convenience and easily available goods and services in the city. On the other side, they missed the strong neighborhood ties of village life. Therefore, there were nostalgic feelings experienced by many participants. The memories and events of the past kept reoccurring and impacting on their current life in the city. For some, seeing their past life from a distance sometimes made them realise how important the care and support of their parents was. The hardship of a past life in poverty also made many participants become stronger and more willing to endure hard work in the city in order to escape poverty. Geographic mobility had been undertaken to access a world of financial and material opportunity, to move beyond the confines of their village life. With this came new and various dimensions of emotional experience that emerged on relocating and starting a new journey in the city. These emotions significantly influenced the ways in which the young migrants saw themselves, as well as what they wanted to do in the future. This will be explored further in a section regarding their future aspirations in chapter 7. The young migrant workers in this study had gone through a special stage which Arnett (2000) called 'emerging adulthood', which means it is no longer adolescence but not yet being adulthood, and which young people often go through with ambiguity and uncertainty.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed different aspects of the social and emotional experiences of the young migrants who participated in this study. On leaving their parental homes, the participants took up different kinds of accommodation, including renting, residing at employers' homes, living at work sites, and being accommodated by relatives. Sharing rental accommodation with friends was the most popular among those options, and it was also the most preferred type of housing because it offered the participants more freedom, privacy and autonomy compared to being housed

by employers or relatives. The type of accommodation had important social and emotional implications for the participants' overall social experiences in the city. Those who lived with employers' families or relatives did not report suffering loneliness and homesickness as much as the renters did; however, the former groups did not have as many opportunities to expand their social networks as the renters did.

With regards to social interactions, most participants established new social relationships in the city with new friends, colleagues, and neighbours, and at the same time maintained strong connections and frequent contact with families and friends in their villages. Friendships became very important social connections for most participants in the context of living away from familial ties. There were very limited interactions with local residents and the local community. Though they often claimed to have very limited free time, the majority of participants had some sort of recreational activity, of which gathering with friends was the most popular. After that, watching television, and using mobile phones for listening to music and watching videos, were also popular at-home entertainment activities among the participants. The use of computers and the internet was also emerging in this group.

Emotionally, the participants experienced diverse feelings that ranged across happiness, satisfaction, excitement, fulfillment, sadness, disappointment, ambiguity, and nostalgia. Many respondents were satisfied with the improvement in their material life due to having a regular income. In addition, they were happy about becoming independent both financially and socially, gaining freedom, and developing greater autonomy away from parental guidance and supervision. Some participants felt excited and enjoyed the busy and dynamic life that the urban living environment offered, while others found the pace of life in the city was very pressured and took time to adapt. It is an important observation that loneliness and boredom were the two recurrent themes emerging from most of the interviews with participants in addition to the feelings of eagerness and excitement with the new living environment. Many of them had feelings of nostalgia; they kept recalling and thinking about the good memories from their hometown. In addition, some participants showed their frustration and tiredness with life in the city, as everything was more costly there than in their hometowns.

It was observed that there were some differences between male and female participants on how they experienced social interactions and emotions in the city life. While more number of male were more opened and embracing new things that the city offered. They went out more and tended

to enjoy exploring the city. On the other hand, female participants tended to spend more time at a domestic environment such as at a friend's place. In addition, the expression of boredom and loneliness were found more among female participants than among the male counterparts.

This chapter has presented different aspects of social lives as experienced by the participant as they lived in the city of Hanoi after migration. Many things are new to the participants from everyday organisation of their living to changes of social relationships. There were a mixture of experiences and feelings both positively and negatively, both rewarding and frustrated which resulted from both relocating and living in a new urban environment and as an integral part of growing up and becoming independent adults. The next chapter will explore the experiences of the young migrants in the economic field with a focus on their employment experiences.

Chapter 6. The working experiences of young rural to urban migrants

6.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter discussed the living experiences of the young migrants in the urban social field. This chapter focuses on their working experiences in the urban economic field, because working experiences constitute a major part of the overall experience for young migrants in the city. Together with chapter 5, this chapter addresses the first research question, *What are the living and working experiences of young migrants in the city?* Recall that *field* is defined by Bourdieu as a social space where human beings act under its rules and regulations (Swartz, 1997). There are several fields that operate with their own sets of rules. Fields have their own rules, histories, and lore (Thomson, 2008). The economic field is defined by Bourdieu as “a cosmos obeying its own laws” (Bourdieu, 2005b, p. 5). In relation to this study, there are various components within the urban economic field; however, this chapter focuses on the employment field in which the participants are involved as employees.

The analysis and discussion of this chapter is based on three sets of data: in-depth participant interviews, photovoice data, and field observation journals. While the first two sets of data are the primary sources of material for this chapter, the observation journals play a smaller role because only limited observation at work places was possible.¹⁹ The chapter starts with a reminder of the occupational profiles of the twenty research participants. This is then followed by reporting the spectrum of their work-related experiences, including working environment, working hours, and safety issues at workplaces. The third section discusses the economic capital accumulated by the participants in the forms of savings and remittances.

6.2 Occupational profile of the participants

In understanding the economic sphere of the participants, it is necessary to appreciate their varied employment profiles. As mentioned earlier in the methodology chapter, there were a total of twenty young migrants living and working in Hanoi who participated in this study. All of them

¹⁹Observations could only be conducted in open-environment workplaces such as shops, construction sites, markets, and small workshops. The author could not observe inside of the participants' workplaces such as companies and factories.

were working full-time when this study was conducted. Their jobs ranged across manufacturing, construction, hairdressing, retail, and domestic work. Based on the nature of their work, the occupations of the participants could be classified into three employment sectors: (1) the manufacturing sector, which includes workers in factories and workshops; (2) the construction sector, which includes brick layers, builders, and plumbers; and (3) the services sector, which comprised those who worked in restaurants, shops, hairdressing salons and domestic services (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 The occupational profiles of the research participants

Employment sector	Occupations	Female respondents	Male respondents	Total respondents
Manufacturing sector	Factory worker	3	3	6
	Technician	1	1	2
Construction sector	Builder	0	4	4
	Construction worker			
	Metal worker			
Services sector	Waiter	7	1	8
	Shop assistant			
	Handicraft worker			
	Hairdresser			
	Domestic workers			
Total		11	9	20

As is evident in Table 6.1, a larger number of the participants were employed in the service and manufacturing sectors. Forty percent of the research participants were working in these two sectors

respectively. The service and manufacturing sectors have been the fastest growing employment sectors in Vietnam since 2000, reflecting the processes of urbanisation and globalisation taking place in the country. They are among the top occupations that absorb the highest proportion of rural to urban migrant laborers in Vietnam (Asian Development Bank, 2005). The occupations of the research participants do not reflect a gender balance; that is, all construction worker participants in this study were male, which reflects the wider male dominance in construction work. On the other hand, females outnumbered male participants in the service sector with a ratio of seven to one, which also reflects the wider gender bias in the service sector in Vietnam. The findings on the working experiences of the participants in the rest of this chapter are also organised along the lines of these three employment sectors, because they are distinct from one another. Each participant had taken a different path toward their jobs and social networks played a crucial role in obtaining a job in the city.

Social networks as a pathway to work

Most respondents knew someone in the city of Hanoi before they migrated. The majority of participants revealed that they talked to and consulted with relatives, friends and/or villagers who had already migrated to the city, in order to obtain information and advice about job prospects and life in the city before they decided to leave their villages. Only a couple of participants did not know someone who could help them with finding a job in the city before leaving, so they had to resort to the employment ‘middle women’.²⁰

Migrants who had already settled in the city, as well as other relatives in the city, were reported to be common information sources, and played a bridging role between the potential migrants and jobs and accommodation. In this study, kinship was the most frequently mentioned source of assistance to these young migrants, cited by approximately three-quarters of the respondents. Lan, for example, said that she came to Hanoi to work because her uncle was living there and asked her to come. Relatives who had already settled in the city not only gave information, but often they also offered accommodation to the newcomers. It was reported in the housing section of the previous chapter that quite a few of the participants said they were

²⁰ These middle women are usually villagers who have connections with people in the city. They select people in the village who need to find jobs in the city then connect them with potential employers who need labourers to get commissions. They are paid commissions for this job matching.

temporarily accommodated by their relatives when they initially arrived in Hanoi. Ly said that her uncle took her to Hanoi and got her a job when she wanted to quit school in the village:

My uncle introduced me to a company owned by his friend. I first had some training, then I started working for the company. Being here, I live at my uncle and aunt's house.

(Ly, female, manufacturing worker)

Such assistance was described as part of the adaptive function of social capital by Gurak and Caces (1992), because the network members facilitate access to other resources such as housing, credit, and information, thus acting in the short term as a buffer for the costs and disruptions caused by migration.

In addition to relatives, friends or acquaintances from the same village were also a valuable resource of assistance for the participants. About one third of the participants reported receiving this kind of support. Trung, for instance, said that he came to work in Hanoi because of his friend's introduction. He recalled, "the first time I came to Hanoi I came along with a friend in my village. He was working there and he asked me if I wanted to go to work. Then I just followed him" (Trung, 22, male, construction worker). Similarly, Lam also mentioned that he got his job through his former colleague's introduction. The role of the friend's introduction to potential employers was very important, because it was reliable for both employees and employer. As Hoa explained,

I got this job also through my friend's referral. She works there; the shop owner needs more workers so she introduced me to the employer. She has been working there for a few years... We workers are coming here from the countryside mainly through the introduction of friends who already work here in this city. The shop owner also prefers employing through referral from their current staff as it is more trustworthy, because they already knew the staff who are working for them.

(Hoa, female, 20, shop assistant)

Besides the kinship and friendship networks, two participants in this study had sought jobs through employment brokers. Both Hà and Xuân described that job 'middle women' had come into their villages to recruit young labourers, who could then be matched with employers in the city who needed labourers. Xuân recalled,

At that time [of migration] I did not know anyone here [in Hanoi]. There was an employment broker lady [bà mối] who selected young workers like me in my village and

took us to the city to find us jobs, such as [being] a housemaid or a helping hand in restaurants. She found me a house maid job in that year and I had worked as a housemaid for nearly a year before I left for a restaurant job.

(Xuân, female, 23, retail assistant)

Looking closer at the gender pattern of migration networks, it was observed that all respondents had same sex contacts. Female participants were introduced to their jobs by their female friends or female brokers while male participants were referred to their jobs by male friends, villagers or relatives. This gender-specific pattern in searching for jobs of the migrants in this study is quite different from what Hoang (2011) found on her study, in which males dominated the facilitation of both male and female migration in Vietnam. It should be noted that, many participants of Hoang's study were married and husbands were active in facilitating their wives' migration while all participants in this study were single. Significantly, the gendered migration networks also led to gendered occupations, such that males were recruited to work in male-dominated construction jobs while females were recruited to work mostly in the female-dominated service sector. This practice in turn led to highly gendered social relations at workplaces at the migration destinations.

Most respondents emphasised the importance of information and assistance provided by their networks in their migration process. All of them had their jobs arranged prior to their arrival in the city. This practice of networking helped to reduce the cost and risk of migration for the young migrants. This referral practice also resulted in the phenomenon of migrants clustering by place of origin. For example, people from the same village tend to do the same or similar kinds of jobs in the city, and live in the same or a nearby neighborhood.

Social capital, in the form of migrant networks, therefore affects a migrant's motivation to migrate and the ability to adapt efficiently to the conditions found in the receiving area (de Haas, 2010). Yet, migrant networks are only part of the spectrum of migrants' social capital. Educational attainment is another important factor influencing urban employment outcomes. Also, the volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent depends on the size of the network of connections he or she can effectively mobilise, and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his/her own right by each of those to whom he/she is connected (Bourdieu, 1986). Based on relationships of connections between actors located at different levels, social

capital has been extended and classified as bonding, bridging, and linking social capital (Woolcock, 2001). According to Woolcock and Sweetser (2002),

bonding social capital refers to connections to people like you [family, relatives, kinship]...bridging social capital refers to connections to people who are not like you in some demographic sense... linking social capital pertains to connections with people in power, whether they are in politically or financially influential positions (p. 26).

With reference to these different types of social capital, the respondents in this study exhibited a high level of the first type of capital, bonding social capital. After migration, they expanded their bridging social capital when they were working in the city, through building and maintaining relationships with their workmates and employers, as was observed in Chapter 5.

6.3 The lived experiences at workplaces

Having provided some general description of the sectors in which the young migrants were employed, and also some description of how they got their jobs, this section discusses aspects of the workplace conditions that the participants experienced. Three aspects of the workplaces will be discussed; the working environment, the pattern of working hours, and the issue of safety and vulnerability in the workplace.

6.3.1 Conditions at workplaces

The manufacturing sector

Factory workers interviewed in this study included employees of large, foreign-owned factories in an industrial zone on the outskirts of Hanoi, and small-scale production factories in an inner suburb. According to the former group of factory workers, their factories were large, with modern buildings and well-equipped facilities and machineries. The assembly areas were fitted with central air-conditioning systems. There were kitchens and canteens attached to the main production areas where workers had their meals and tea breaks. Hai, a worker at a factory that produced forklifts and logistics equipment, illustrated his workplace in photos 6.1 and 6.2. Below is a summary of discussions with him about the photos he took.



Photo 6.1 My factory



Photo 6.2 Inside my factory

(Both photos by Hai, 24, male, factory worker)

This [Photo 6.1] is outside of the factory where Hai worked. It is a Japanese factory manufacturing transmissions and axle components for forklift trucks and logistics equipment. It is a big and modern factory. That [photo 6.2] is inside the factory. This photo was taken in the production line. It is equipped with modern and heavy machineries. In this picture, he was heading to the factory's canteen for a morning tea break together with his work colleague.

Vui, a female participant, worked in a factory which produced electronic devices, in the same industrial zone that Hai's factory was located. She depicted her workplace through some pictures (see photo 6.3 and 6.4). She explained,



Photo 6.3 An entrance to my factory



Photo 6.4 In the corridor of the factory

(Both photos by Vui, 21, female, factory worker)

This [photo 6.3] is outside my factory. I took this before my evening shift so it is a bit dark. People are walking into their night shifts. Most workers get to work by bike. There are many bikes in the parking lots but I walk to the factory as I live nearby. This picture [6.4] is [in] the corridor leading toward my production line. I was walking into my working area. Photography is not allowed in the working areas so I just took a photo here before starting my night shift.

(Vui, 21, female, factory worker)

From my personal observation outside these factories, it was noted that these factories were well guarded; anyone who entered or exited the factory needed to register. All workers wore uniforms to work. As the dayshift workers left the factories, the nightshift workers arrived. Big trucks moved in and out to load parcels. According to Hai, Vui and Hong, who were all workers at different factories in the industrial zone, there were strict rules and codes at work that they had to follow, such as getting to their jobs on time as per their allocated shifts, wearing uniforms at work at all times, adhering to the number of breaks, and being punctual at designated positions in the production lines. These rules and regulations were new to them, and very different from their working experiences on the farms in their hometowns, hence requiring them to adapt.

Being employed in a smaller scale manufacturing factory, Trung reported similar well-equipped working conditions at his company, in which each worker was allocated a work station. They had a fixed work schedule from 8am to 5pm, and all were required to wear uniforms at work. There was also a kitchen and a canteen which catered for lunch and tea breaks for all staff. Trung demonstrated his working environment through some photos that he took at work: photo 6.5 shows his working station; in photo 6.6, he was having lunch with his colleagues in the company's canteen.

Moving from farming backgrounds to highly disciplined employment was stressful at times for some participants as they had to learn to adapt with these new ways of doing things, new rules and obligations applied in large factories. The highly disciplined work environment in the new urban economic field was very different from traditional agriculture and household farming production in the villages where the participants came from.



Photo 6.5 My work station



Photo 6.6 Lunch break in the canteen

(Both photos by Trung, 20, male, factory worker)

The construction sector

Unlike the factory worker participants who spent their working time inside closed, gated buildings, the construction workers spent most of their working time outdoors at construction sites. They frequently relocated from one location to the other both within and across cities. Lam noted: “I [have] been to many different places, almost everywhere [within Vietnam], the South, Nha Trang, mountainous ethnic group areas, and so on” (Lam, 25, male, iron worker). Usually the construction workers stayed at the building sites after their working hours. In this study, three out of five construction worker participants stayed at their work sites. The other two moved between the sites and their employer’s residences, because they also did some assembly preparation work at the employer’s residences before transporting the metal parts to the building sites (see Chapter 5). From field observations, it can be concluded that the construction jobs were very physically demanding. Their jobs involved handling heavy materials such as bricks, cement, tiles, glass, and carrying and operating heavy equipment and machineries. Their working sites were mainly outdoors so they were exposed to weather conditions such as heat, cold, and rain. Most workers at construction sites were young men. No women were seen at any of the construction sites. Cường, a brick layer, recalled how hard the job was when he first started:

At that time (laugh) I was trying to carry a wood pole to get them joined to make scaffolding, but I could not lift it up as it was too heavy. I sometimes lost my balance and fell when I was walking [and] carrying stuff at work.

(Cường, male, brick layer)

Tâm, another young brick layer, had similar comments about his job as a house builder. Picture 6.7 shows him and his colleagues having a break by the side of a house that they were building. “It is a sweaty job and very dusty at the site”, he added.

The high risk of accidents at work was the most outstanding issue of concern. Most construction worker participants had experienced an accident themselves at least once, from minor injuries such as cuts and bruises to more serious ones that needed medical treatment. This issue will be discussed in further detail in section 6.3.3.



Photo 6.7 Taking a break at work
(Photo by Tâm, male, construction worker)

Duc, one of the two construction workers who moved between the construction sites and the family homes, illustrated the family workshop through photos 6.8 and 6.9. He said:

It is an open space. This workshop was set up using metal bars to make walls. It is very hot in the summer, because you know the roof is also made of iron bars. There are metal materials, glasses, machines here, there in that corner... the [owner's] family also lives here... three of us workers also sleep here at night.



Photo 6.8. Domestic metal workshop
(photos by Duc, male, construction worker)



Photo 6.9. A corner in the domestic metal
workshop (photos by Duc, male,
construction worker)

As can be seen from photos 6.8 and 6.9 and descriptions of Duc, the workshop was very congested with many machines, equipment and materials. The workshop was set up with iron bars, and accommodated all sorts of building materials. On top of that, the owner's family and some workers lived there.

The service sector

Jobs of the participants in the service sector often involved commercial services such as retailing, waiting on tables, hairdressing, care-giving and household help (often called domestic workers or housemaids). Participants in this group were employed mainly in small-scale, family-owned shops, restaurants, and other types of businesses that have been emerging in the city of Hanoi as the country integrates further into the global economy. Hoa, for example, was a shop assistant in the central business district of Hanoi. She worked at a store that produced and sold artificial flowers. Her daily work involved dealing with customers, taking customers' orders, packing orders, handling cash, shelving goods and setting up the store. Hoa illustrated her workplace through photo 6.10, in which she was making lotus flowers with other female co-workers. She commented:

I like working here, because I have been working here for a while, so I am used to this. Some co-workers here are also girls [of a] similar age to me, so we [are] working and

talking so it is very cheerful and relaxed environment. In addition, the job is not very hard, it is clean, it gets busy [for] only a few months at the year-end. Otherwise during [the] summer months we just sit all day and make flowers.

(Hoa, 20, female, handicraft worker and sales assistant)



Photo 6.10. Making lotus flowers in the store (Photo by Hoa)

Working in the retail industry requires interacting and communicating with customers. Many participants in this group reported that working in such an environment helped them becoming more confident and enhanced their communication skills. In such business environments they needed to present themselves properly through the way they dressed and spoke to customers. Handling cash was a new experience for most participants, which gave them a sense of the value of money, ideas about how the market in their area operated, and in the long run, could shape their perspectives on wider trading business and market conditions. They consequently developed their economic knowledge through their daily working experiences. For example, Hung explained:

We were given [a] sales quota every month. If we can sell more we earn better, but if we cannot sell anything we cannot earn anything... As staff of the company, we were given good 'original' price. It is then dependent on us how much we charge each customer,

dependent on how we negotiate the sales contract with customers (Hung, male, sales assistant).

'Domestic' workplaces

In Hanoi, using a venue as both a functional workplace and accommodation is quite a common arrangement among small family businesses, to save rental and travelling costs and time getting to and from work. In many cases, workers of such businesses are also accommodated there together with their employers. Half of the participants who had jobs in the service sector worked also stayed at the employers' places after working hours (see Chapter 5).

The housemaid participants in particular spent their time both during and outside of working hours within the confines of a private family home. They described their jobs as involving many tasks, such as babysitting, cooking, cleaning, laundry, ironing, and many other 'unnamed' duties. There were no co-workers; they were the sole employee of the family. Their job was restricted to the confines of the family home, with very limited or no interaction with other people outside the boundary of the host family homes.

Other participants who worked in small family businesses also worked in such home-environment, which meant the workplaces were also residences of their employers. For example, Mai worked at a hairdressing salon, which was also the house of the shop owner. She discussed her working environment as illustrated in photos 6.11,

It was me at work [picture 6.11] I was dying hair for a customer in this picture. I mainly do hair washes and apply chemicals to the hair of customers; haircuts and styling are often done by the owner because I am new [to] the job so not yet confident to do haircuts for customers. This is the front room of the house, used as a hair salon. There are rooms in the back which are bedrooms and a kitchen.

(Mai, 22, female, hairdresser)



Photo 6.11. Dying hair for a customer (photo by Mai)

Across the three employment sectors revealed in this study, working conditions were hard and challenging in their own ways. Many service sector workers in small family businesses, particularly the domestic workers, were mostly confined to a limited, designated 'family'. Construction workers' jobs were physically demanding and required extensive mobility. The manufacturing workers seemed to have more stable jobs, and better and more formal work settings; however, they also had to face strict shift rosters and were subject to strict quality control of the products for which they were responsible.

6.3.2 Working hours

In general, all participants, regardless of their occupations, reported working very long hours. This was particularly so for those who were employed in the service sector, especially female participants, who worked longer hours than the male participants in this group.

From what the participants shared of their working hours, it was seen that the housemaids worked the longest hours, usually from the time they got up in the morning until bed time. For housemaids, there were no regulated working hours; it was based on a mutual understanding between the employers and employees. There was also an unwritten expectation (as a norm) that

housemaids are supposed to be available to work around the clock, because they reside with the employer's family. Hang, one for the domestic workers, described her daily routine as follows:

I usually get up before 6 o'clock, cook noodle soup for breakfast for the little boy, get him [to] have his breakfast, then take him to the school bus by 6.20am...then I return home, do some cleaning up, and then the smaller baby girl [gets] up and I [take] care of her... when aunty comes back from work, she takes care of the baby and I do cooking and cleaning and other housework... I go to bed when everything is done; usually it is around 10 or 11 o'clock.

(Hang, 18, female, domestic worker)

Apart from very long work hours each day, live-in domestic workers did not have days off, except when they felt sick or needed to visit their hometown. To quantify this, they each worked in the vicinity of 100 hours per week. This finding of long working hours for the domestic workers in this study echoes the survey results of Duong (2007) on domestic workers in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city.

In a similar pattern, the female hairdressing respondents who lived with their employers' families also experienced very long working hours, because they were expected to cover unpaid housework for their boss's families outside of their 'official' working hours. Mai explained that she had to do a lot of unpaid housework, such as cleaning, cooking, and laundry, for her employer's family outside of her paid working hours as a hairdresser. Similar to the housemaids, these 'live in' workers did not have any days off from work. Due to the arrangement of working and living at the same place together with the owner's family, the boundary between paid work and unpaid work was very blurred, or often got mixed up. Therefore, they became more easily exploited, as it was not easy for them to refuse their employers' requests, leading them to work extremely long hours.

Unlike the 'live-in' workers mentioned earlier, those who were employed in the manufacturing and construction sector, in addition to those who were in the service sector but lived separately from their work place, had more regulated 'official' working hours and were entitled to overtime payment if they worked extra hours.

In particular, factory worker participants had the most highly regimented and regulated working hours. Because of the highly regimented work disciplines at manufacturing factories, all factory worker participants had quite fixed working hours, which were often rotated in shifts. Their

working hours, which ranged from 40 to 48 hours per week, were stated in the written labour contracts. They either worked from 8am to 5pm (with 45 minutes to an hour lunch break) or in eight hour shifts. There were three shifts in a day and the workers were rostered to shifts. They often had one or two days off over the weekends or took turns to have days off during the week. When they were requested to work longer than the regulated hours, they were paid overtime and had a choice of taking the extra shift or refusing it. For example, Minh worked at an electronic assembly factory that followed a roster cycle:

I work by shifts, two day shifts, two night shifts and two office hour shifts a week. After completing six shifts in a row I have two days off before changing to the new roster.

Sometimes there are more jobs the company asks us to work on our days off. I often take [them] to earn some more money, but if I am busy or want to visit my hometown I do not take overtime shifts.

(Minh, 20, male, factory worker)

This work pattern was similarly observed at smaller-sized manufacturing enterprises. Ly, an employee of a smaller company said:

My working hours start from 8 o'clock in the morning till 5 o'clock in the evening... We work on Saturday too, but have Sunday off every week. When there are lots of work and orders from customers, like today, everybody in my production line works until 6 or 7 o'clock.

(Ly, 18, female, worker)

Experiencing the highly regimented work environment, the workers developed discipline, team work skills and punctuality. These experiences were new to those young migrants.

For construction worker participants, they had more variable working hours, dependent on the demands of each job. They often started early in the morning (around 6:30 or 7:00 am and finished by around 5:00 or 6:00pm. All construction worker participants said that they had quite variable working hours, dependent on the workload which varied from contract to contract. Their work hours also depended on whether it was the peak or off-peak construction season.²¹ As their

²¹ In Vietnam, more construction work takes place during the dry season and less in the rainy season. Close to year's end is the peak time for construction and maintenance jobs, while it is very quiet at the beginning of the Lunar New

monthly wages were paid according to the number of hours that they worked in that month, their monthly incomes varied according to how much work they had done for the month. Cường, a young freelance brick layer and plumber, revealed his work routine as follows:

In my working days, [I am] a freelance brick layer and plumber, so starting work early or late is not important. I go to work by 7 or 8 in the morning... That building [pointing at a picture], we offer the whole package [of building] work. We did brick laying, fitting water pipes and electricity lines, just two of us (me and another co-worker) in charge of that construction, so starting a working day late or early is not that important. We come early on warmer days and late on cold days.

(Cường, 21, male, brick layer)

6.3.3 Workplace safety and vulnerability

The young migrant workers in this study experienced different types of workplace risks, vulnerability to workplace accidents, and/or requirements to pay for damaged or stolen goods that they were responsible for. In particular, construction workers reported a very high probability of workplace accidents. From what was revealed in the field observations and interviews with the participants, construction worker respondents in particular experienced the highest risk of being involved in an accident at work. Three out of five construction workers reported having had an accident at work. Duc had one of his eyes injured when he was cutting an iron bar. He had to go to the hospital for medical treatment. He added that this type of accident happened quite frequently with his other colleagues. He showed a picture of one of his colleagues cutting and trimming a piece of iron bar (see photo 6.12). It showed that his colleague was not wearing protective glasses or gloves, which put him at risk of getting iron heated crumbs in his eyes or accidentally cutting his finger. Duc added: “doing this type of job, cuts and bruises are unavoidable”.

Year (falling on January or February of the Western calendar) as no one wants to have their houses built or fixed in this early time of the new year.



Photo 6.12. Cutting a metal bar at work
(Photo by Duc, 24, male, construction worker)

Though exposed to a very high risk of accidents at work, most construction worker participants did not always follow protective measures to protect themselves. The obligation and implementation of a workplace safety policy was weak, because the wearing of protective clothing was not enforced by all employers as a matter of standard practice. Cường, a brick layer, revealed the reality of workplace safety in the construction site where he worked when he was asked how he protected himself against the risk of accidents,

We are provided with protective helmets, but I don't ever put it on my head...It is heavy and very uncomfortable so I do not like wearing them when I work...

(Cuong, 21, male, iron worker)

Cuong was very aware of the high risk of being involved in an accident at work, but also acknowledged that he hardly took any measures to prevent it. In addition, these workers did not have any insurance, so a high cost was incurred by himself and his employer for treatment of injuries. Workplace accident was an important element of the workplace experience in terms of human cost and economic burden, which consequently impacted on every aspect of a worker's life.

Though not involving the physical injuries at work that some construction workers experienced, the service sector participants, especially those working at shops and handling cash,

reported on the risk of losing money. For instance, Linh, a participant who worked at a restaurant, reported an incident of being robbed,

I was afraid [of] the money being stolen so I didn't keep [it in the restaurant], but usually brought [it] home with me. On that day, I went to the market very early in the morning...I kept all money in my purse inside a plastic bag, like this bag, and rode a bicycle to the market. Suddenly a passerby robbed my bag. There was quite a lot of money on that day, around thirteen million, including my own money...

Linh, 23, female, restaurant staff)

It would have cost Linh many months of her salary to pay off the lost money when an incident like this happened, leading her to have to borrow money or to live many months without money to pay for her basic needs. She actually quit the job after this incident, because she could not bear the risk of it happening again.

Furthermore, female participants, particularly those involved with late-night work, reported their fears and risks when returning home alone late at night. Three female participants, whose jobs required them to work late at night, revealed that more than once they were approached and followed by male strangers on the way home from work. Despite such risks, those female participants said they continued to keep their night jobs. "I could earn some more money to cover my rent and food", explained Hoa.

6.4 Income, Saving, and Remittance

By having waged jobs in the city after migration, all participants had an income. Having incomes helped the participants become financial independent, which improved their qualities of life. In addition, some participants could save up and also remit to their parents. Remittances to their families in the villages both improved their families' financial situation and strengthened the connections of the participants with their hometowns. Bourdieu emphasised economic capital as the most important type of capital, as it is the main condition (together with time) for the accumulation and conversion of all other kinds of capital (2005b, p. 194). This section is concerned with the economic resources and accumulation by the participants. This section is informed by the in-depth participants' interviews data.

6.4.1 Income and economic independence

Statistics and empirical research on internal migration in developing countries, such as Vietnam, indicates that in general, internal migrant workers have low incomes, which are lower than their urban non-migrant counterparts. However, migrants usually earned much more than the non-migrants in their hometowns (UNFPA, 2007). This study did not ask the informants specifically how much they earned and saved, though at least two thirds of respondents revealed their income figures in the interviews. Rather than focusing on the exact gross figure, it is more important to consider the approximate relative amount that was left in the pocket of the participants after deducting basic living expenses, because the cost of living in the city is usually much higher than that in the countryside. Therefore, in many cases, though earning a higher wage in the city, the migrant might have to spend most of their income on their living expenses, leaving them with little or no savings.

In general, most respondents said that their income was relatively low, though it should be noted that the culture in Vietnam predisposes people to say a lower figure than their real income, in order to be polite and modest. Nevertheless, all participants acknowledged that they earned much higher than they could do if they had remained in their villages, and some revealed that they earned higher than their parents could earn from doing farming, or undertaking other economic activities in their hometowns. Importantly, over half of the respondents were satisfied with their earnings. All respondents reported that they were able to sustain themselves in the city without requiring financial support from their parents once they started working. The majority of the participants commenced their jobs fairly shortly after their arrival in the city due to prior arrangements with their networks of assistance, as mentioned earlier. Three participants, Trung, Ly and Binh had undergone training before starting working and they received financial support from their parents during their training periods.

Income levels of the respondents varied greatly; some earned double that of others. Their income level was observed to be dependent on their occupation and the length of time they had been in the job. In a similar occupation and position, the longer one had spent in the job, the higher his or her salary was. Construction workers and factory workers had similar income levels and they earned higher than service worker participants. However, it should be noted that while factory workers had quite stable wages every month, the construction workers' earnings fluctuated according to the actual workload that they were offered and had completed for the month. Service

sector workers were at the lower end of the income scale among the participants, but many of them were offered free accommodation and meals by their employers. Therefore, though their cash income was lower, the total benefit from employment was not necessarily lower than the other groups.

A higher income was an important pulling factor that attracted young people to migrate to the city. For instance, Lam revealed that he earned much more in Hanoi, higher than what his parents could make in the village. He added that “there was nothing to do in the village”. Many other participants such as Hung, Hang, Hoa, Hong and Ha were also satisfied with and valued their jobs that provided them with money. Hoa explained her situation further:

There are very limited job opportunities in my hometown so many people in my village come here for work. Income here is higher compared to my hometown... [If someone works in a factory close to home], going to work in the morning and returning home in the evening, we could earn about one and a half million [Vietnam dong per month] but I can earn more here. In addition, I can take an extra job so I can earn much better than if I remained and worked in my hometown.²²

(Hoa, 20, female, handicraft worker)

Having a regular income enabled many participants to be self-sufficient and become financially independent from their parents, hence changing their social status from dependent children to independent young adults. In addition, they also helped their families at home to repay debts, shared the burden of healthcare costs and assisted to finance their siblings' schoolings.

6.4.2 Saving

The majority of informants in this study reported that they had some savings after deducting expenses. Some were able to save a large portion of their earnings while others saved very little. Indeed, the saving amounts did not necessarily reflect the level of their income. Construction workers and factory workers had higher salaries compared to the service sector workers; however, not many of them had substantial savings compared to some of the service worker participants. In order to understand the level of saving, it is important not only to look at the income, but also at the expenditure of a respondent.

²² Exchange rate: 1 AUD = 17,000 VND; so 1.5 million Dong is approximate 85 Australian Dollar

The construction workers lived at the worksites or with employers and did not have to pay for their accommodation and utilities. Their meals and toiletries were also provided free of charge. Therefore, they did not have to spend much of their income on daily basic needs. However, most of the construction workers reported that they could not save much because they spent quite a large amount on social activities such as eating out with friends and other leisure activities. Lam, for instance, said he spent most of his savings on travelling around.

If I work a full month (without any day off) I can save some money... but in fact I almost do not have a penny as savings, I keep wandering around... Maybe I travelled to the South twice a year, to the North two-three times. I go everywhere. Maybe there is no place in the South that I have not been to.

(Lam, 25, male, iron worker)

Similarly, Tâm, a construction worker, also revealed that he used up all of his income on outings with friends, socialising and entertainment. He said:

I have used up all that I can earn, I cannot save up anything... Hmm, many things, a bit on each, like telephone bills, going out for drinks with friends, going here and there, sometimes karaoke, eating out, etc.

(Tâm, 20, male, construction worker)

On the other hand, domestic workers, whose salaries were at the lower end of the income scale among the participants, were surprisingly among those who had the highest level of savings. Domestic workers did not have to cover their living expenses because they were accommodated and fed for free by the host family they were working for and living with. Both domestic workers of this study, Hang and Ha, reported that they did not have to spend any money on their daily needs as their employers covered those for them. On top of their cash wages, they were given other in-kind benefits such as clothing, medical care and treatment when they were sick, goods and gifts to bring home when they visited their hometowns, and even their transportation costs to visit home were also covered by the host family. Moreover, they were hardly allowed to go out of the employers' houses to socialise with their friends or take part in any other socialising activities, which also means that they did not spend at all on such items. Therefore, the domestic worker participants could keep most of their monthly salaries. Nevertheless, this is a twofold situation: on one hand they could accumulate their financial capital more effectively, but on the other hand they did not

have a chance to socialise, which constrained the extent of their social and cultural capital. In turn, restricted socialising might have longer term impacts on their further career development, and could result in limiting their life opportunities.

The participants who rented their accommodation had to spend a large percentage of their earnings on living expenses, including rent, food, utilities, and other miscellaneous items. Living in the city was expensive, therefore, there was not much money left for saving. Unlike being in their hometown where everything was taken care of by their parents, the renters had to pay for everything on their own. This explained why factory workers who mostly lived in rental accommodation could not save as much as the domestic workers could, even though their salaries were higher.

Living alone in the city, it was crucial to make sure one earned enough to at least cover daily expenses, such as accommodation, food and bills; therefore, even if one did not like the job much, he or she still needed to persevere with it to get by. Financial pressure was a concern among quite a few participants. Hoa noted:

Everything here is more expensive than in the village; everything is expensive so I feel that though I have a good income, I spend most here... I need to be very tight in order to [be] able to save up and send some money home. Everything is expensive, I feel very pressured.

(Hoa, 20, female, handicraft worker)

Hoa explained further why there was such a pressure for money while living in the city:

[Generally] speaking, life is very hard here. We have to work hard. For example, if there is a day without pay I feel very different, panicked, hmm, it is difficult to explain, fear, kind of, [about] not having a wage. Because without money there is nothing you can do here. Being at home, my father and mother are there so even if I have a day without pay it is not a problem. But it is problematic here. No wage, you cannot have food, cannot pay the rent, so I take very few days off because taking a day off means no wage.

(Hoa, 20, female, handicraft worker)

Hung, a male participant, was also concerned a lot about money. He stressed the need to earn more money whenever I met and talked with him. He had to juggle what to spend on and what to cut down:

If I work a full month I can get about three million, eight hundred. Telephone bill costs about three hundred. My lunch allowance... By calculating back and forth I should have a certain saving amount every month in principle, but I do not know why I save nothing. Say, I have to pay eight hundred per month for the rent and buying food plus three hundred for the telephone, so it is about a million and one hundred. So my credit balance should have a million outstanding each month but I do not know what I spend on that I do not have any money left... I always have an urgent thought in my mind of how to make a lot of money.

(Hung, 21, male, sales and marketing assistant)

It can be seen that there were different monetary 'sets of rules' in the new urban social economic field, which operate according to the market rules in which individuals need to pay for their demands and consumptions. This is unlike how traditional, rural society functions, which is based on the exchange of goods and sentiments. Their labour was now paid in a quantifiable value in the form of salaries, not as crops and other farm products. The young migrants emerged in this new field. They have adjusted to the new sets of rules and are working their ways through it. Many participants were able to save from their income and gradually build up their financial capital, which is crucial to expand other forms of capital, for instance, cultural capital through investment in further education and training, and social capital through spending on attendance at social events and activities to expand social networks. Bourdieu suggested, in part, that the convertibility of the different types of capital is the basis of the strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital, (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 253). Such types of capital ensured the long-term survival of internal migrants in the economic field of Hanoi.

6.4.3 Remittances

Research on remittances of migrants worldwide shows that the most obvious and direct economic effect of remittance is its contribution to household well-being in the rural areas, including household income and living conditions (Le & Nguyen, 2011). Remittances can effectively improve living standards and reduce poverty in poor rural households in Vietnam, as suggested by Giang and Pfau (2008). Moreover, productive investments can have a lasting impact on the economic standing of households. There is a growing empirical literature that shows the positive effect of remittances on various outcomes at the household level, such as schooling attainment of children, healthcare improvement, productive investment and household business start-up (V. P. Hoang & Magnani, 2010). Literature on remittances has pointed out two main

motives for migrants to send remittances to their families. The first motive is altruism, which means the sender's objective is to maintain a good connection and standing with their family members in their hometowns (Stark, 1991). The second motive is to make productive capital investments, and as an insurance measure to prepare for migrants' return to their hometown in the future (Amuedo-Dorantes C. & Rozo S., 2006).

Participants of this study remitted to their parents for both reasons. Many of them did so in order to help their families to repay the debts which their parents had before they migrated, such as Xuân, Hà, Nga and Hằng. For example, Hang, one of the domestic workers, shared her situation:

I do not keep my savings for myself. I give them all to my mother... so that she can repay part of our family's debt. I also need to spend some [money] every time I visit my home... buying some new clothes and stuff... My father goes offshore fishing, but he cannot earn much from it. Sometimes he comes back home empty handed. My younger brother is still at school, so it is also costly.

(Hằng, 17, female, domestic worker)

Additionally, three out of twenty participants said that they remitted to cover the schooling fees of their siblings. In particular, Nam and Xuân had been able to set aside part of their savings and remitted them to their parents so that in the future they could use it to open their own businesses in their hometowns. By remitting to parents, participants demonstrated taking responsibility to help their parents and families. This confirmed that the inter-generational linkage is strong, which means parents provided support to children when they were young and the children take on the responsibility to give back to their parents as a gesture of repaying/reimbursing to what they had given to them. The act of remittance was also a demonstration of a strong inter-dependence between generations.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown the different dimensions of the working experiences of the participants in the city. The workplace environment played an important role in shaping perspectives of the participants, not only on their employment in the city, but also, in many cases, towards a wider world of employment in general. A strong contrast was observed between young migrants in the 'domestic' and 'mobile' work environments in terms of socializing and building social networks. The female, 'domestic' migrants were confined to the private home space and their

jobs required no travel. In contrast, in the ‘mobile’ workplaces, where only male respondents were located, was associated with frequent mobility and necessitated transport such as owning a vehicle, and involved free time after work. These different situations are very likely to result in different social capital among the two groups. In other words, (female) ‘domestic’ workers had limited chance to interact with other people reducing their chances to increase social capital, while ‘mobile’ workers had more space to do so. In a long run, this could have implications on the amount of financial and cultural capital each worker possesses. Social networks were identified as the most important factor in linking the participants with their jobs. Most participants acknowledged and appreciated the assistance of their social networks, including friends, relatives, and co-villagers, in helping them to find a job and accommodation in the city. Such supports helped to reduce the costs of migration and minimise waiting time for jobs.

The empirical data demonstrated that different employment sectors brought about distinct employment experiences for the participants. While most service sector participants experienced small-scale and informal work settings, manufacturing workers were involved in the most modern, professional and formal work environments and conditions compared to the other groups. Construction workers especially experienced the most transient and harsh working environments, as they had to move along with their jobs. In general, young migrants participating in this study worked very hard and long hours, though their working hours varied by employment sectors. Workers in the service sector worked the longest hours, followed by construction workers, then factory workers. While factory workers had regulated work shifts and holidays, service workers usually did not. Construction workers’ working hours were varied by seasons and dependent on the workload available. Work safety was a significant concern among construction workers, while this was not a matter of concern for the other participants. Though exposing themselves to a high likelihood of work-related accidents, it seemed that construction workers were not bothered much to pay due attention to protective measures to prevent themselves from having accidents at their work places. Many participants, especially those employed in the service sector were vulnerable to employer’s exploitation. Besides, some female participants experienced risks of being approached and verbally abused by strangers when they returned home late from work; however, no critical case was reported.

Economic accumulation, saving, and remittances were highlighted in this chapter as part of the material outcomes of migration. Most participants had accumulated and increased their economic capital through migration, and it impacted on various aspects of their life. Having income

not only improved their quality of life materially and socially, but it also facilitated their autonomy, independence and freedom from their parents as well as changing the parent-child relationship to a more equal basis. Having savings also made it possible for them to plan their future in a more proactive position. Construction workers who were very mobile and had more socialising activities saved the least, while home workers saved the most, even though their income was at the lowest end of the scale among all participants. It was also evident that female participants could save more than male participants, though their income was not necessarily higher.

Work, the ability to earn, and the affordability for 'modern' consumption constitute an important part of how the young people in this study experience their everyday lives. The type of jobs, the ability to earn and the affordability to consume 'modern' material goods are also the symbolic of successful or 'failed' young migrants which affect their 'mobility' both in the geographical sense of 'moving to somewhere else' and in the social sense of positioning themselves in social standing, which in turn impacts on their pathways to later stages in their lives.

The experiences of work and socially (presented in Chapter 5) in the urban setting together affected the development of these young migrants in their transition to adulthood, in particular their sense of identity, and this will be the focus of discussion in the next chapter.

Chapter 7. The changing identities of young rural to urban migrants

7.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters provide insights into the lived social and work experiences of the young migrants. This chapter focuses on understanding their identities. It addresses the second research question: *How do the experiences of working and living in the city shape identities of young migrants?* It seeks to understand how the participants construct and reconstruct their identities under the influences of their everyday living and working experiences in the city. Drawing primarily on Bourdieu's concept of habitus and capital in relation to field, this chapter looks at the way in which the participants present and perform their subjective identities. Habitus, as explained in the theoretical framework in Chapter 3, is the system of durable and largely unconscious bodily dispositions that orient human actions (Bourdieu, 1984). The approach to identity in this study is not something pre-determined or static, but rather something flexible, fluid and developed on a day-to-day basis, as well as in the longer term, where individuals continuously define who they are. This chapter draws on the participants' interviews, the observable elements shown in their photographs, and the observation journals recorded when having interactions with them.

This chapter is organised into three sections. The first section discusses the embodied dispositions of the participants, including their personal presentations: the way they dress, their make-up and accessories, their lifestyles, and the way they use language. The second part examines the newly acquired capacities of the participants as accumulated cultural capital and agency in demonstrating who they are and who they want to be. Planning for the future is a crucial aspect of developing and constituting one's identity; therefore, aspirations for the future are the final focus of exploration.

7.2 Embracing the new urbanity, yet the old remains

When reflecting on changes that they had undergone since migrating to Hanoi, most participants revealed that they had changed quite a lot, particularly in their ways of being such as how they dressed, their manner, and also important changes in their thinking about life, job, relationships, and the world in general. In many cases the participants realised how much they had changed by comparatively referring to those who remained in the village, such as their relatives, friends, and

other villagers. This first section of the chapter examines different embodied attributes of the participants. It first deals with observable appearances, including ways of dressing, hairstyles, and accessories. It then turns the focus on lifestyles and the language of the participants. These visible elements are important indicators of how individuals present themselves to others and how they want other people to see them.

7.2.1 Bodily appearances

Bennett argues that,

All bodies carry marks of their experience ... Bodily appearance offers an initial orientation in many encounters. Bodily properties hence supply the most ubiquitous ways of classifying people—by gender, race, age and class... What one wears continues to mark position, for example, skirt, dress, business shirt, shoes, chain, watches, and so on convey meaning (2009, p. 152).

This statement emphasises the importance of appearance in interpersonal communication, because people often have initial ideas and judgements about a person firstly through such visible personal presentations. In contemporary life, appearance, such as dress and accessories, is not necessarily always a true reflection of who a person really is; however, it is a first impression, a marker that orients how other people perceive who you are. Bourdieu in his seminal work, *Distinction*, claims that embodied attributes such as body shapes and presentations, accents, posture and bearing, some embodied features carry more value than others (1984). Such bodily embodiments are now examined through looking at some of the participants' embodied dispositions.

Let us consider the first case, Nga, who worked in a beauty salon, at a cafe at 9.30 at night for an interview after her work. She came straight from the nearby beauty salon where she had been working for almost a year. She had a short, straightened bob-cut hairstyle, dyed in a bright yellow-brown colour. She wore careful make up on her face, highlighted with glossy red lipstick. She wore a white jacket with faux fur on the collar paired with a dark, above-knee-length skirt. She also had black stockings and a pair of red shoes on to keep herself warm on such a cold winter's night. She had adopted the trendiest look that was in fashion among young girls in the city. High-heel shoes, short skirt, stockings, white coat, make-up, and yellow-coloured hair, were not seen among girls in the countryside where she came from. As most people in the countryside worked on farms, such dresses and make-up would be absolutely out of place.

As our conversation went on, Nga described how much she had changed in her look, personality and perspectives since she came to work in Hanoi, especially since she started working in a beauty salon. Her job was to style make-up and hair for customers, specialising in bridal make-up. She recalled how dark her complexion had been due to working on a farm in harsh outdoor conditions when she was in the village. However, she had started taking care of her looks and paying more attention to fashion since she started working in the beauty salon for almost a year. She also described how small and short she was, as her family was too poor to have sufficient nutritious food for growth. She said she had gained weight and grown taller more quickly since she had lived and worked in Hanoi. Photo 7.1 was a random shot that Nga took at work. In the photo, she has make-up on, a neat hairdo and wears a dress. In photo 7.2, she is on the street at night to celebrate the Christmas season with her friends. She wears a long black coat, stockings, and high-heel shoes. She also has make-up on and a styled, short haircut.



Photo 7.1 Nga at work (Photo provided by Nga)



Photo 7.2 Enjoying the Christmas atmosphere in the centre of Hanoi city (Photo provided by Nga)

The two photos of Nga were taken in two different contexts, one at work and the other in her leisure time. But both photos show a well-dressed and made up Nga, which might mean that it was

not just because of the requirements at her work that she dressed up nicely; it was also her choice and pleasure to have such a trendy ‘city’ look.

Mai, another female participant, who was also a hairdresser, told me about how she had changed since she left her village. She talked about her hairstyles at length and explained how her coloured and styled hair concerned her parents, and even became a topic for discussion for the villagers when she visited her hometown. She recalled:

I changed my hairstyle very often, even when I was working in my hometown, but I did not colour my hair then. I had my hair cut short again and had it dyed in multiple colours when I came to work here. I told my mum on the phone about it and she warned me, “don’t come home to see me with your coloured hair”... The villagers also kind of judged my personality on seeing my coloured hair. They often spread negative rumours about those who adopt ‘playful’ styles in the villages. I heard that they think I have become a ‘rebellious’ girl... but I don’t care.

(Mai, 24, female, hair dresser)

Having hair styled to be curly and coloured is not a traditional practice in the villages of Vietnam. The traditional female hairstyle in the countryside is long, in a natural colour of black or dark brown. Urban hairstyles are considered ‘playful’ and are a sign of losing one’s rural roots among ‘traditional’ senior villagers. In Vietnamese society in general, and in the village context in particular, people have a tendency to judge others based on their looks. There are certain unwritten social presentation codes, for example, ‘good girls’ should have traditional, long, black hair; dress properly; and not expose too much of their skin. ‘Good boys’ are expected to have decent, short haircuts. These conventional perspectives of the villagers can explain why Mai’s new hairstyle had become a concern for her parents and a topic of gossip among the neighbours in her hometown.

One might argue that Mai and Nga were particularly trendy in their hairstyles and dress because they worked in the hair and beauty industry. However, this is not necessarily true, as other female participants in this study who had different types of jobs had also done their hair according to trendy styles in the city, such as straightening, curling or colouring their hair. For instance, Lan, a factory worker participant, had her hair straightened and dyed yellow; Hang, a domestic worker, had her hair straightened and dyed light purple.

In addition to a changed hairstyle, fairness of complexion was another matter that drew attention not only from female, but also male participants. In general, Vietnamese people have a

view that a sunburnt or darker complexion is a sign of hardship and working life on a farm, while a fairer complexion is a mark of having an 'indoor working environment' or a white collar job. Having a fairer complexion was desirable to most people in this study, not only because it is considered to be more beautiful, but also as a symbol of having an easier job, an indicator of being an 'urban' inhabitant. This perception of beauty makes many young females cover themselves up in full sleeve shirts and masks when going out in the sun. This is not only to protect them from the heat, dust and air pollution, but for many it is to avoid a dark, sunburnt skin tone. Fairer skin is considered to be more important for females, but a few male participants also preferred fairer skin. Trung, a male manufacturing worker, proudly spoke of his fairer skin:

In the past, when I lived in the village, I also worked on the farm, so my skin tone and dress style [were] different from now... I worked on the farm so I looked more sunburnt, but I have a fairer skin tone now.

(Trung, 20, male, manufacturing worker)

Trung might be trying to convey an implied message, that he is now employed in a factory and not doing farm work anymore. He also emphasised the changes in the way he dressed: "I dress up more politely now [when going to work]...not like before when I was a boy working on the farm. I mainly wore shorts then, but now I have to dress like my colleagues at work".

Many participants had changed in the way they dressed and presented themselves, from hairstyles and clothing to shoes and other accessories. For some participants it was a particular requirement of their job, such as those whose jobs dealt directly with customers, but many chose to present themselves in a more modern and urban way of their own volition. The presentation of the self was not only a reflection of their new perspectives, influenced by the urban beauty standard, but it was also an indicator of their financial ability to pursue the look that they wanted. More importantly, the young migrants expressed their personal preferences through such presentations, which were also an indicator of their freedom and autonomy to make choices outside of parental supervision. Therefore, participants such as Mai and Hoa adopted the styles they were fond of, without worrying about what their parents or the villagers wanted them to look like. Such changes are results of the transformation which occurs when habitus encounters a field with which it is not familiar (McNay, 1999). These newly adopted personal presentation was also an indication that those young migrants were becoming urban, not villagers any more.

Regarding such changes of individuals, Skeggs (2004) also emphasises that social distinctions can be made, read and known through the tastes, practices and embodied 'styles' of individuals and groups. Particular hairstyles or items of clothing, or ways of wearing (or not wearing) clothing and accessories, can all operate as 'condensed class signifiers' (Skeggs, 2004, p. 101). In addition to bodily presentations, lifestyles can also say a lot about who an individual is and how they want to be seen, both consciously and unconsciously.

7.2.2 Adopting urban lifestyles

One of the impressions from my observation of most participants was that they were all very busy with their work. It was not easy to make a time to meet and talk with them, as many of them worked from early in the morning until late in the evening. They had very few days off. About a third of the participants had one to two days off per week, but many others who were employed in the service sector usually had only one to two days off per month; some even worked seven days per week and only took days off on major public holidays or by request, usually due to sickness or family responsibilities. A detailed account of the working hours of the participants was presented previously in Chapter 6.

This section emphasises how the participants adopted new urban lifestyles and how they managed to adapt to this busier life in the city. Areas to be covered in this section include daily routines, the ways that leisure time was spent, and food choices and preferences. According to Bourdieu, lifestyle partly reveals social class or positions of individual agency. In his words, people unconsciously acknowledge and reveal their own social position through a complex process of classifying themselves and others in terms of preferences for activities, possessions and performances (Bourdieu, 1984).

Most participants noted that they had become much busier than before, as they were occupied with their jobs most of the time, leaving little or no free time that they had in the countryside. For example, Vui, a factory worker, expressed her frustration over her busy work schedule in the factory, because she often had to work overtime. She was supposed to have weekends off, but she took extended shifts over the weekend very often to earn some extra money. She had to schedule her personal activities, for example, going out and catching up with friends, visiting home and so on, around work shifts. In addition, she had developed a stronger sense of date and time since working in the factory, because the job required her to be very punctual. Weekends did not have much meaning for her before when she was working on the village farm; however,

now in the city, her weekends were usually non-work days for resting, meeting with friends, going out, or visiting home.

Due to a busy working schedule, a few participants revealed that they did not have time to cook at home, but had to buy take-away foods or quickly eat out on their way home from work. This was very different from village life, where they ate both lunches and dinners at home with their families. In their busy schedule, many participants also tried to find time for recreational and leisure activities, which were discussed in Chapter 5. Some new recreational activities that were unique to the city and that the participants eagerly embraced (if they had time), included gathering with friends, and going out for drinks and dinner with friends. Eating out was a very popular leisure-time activity in the city, reported by more than half of the participants. The frequency of going out varied by gender and the job type of the participants. Males went out more often than female participants; service sector and construction worker participants ate out more often than factory worker participants. In particular, construction worker participants reported going out at night the most frequently among all participants. This was due to them often staying with the group on the construction sites, and there being few entertainment options at the site other than going out.

When going out, most participants often ate at low-budget restaurants on the roadside. Hoa explained:

We do not usually eat here [at the restaurant where she and I had dinner while I was interviewing her]. I often go to eat in some small roadside stalls on the other side of this highway. It is just across the road, but it is much cheaper there and there is a variety of food. We sometimes just buy some food and groceries to cook at home together. A home-cooked hot pot for a group only costs around two to three hundred [Vietnamese Dong, which equals to approximate 10-15 Australian Dollar].

(Hoa, 20, female, handicraft worker and sales assistant)

According to Bourdieu (1984), choice of restaurant is an indicator of social class. Upper class people tend to dine in expensive, fine restaurants, while lower class people tend to choose a street-cooked food as they cannot afford to dine in an expensive restaurant. This classification of class hierarchy was clearly observed in urban Vietnam. There were plenty of roadside budget food stalls and restaurants in the suburbs of Hanoi, which were a very popular choice for migrant labourers and other ordinary people. Very few participants ever ate in fine-dining restaurants in the

city, as they were very expensive. Those who did eat in such fine-dining restaurants were taken there by their employers on special occasions.

In addition to eating out, many participants also gathered to cook and eat together every now and then. This was also a very popular way of spending free time together or celebrating something. Picture 7.3 shows a group of friends gathering to cook and eat together.



Photo 7.3 Cooking and eating together on a day off
(photo by Thoa, 24, female, factory worker)

On occasions such as a friend's birthday party, end of year party, and so on, some participants said they gathered with their friends either at home or in restaurants. Hai depicted some of these party moments through his archived photos: photo 7.4 was taken at the birthday party of his friend in a karaoke bar. He said he had never had a party for himself or attended a birthday party in a restaurant in his home town, but many of his friends did so in Hanoi. In addition, photo 7.5 shows a picnic with his city friends on a holiday.



Photo 7.4 A friend's birthday party (photo provided by Hai)



Photo 7.5 A picnic with friends (photo provided by Hai)

Eating out was new to most participants, as previously they always ate at home with their families. Cafes and public parks were also new venues for meeting up and outings for most participants. Many of them reported going to such places to catch up with their friends in their free time. Such activities formed new lifestyles that the young migrants adopted through which they maintained and developed their social ties.

Delaying marriage was also considered a sign of being 'modern' and 'urban'. For instance, Trung, one of the male participants, who was 21 years old, said that most of the friends in his hometown who went to school with him were already married and had a child or two, but that he wanted to focus on developing his 'career' first before starting a family. This view was also shared by a female migrant who said that she was afraid of a life that was bound by the village, getting married and having kids. Many participants showed their changing attitude toward early marriage especially for male migrants; they placed their career development as a priority and forming family a second place. For example, Trung, a male participant said:

All friends of my age who stayed back in the village already married. They even had children, but I have not yet thought about starting a family life yet. I need to work and earn some more. I might be joining the company-training course next year to improve my technical skills.

(Trung, 20, male, technician)

Nevertheless, this new and ‘modern’ view of early marriage was different to that of other, older female participants. For example, Vui and Hong, female, 24 and 25 respectively, both showed their concerns about not yet being married. They said they might need to return to their hometowns to see if they would have a greater chance of getting married soon.

7.2.3 Local dialects and accents

Though Vietnamese is the national language spoken in Vietnam, there are 54 ethnic groups with about 90 different languages in Vietnam (Ta, 2014). In this study, all participants were Kinh people, the majority group, speaking Vietnamese. Therefore, language was not a problem for them after migrating to the city, but there are dialects and accents that vary by sub-regions. There are basically three regional accents in Vietnam: Northern, Central and Southern, which are quite different from each other. Moreover, within each region, there are variations in the accents that people have. Though many participants embraced and adopted new urban appearances through their ways of being, their personal presentations and lifestyles, their local accents and dialects remained strong, and were considered more difficult to change. The place of origin for some participants could be identified when they spoke. For example, Hang, from Nghe An province, had a strong accent from the central region. People from Nghe An province have a distinguished way of pronouncing certain consonants, for example ‘tr’ or ‘s’, which are very different from other parts of the country and in particular from Hanoian accents. Other examples of this were evident in Ha and Xuan, who came from Thanh Hoa province. Ha and Xuan also had very typical local accents from their home province, so that they could be easily identified from people of other places. Similarly, some participants from Ha Tay, Hai Duong, and Bac Ninh mistakenly pronounced words starting with ‘l’ and ‘n’ occasionally: they confused pronouncing words that start with ‘l’ and ‘n’. For example, ‘no’, meaning ‘full’, was sometimes mispronounced as ‘lo’, meaning ‘worry’. Such pronunciation clearly stood out from the national, standard pronunciation. A few participants said that they had tried to change their accents, as their accents made it difficult for others to understand them sometimes. Accents and dialects in particular are established from childhood, and it takes a long time to change and adapt to the new way of speaking in a new environment.

The discussion so far focuses on the embodied attributes of the participants, or the personal presentation and manner of performance, as well as the way the participants speak as part of their urban identity formation and reconfiguration in their new urban location. It can be seen that some

dispositions of the habitus of the participants were flexible and easier to change, but some were very slow to change and took a longer time. Living and working in the city, the participants consciously and unconsciously adopted new ways of living and being through the learning and negotiation process. Or in other words, it was an internalised process of the externals that the individuals adopted both unconsciously and with rational strategic calculation. The following section examines other components of cultural capital, namely skills, competency, and the new personal qualities of the participants.

7.3 Newly acquired cultural capacities

Newly acquired knowledge and skills, or in broader terms, new capabilities, constitute an important component in the newly acquired cultural capital of the participants. This section first shows the process through which some participants obtained their work skills and qualifications. It then reports on other skill development, specifically technological knowledge (using a computer and the internet), new language, cultural learning, and other inter-personal skills.

7.3.1 Vocational qualifications and skills

The majority of the young participants in this study did not have any vocational training before migrating to the city. Most of them had just left school and had some farming experience, as they had assisted their parents with farming work. Relocating to Hanoi and joining the urban workforce without any work skills put many participants in a difficult situation to find the job of their choice. As a result, they took up any type of job that they were introduced to by their social networks, as reported in Chapter 6. All participants had a job pre-arranged for them by their relatives, friends, or other villagers before their arrival to Hanoi. The majority of participants had low-skilled or manual jobs. After being offered and accepting the jobs, only one fifth of participants were given training before commencing their jobs. This training was offered by their employers at the cost to the employees with some subsidies. The rest of the participants learnt to do their jobs while doing them. Hai, a factory worker, was among the very few participants who had training before commencing his job. He recalled:

I took a training course in electronics... I then got a job in a company in this industrial park. At first I had to observe how other colleagues [did] the job and [then] copy them. It took me a few weeks to master the skills in my production line.

(Hai, 24, male, factory worker)

Similarly, before working as a hairdresser, Mai attended a hair dressing class for several months before she got a paid job in a salon. She said:

I learnt to do haircuts in a salon for six months. He [the trainer] did not really show or teach me, but I mainly had to observe how he did it on customers when I assisted him every day at the store. After I completed the training, I [was] still not able to do haircuts for customers... it took a little more time... Working here in this salon I still mainly do some simpler jobs such as hair washes or hair-colouring. Other complicated techniques like hair straightening or curling, which require more experience and advanced techniques, I am yet to be able to do them on my own.

(Mai, 22, female, hair dresser)

Each participant told a unique story of how he or she learnt to do the job. But many shared a similar story of their hard time in figuring out how to do their jobs when they first started, as most of them were neither prepared nor equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge required for the jobs. Learning by doing was more common. Cuong was among those who learnt on the job. He recalled:

After I worked at the construction site for six or seven months as a site assistant, one of the experienced builder leaders in the team asked me if I wanted to follow him to learn more about electricity and pipe-line fitting for buildings. I said “yes” to him and followed him to learn it and worked with him for about three months. At first, I learnt to fit simple and short electricity lines. He then gradually showed me how to do more complicated systems such as the whole pipe system of a house or fitting the air conditioning pipe system.

(Cuong, 21, male, construction worker)

In general, it took several months for many participants to learn to do their jobs after being recruited; therefore, their starting wages were very low. Work skills gave the participants a competitive advantage in the labour market and better employability. Mastering a certain work skill facilitated many participants to gain confidence and bargaining power with employers, in cases where they wanted to change their jobs, and some of them had done so. Work skills play a crucial role for all participants in retaining their work and life in the city, as well as providing firm ground from which to achieve future career goals. Bourdieu (1986) names this type of cultural capital ‘institutionalised cultural capital’, which consists of institutional recognition, most often in the form of academic credentials or qualifications, of the cultural capital held by an individual that they can

‘sell’ to buyers (employers) who need their skills. However, the majority of participants were employed in manual jobs and were equipped with limited skills that were specific to the jobs they performed. There was very little potential to see a leap in their careers in the near future.

7.3.2 Learning new cultural practices and languages

Hanoi is a culturally-diversified city, home to people from different parts of Vietnam and also from many other countries, who work and settle there. Living in such a multicultural environment, the participants of this study were exposed to various cultural practices both domestically and internationally. The level of exposure to people from diversified backgrounds was particularly high for those who worked in large foreign-owned enterprises, which are usually comprised of a large number of employees from various provinces of the country as well as foreigners. Therefore, the manufacturing worker participants employed in large foreign-owned factories had many things to say about the differences they came across while interacting with their colleagues. In addition, those who lived in rental accommodation also had greater exposure to other cultural practices and norms, as they shared their accommodation with many other migrants from various provinces across Vietnam. For example, Hoa, who shared her room with two other roommates that she knew through work, said, “everybody has different characters [and] habits so it is quite difficult sometimes; it is not like at home...” As shown in chapter 5, the social experiences of the participants in the city differed, because they embarked on different housing arrangements and conditions in which renters had to learn to adjust to living with people who were not their relatives or long-term friends.

For a few participants, learning a foreign language was a requirement for their current or future jobs. For instance, Hong and Vui undertook a Japanese language class before they both commenced their work for Japanese-owned companies, so as to be able to communicate with Japanese supervisors and managers at work. Hong recalled,

My company requires all newly recruited workers to learn the Japanese language. We learnt it for four days intensively before officially being accepted to work for the company.

(Hong, 20, female, factory worker)

Besides, Nga and Hung attended a Chinese and a Japanese language class respectively in preparation for their immigration plans to work on contracts in Taiwan and Japan. In addition to language, the aforementioned participants also understood a little about the culture and people that

they were working with too. Being exposed to and learning new foreign languages and cultures brought about new perspectives for the participants, and a sense of internationalisation and globalisation at the local level. This sense of internationalisation and inter-connectedness was also felt and experienced not only by the participants who were directly exposed to other cultures, but also by others through the mass media and the internet. The next section shows the self-learning journey of quite a few of the participants in using computers and the internet.

7.3.3 Learning to use computers and the internet

There were many new things to learn and adopt in urban life for young rural to urban migrants, of which approaching modern information technology was one. Nearly half of the participants learnt to use computers and the internet after moving to Hanoi. Most participants in this group said that they learnt through their friends, colleagues, or housemates in their free time. Nam, a factory worker, said he learnt to use a computer and the internet by observing his brother and friends. He then bought a used desktop computer for himself and had been using it every day for both entertainment and learning purposes. He showed a photo of his girlfriend (see photo 5.15 in Chapter 5) using his computer at his place. He explained further that he instructed her in how to use it and they often watched movies on the computer at home. Nam was one of the two participants who owned a computer in this study. Those who did not own computers had to go to their friends' or relatives' houses, or internet cafes, to get access. Internet access has become very easily available in cafes in Vietnamese cities and towns over the past few years, at very reasonable prices, which has enhanced accessibility to computers and the internet.

Interestingly, Hang, a domestic worker, learnt to use a computer and the internet through observing the son of her employer. She developed her interest in learning to use the computer out of curiosity when she saw that the little boy could use a computer proficiently. In addition, as a domestic worker she was not allowed to go out to internet cafes or visit friends. She learnt to use the computer on her own at the employer's house. She explained:

I saw the little boy [her employer's son] could do it very proficiently and thought to myself that, hmm, he is such a little boy and he could use it very professionally, why cannot I? So I started exploring using it when I had free time and when he did not use his computer... I often go online to read news and cultural magazines. I am particularly interested in reading about Japanese culture.

(Hang, 18, female, domestic worker)

In addition to using the internet on a computer and laptop, some participants reported that they could access the internet through their mobile phones, and those participants often used communication applications on their phones, such as Facebook and Viber, to connect with their friends.

Recall that one of the main reasons many participants wanted to relocate to the city was because of its modernity, progressiveness, and advanced level of socio-economic development. New technologies such as computers and the internet, which are more easily available and accessible in the city, partly contribute to making the city more ‘advanced’ than the countryside. The rate of accessing and using computers and the internet in urban areas is much higher than in rural areas in Vietnam. It can be said that many participants demonstrated their agency and positive attitude toward learning new things and new technologies through the fact that they learnt to use computers and the internet of their own volition, not because it was required in their work. Using such technologies also had the symbolic value of keeping oneself up to date with modernity and not being left behind by their peers in the city.

7.3.4 Changes in personal qualities

Becoming more ‘confident’ and more ‘sociable’ were the top key words mentioned by a number of participants when they talked about undergoing personal changes since migrating to Hanoi. An important aspect of personal improvement that many participants discussed was their interpersonal communication skills. They emphasised that they had become more sociable and more confident in interacting with people, whereas they had been shy and lacking in self-confidence in public places or in interacting with people before. These new qualities were particularly highly regarded among those who worked in the service sector, which required them to deal with customers. Such qualities were shown through their personal appearance, the way they talked, their manner, and postures. Xuan, a sales assistant participant, commented that her personal changes were noticed more by people who knew her before:

When I visit my hometown nowadays, I often hear people in my village comment that I am no longer as shy as before. I have become more outgoing, more talkative. In the past, I was very lacking in confidence and kept things to myself. You know, I have faced lots of issues and troubles since I came and lived here... not like before... my school friends in the village also commented that I have transformed... not like before...

(Xuan, 23, female, sales assistant)

Xuan had worked as a live-in maid for a family when she first came to Hanoi, but she then became a shop assistant. The new position required her to talk to customers, being open and enthusiastic in order to keep sales up. She commented that the job played an important role in changing her from being a very shy girl to a more sociable person. “Living here alone, I have faced many issues and problems, so I have to deal with it by myself”, she added. Similarly, Hung, who did a sales and marketing job, noted that he had become better at talking and persuading people because of his sales job. He added, “I was a very unconfident village boy before, but this job pushes me to talk to people”.

Furthermore, some participants noted that they had become more mature in their thinking. For example, Minh articulated,

When I was in the countryside, I was younger and very naïve as I had just exited school. I was not as mature and thoughtful as I am now... I think of my parents more. I feel for them.

(Minh, 20, male, factory worker)

Minh explained further that he took everything for granted before, from a family meal that his mother prepared for the family every day, to his school fees that his parents always paid on time, or clothing that they bought for him. But living alone in the city, all these ‘small’ things were done by himself, which made him realise how much work his parents had done for him.

Such development of personal qualities, such as confidence, thoughtfulness, consideration and maturity, was not only the result of the conditions they had to tackle at their jobs and in their everyday life in the city, but was also a part of growing up and becoming more responsible adults. Personal development is partly a process of becoming an adult. This process happens for any adolescent, but it is evident that it happened more quickly and sooner for these young migrants, because migration forced them to live away from their parents and to decide most things for themselves. Many participants acknowledged that migration and living away from their parents facilitated their personal maturity. Importantly, gaining confidence and sociability were, according to them, largely due to what they had learnt from doing their jobs.

In fact, to become more confident and increase self-esteem in their manner, posture, and ways of being was largely due to the fact that the participants had achieved their new ‘social status’, which was different and higher than what it was before. They had changed their social status from dependent children, who were reliant on their parents in the village, to independent adults, both socially and financially. Their work and the value of their labour was recognised and measured by

their monthly wages, instead of just being helpers to their parents with farm work. Both the social status change, and the increase in their economic status, contributed significantly to the improvement of their sense of self-esteem and self-confidence.

7.4 Future aspirations

Arnett (2000) argues that emerging adulthood, which extends from roughly 18 to 25 years old, is the developmental period when individuals determine how one's current aspirations will mature into coherent adult roles. He sees emerging adulthood as the period of exploration for different relevant life domains, such as work, love, and education, before settling into stable adult roles and responsibilities, including work, marriage, and parenthood. When preparing for their future career, emerging adults explore different educational options and enrich their work experiences. This is how they learn more about themselves and clarify their preferences and abilities, thus constructing their identity (Arnett, 2004). Most young migrants of this study became very concerned and proactive about their futures. Many were concerned about their futures, with questions such as, *What job will I be doing next? What future directions should I take? Should I stay in the city permanently or return home?* The participants shared their future plans, showing thorough consideration of many factors such as their capabilities, accessible resources, available opportunities, and their own ambitions.

The interview materials revealed that the majority of participants emphasised the economic dimension of their futures, with the top priority given to achieving better employment (to improve their economic situation), or in general to have 'a better life'. There were different plans that the participants wanted to explore in the near future, and these can be categorised under three main themes: gaining better jobs through vocational skills acquisition; opening a small business; and migrating to somewhere else for better employment opportunities. Each option is now discussed.

7.4.1 Vocational training to get better jobs

Many young migrants in this study expressed an aspiration to gaining better jobs in the future. A better job, according to them, was one with higher wages (compared to their current wage), was more stable (both in terms of working hours and income), and not too physically demanding. Many expressed a desire to learn a certain job skill or to improve their current job skills in order to get better jobs in the future. It should be noted that the majority of the participants did not have any vocational training before migrating to the city, and that they were mainly employed

in unskilled labour with low wages, such as domestic work, retail, and factory work. After working in the city for some time, they developed different ideas and plans for their futures. For example, Hang, a domestic worker, planned to get another skilled job in the future. She explained:

Working like this [as a domestic worker] cannot continue in the long run. I am still working here for them [the employer's family] but early next year when the smaller baby [starts] growing up, they [her employers] will let me attend a job skill training course [in the evening]... in order to have a more sustainable job in the future... [because] once I get married, I cannot live far away from my family and be a live-in domestic worker like this... I also think that I need to have a certain type of job skill which helps bring a better life.

(Hang, female, 18, domestic worker)

For Hang, her desire to learn a specific job skill in order to get a 'proper' job was also a strategic preparation to start her own family. A more stable job was what many young migrants aimed for, but they were also aware of the need to upgrade their skills in order to make this happen. In addition, a job was not simply a source of income, but the type of occupation was also considered a social class marker that the young migrants wanted to change. For instance, Minh was employed as a worker at a foreign-invested electronic factory, but he did not want to be a manual worker for the rest of his life. He noted,

You know, no-one wants to be a worker. No-one wants to be a worker for their whole life time... I have to learn something, some sort of job skill that [can] give me another job, a career.

(Minh, 20, male, factory worker)

Unlike older generations of migrants who tend to stick with the same job for quite a long time or even for their whole life, younger migrants in this study showed their aspirations and expectations to make progress in their future, through the acquisition of job skills to have a 'career', not just a job. Respondents mentioned a variety of vocational skills that they had figured out as potential options for them to get more desirable jobs, such as electrical, hospitality, tailoring, and hairdressing skills. However, at the same time, many expressed their concerns about the affordability and time constraints in making their study plans happen. For instance, Nga, a sales assistant, commented:

I prefer to learn hairdressing. I want to take the course, but if I do so I won't have money to send to my parents, to support my younger siblings for their schooling. I feel for my parents and for my siblings, so I was reluctant to spend on the course... Learning at the salon, they will feed me and accommodate me, but they won't give any pay. Without receiving a wage I don't have money to send to my parents... so I abandoned the idea. I [would] still like to learn to become a hairdresser, but my situation does not let me... I have to continue working to send money to my parents.

(Nga, female, 20, sales assistant)

Nga was not the only participant who experienced this challenge of choosing between current earnings and expenses, and investing in a skills upgrade. The tension between one's desire and financial constraints was shared by other participants as well. They encountered the dilemma of lacking financial resources to invest in improvement of their cultural capital (in the form of vocational qualifications) which was needed to help them move ahead in their career paths. Lacking initial financial capital might lead young migrants into a vicious cycle of having insufficient financial capital to invest in enriching their cultural capital, which leads to zero opportunity to increase their economic capital in order to have 'a better life'. We can see here that choices are bounded by the framework of opportunities and constraints the person finds himself or herself in, the external circumstances, as Reay suggested (2004).

7.4.2 Entrepreneurial dreams

About one quarter of the respondents showed interest in opening their own shops when they could afford to do so. The participants shared similar plans towards owning a shop, such as saving money and accumulating more work experience in the relevant business. A range of types of shops were mentioned, for example, a grocery store, a tea and coffee stall, a cafe restaurant, and a hairdressing salon. It was observed that the respondents who had intentions to run their own businesses were those who had been or were currently working in a business environment. For example, Duc, a metal worker for a family-owned enterprise, wanted to open his own metal workshop. Mai, a hairdresser, planned to open her own hairdressing store. Nam, who used to be a bartender, shared his aspiration to open a cafe of his own. He said:

I want to open my own cafe. ... I will work for a restaurant or a bar for some more time to get more practical experience. Working and learning in that industry, you might think that

you know a lot, but things are changing. You cannot know or be up-to-date with all the new things in the industry...

(Nam, 24, male, factory worker)

Thus, the participants' employment aspirations were influenced by the environments in which they were employed. Work experience accumulated in such work environments was an important cultural resource, which enabled the possibility of following their aspirations to set up a business. In addition, the business networks that they established through their jobs also facilitated their own business plans.

Besides the two options of acquiring formal vocational training and becoming self-employed by running a small business, there were a few participants who looked for opportunities to migrate further away, both domestically and internationally.

7.4.3 Further migration

A smaller number of participants in this study showed their desire to migrate to somewhere else. This group wanted to migrate further, such as to the South of Vietnam and overseas. Domestically, Ho Chi Minh City is the most popular destination for rural to urban migrants in Vietnam. It not only attracts people from surrounding provinces in the South, but many from the Northern and Central regions too. Cuong, who had migrated to work in the South before, planned to return there for long-term settlement. For him, migrating to the South was not only for his career development, but also for the reunion of his family. He said:

I am planning to go to Saigon [Ho Chi Minh City] again in the future, maybe next year. My brother will be working by next year when he completes his university degree... My mother wants to remarry soon, [and] my father is now living alone in the village. He drinks a lot. If I have a stable job [in Saigon], I want to take my father along with us.

(Cuong, male, 23, builder)

In particular, there were two participants who wanted to emigrate overseas with the hope of bringing home a lot of money. They both revealed that they had devoted considerable effort and money to pursuing a 'labour export' position, but they were not yet successful at the time this study was conducted. Hung, one of the two who wished to go overseas, said:

I really want to go to Japan but my road towards Japan is very thorny so far... I have lost thirteen million [approximately AUD1500], [on the cost of] language learning, uniforms, food and accommodation. Within six months [for a pre-departure training course with the recruitment agency in Vietnam] it cost me more than thirteen million...

(Hung, 21, male, sales and marketing assistant)

A couple of common points were shared by those who wished to migrate further. First, they had learnt about opportunities in potential migration destinations through their friends and co-villagers, or knew someone in their networks who had done so. Second, they were inspired by the fact that their fellow villagers who worked overseas sent home what they considered a large amount of money. However, international migration transaction costs are very expensive. In order to have an employed position in Taiwan or Japan, the Vietnamese labour candidate is usually required to pay a large amount of money as a secured deposit to the recruitment agency based in Vietnam. For example, Hung explained to me that it required eighty million Vietnam Dong (equal to about \$4000 AUD) for a job in Taiwan, and one hundred million (equal to AUD5000) for a position in Japan. Those who manage to migrate to more developed countries for work often need to get loans from their relatives or banks. Hung, however, was from a poor family that could not support him. Nga, another participant, wanted to migrate to Taiwan to earn more, but she failed to get a bank loan to finance her international migration costs. Regardless of going through all these obstacles, both participants still held onto their hopes of making it happen one day.

International migration seemed to be an attractive option for a few young people in this study. In fact, many people in Vietnam, particularly the young, try to seek their fortunes by emigrating to work in more developed countries in the region that have higher wages, such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and elsewhere in the world (Centre of Overseas Labour, 2014). However, international migration often requires much higher costs, is a more complicated process, and takes a longer time compared to internal migration. Therefore, not many people can actually migrate to work overseas successfully.

Evidence provided in this section shows that the participants considered exploring different options that focused on improving their economic and material situations. One explanation for this might be that most participants were from poor family backgrounds, where the main concern was ensuring that there was enough food on the table. Strong emphasis was given to having good jobs, which meant jobs that gave a higher and more stable income. In general, employment is the top

priority for young people in contemporary Vietnam so as to survive and thrive, given the fact that the unemployment rate among youth is very high (as described in Chapter 2), and there is no state welfare available to support the unemployed in the country. The aspirations to futures of the participants are in fact their strategies to improve their social and economic status. This observation supports Appadurai's argument that "aspirations are not merely individual, but rather they were culturally located, formed in the thick of social life" (2004, p. 67). It was evident that some participants had to consider and balance wishes for a future in the city with their responsibilities to their parents, such as Cuong and Nga. In Vietnamese culture, sons and eldest children are often tied down with a larger responsibility towards caring for their parents as they get old, while this duty is more relaxed for daughters and younger children in the family.

In addition, there were numerous structural constraints and barriers which might prevent the participants from realising their dreams. Financial constraints were the most frequently mentioned hurdle, being identified as one of the most important constraining factors that prevented them from realising their future plans. All options required financial investment, whether they were vocational training, opening a business, or migrating further to somewhere else, but particularly migrating overseas. As argued by Appadurai (2004), the resources that support the capacity to aspire are not evenly distributed; so too the effort required in reaching the desired aim will also be unevenly distributed. This acknowledges that there are many social factors—including friends, schools, family, and the local environment (Wilks & Wilson, 2012)—that influence young people's aspirations and how robust or connected to reality these aspirations are. Nevertheless, the participants demonstrated their agency by exhibiting their capacity to aspire and to work hard in order to achieve what they aspired for in order to escape poverty, by lifting their living standard, and by gaining social mobility through employment, training, and gaining more financial capital. They did not only hold positive attitudes towards the future, and showed belief in their ability to attain their aspirations, but they also worked hard towards it. Many took extra jobs, overtime shifts, and so on to increase their financial capital; and they accumulated their skills and knowledge through their jobs to boost their cultural capital, the two types of capital which are key to gaining position in the field (Bourdieu 1990).

In short, the migration journey from rural to urban areas of many young migrants was a journey to find a better future, a journey of enhancing their capability to aspire. The new working and living experiences in the city proved to act as a learning process that enabled the capacity to aspire from 'wishful thinking' to 'thoughtful wishing', as termed by Appadurai (2004, p. 82).

However, there were tensions between what they hoped for and the capabilities to realise them. Support for young migrants, both financially and socially, from families, communities and the government is crucial in allowing them to move forward toward better lives in the future.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter illustrates the changing identities of the young people who migrated from the countryside to the city. A number of changes and transformations that the participants had gone through were reported as well as observed. The social field of Hanoi city is very different from the social field of the countryside, which the young migrants came from. In the context of rural to urban migration, the migrants entered various fields and they were all different to each other: from the village field to the urban field; from the agricultural field to the commercial and industrial field, which require different sets of skills; from the self-employment field (more informal) to the more commercial and formal employment field, with complicated workplace relationships and conventions (such as employer-employee, wages, overtime payment, benefits, and social protection welfare). This is a result of increased individual mobility, institutional reflexivity, an increased quantitative differentiation of social fields and the blurring of boundaries between others (McNay, 1999, pp. 106-107). In such a context, the establishment and maintenance of habitus is problematised, allowing 'reflexivity in'. McNay (1999) argues that contemporary society is in fact much more routinely marked by the 'crises' emanating from movement between fields than Bourdieu allows. Some aspects of change in the new identities of the young migrants happened rapidly, such as adopting new lifestyles and various aspects of their new embodiment; however, others, such as dialects, accents, ways of thinking and perspectives, had changed more slowly. It was recorded that the external factors, such as living arrangements, types of employment, and work environment, strongly influenced their self-identities.

On the one hand, most participants obtained different 'urban' and 'modern' elements, whether it was consciously or unconsciously. This was demonstrated through their changing attitudes, ways of thinking, their dressing styles, and the way they spoke. On the other hand, their 'countryside' features remained rooted through their dialects, their ways of being and the way in which they saw themselves as still not 'urban' people. The aspirations expressed by the participants clearly showed new thinking toward the future, and a demonstration of the agency of the participants. Instead of taking whatever jobs they could get in the city when they first migrated, they put more consideration into, and provided more rationales for, their future choices, after the

initial migration. The young migrants embraced the urban lifestyle, modernity and progressiveness, and took up urban trends, but the participants did not show any intention of forgoing their rural roots in their hearts. Instead they still maintained a strong link to their hometowns through frequent visits, phone calls, gift exchanges, remittances and other points of engagement. The following, final chapter of this thesis, will provide a synthesis of major findings, some recommendations, and the concluding remarks of the study.

It was observed that most participants demonstrated their ability and affordability to consume ‘urban modernity’ thorough possession of new material goods for themselves and their families. Such consumption ability was made possible by their waged employment. Importantly, it showed that the young migrants gained the ability of ‘mobility-in-migration’ both in geographical and social senses. Their social and financial capital enrichment as well as their newly developed knowledge and different worldviews making them become more confident to take on other forms of mobility (as expressed in the narratives of their future aspirations), whether moving further somewhere else or taking on other roles, or trying new different jobs or attending vocational trainings to get other jobs in the future.

Chapter 8. Discussion and Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This thesis contributes to scholarship on internal migration by adding an in-depth understanding of the lived working and living experiences of young people who migrate from the countryside to the city in Vietnam, and how such experiences impact on their identities. This thesis set out to address two research questions. The first question asked, *What are the living and working experiences of young migrants in the city?* and the second question asked, *How do the experiences of working and living in the city shape identities of young migrants?* The study adopted a qualitative research approach, using three methods of data collection including participants' interviews, adapted photovoice, and field observations. Theoretically, the study applied Bourdieu's theory of practice (1990), using three inter-relational concepts of habitus, capital, and field. Habitus was understood as a system of dispositions to understand the process of identity transformation of the participants as they moved across fields, from the rural socio-economic field to the urban socio-economic field. The concept of 'field' was applied to examine different dimensions of the new urban socio-economic field that the young migrants entered after they left their villages, in order to understand their working and living experiences as the context in which they construct their identities. Different forms of capital, including social, economic and cultural capital, as conceptualised by Bourdieu (1986), were useful in understanding how the different volumes of capital that each participant possessed contributed to shaping their individual social and working experiences in the city; and in turn, how their living and working experiences impacted on the accumulation of different forms of capital, which significantly influenced the way in which they saw themselves.

This final chapter comprises four sections. The first section synthesises major findings of the study. The second section suggests some implications for theory, methodology, practice, and policy based on findings presented in chapter 5 through to chapter 7. This is followed by an acknowledgement of some limitations of the study before outlining future research recommendations. The chapter ends with some concluding remarks.

8.2 Summary of the findings

The lived day to day experiences of young migrants participated in this study comprised of two main components; living and working, which were presented in chapter 5 and 6 respectively, addressing the first research question in two different fields. Leaving their parental home for the city, most participants revealed that they undertook new and very different lifestyles in the city compared to what it was in their hometowns. Among such new and different social experiences included new types of dwelling such as renting, living at workplaces, or living with one of their kin families; and extended and more complicated social relationships. The type of dwelling options which were partly formed by the type of the participants' jobs left some important social implications. Those who lived in shared rental lodging houses and at the construction sites, who can be called 'lived out', reported to have more freedom and autonomy while those lived with employers or relatives, who can be called 'lived in', often disliked being subjected to surveillance, and supervision by their employers or relatives with whom they resided. In addition, female 'live in' workers experienced more exploitation in a form of extra-long working hours and unpaid house work for the employers while male 'live out' workers reported to have more extended social networks. Being young and living a new life away from village families, the participants experienced a wide range of feelings and sentiments from enjoying more freedom and independence from being out of parental supervision and control, embracing the exciting and fun parts that the city offers, but also suffered from feelings of boredom, loneliness, and nostalgia.

Work formed an important part that contributed largely to the everyday experiences of the study participants as most of them spent long hours at work, on average of ten hours per day. The participants were employed in three sectors namely; service, construction, and manufacturing. Working conditions in these sectors were quite distinct from each other. All participants employed in the manufacturing sector reported more positive working conditions such as more formal settings, formal recruitment procedure, strict rule and regulations at applied at workplaces. On the other hand, the work in service and construction sectors was informal and less regulated. The overall experiences were that work was hard and tiring, but it provided important income which financed their daily living and other consumption in the city as well as enabled them to save up for their future and remit home to help their parents. Though appreciating their current jobs in the city, many participants showed interest in getting

better jobs and some have sought different ways to improve their employment situation by renewing their job skills such as taking formal vocational training courses.

In addition, all research participants acknowledged and emphasised the important role of social networks in their migration process and settlement in the city. Kinship, friendship networks, and fellow villager networks were frequently mentioned as sources of assistance for their migration and settlement. Most respondents had their jobs and accommodations pre-arranged by their social networks before their migration and they played an important role in deciding what type of first jobs migrants had on their arrival.

The new living and working experiences in the city strongly influenced the ways in which they saw themselves as well as being seen by others post-migration. Their rural habitus undertook a process of exposure to the new surroundings making migrants adjust, adopt, and accept new elements as well as preserve old dispositions. It was demonstrated that young migrants both strategically and unconsciously gradually developed new identities that include both old and new qualities and characteristics. They adopted new looks, hairstyles and dress, as well as developed their personal qualities such as self-confidence, independence, and self-esteem. In addition, they intentionally and unintentionally maintained their rural qualities such as their dialects, habits, and other embodiments (as demonstrated in chapter 7). An important aspect of newly ascribed identity as modern employees in the urban areas is very much shown through their process of self-learning to improve their capabilities. Such new migratory experiences strongly influenced the way in which participants viewed and planned their futures. Their various aspirations into the future crystallised and become more realistic based on their own assessment of their capital assets and the possibilities to mobilise potential capital.

8.3 Synthesis of the findings

The findings of the thesis draw attention to three prominent areas. First, social, economic, and cultural capital largely contributed to the social and material outcomes of these young migrants, and such migratory experiences brought about differentiated results in their volume of capital. Second, the young migrants demonstrated their agency to improve their social positions despite experiencing many constraints in the urban socio-economic field. Third, the working and living experiences as migrant workers in the city influenced the way in which the participants constructed and redefined their self-

identities, developed their senses of belonging, and shaped their worldviews. The rest of this section provides evidence-based arguments for these three major claims.

8.3.1 The role of social, economic and cultural capital in migration

It is evident in various studies (Massey, 1990; Massey, Alarcon, Durand, & Gonzalez, 1987; Portes, 1995; Portes & Bach 1985; Stark, 1991) that social and economic capital plays a crucial role in facilitating the process and outcomes of migration, whether it is internal or international migration. Such studies show varied evidence that family, friends and community members with migration experience often provide initial contacts and information, or sponsor the move for a kin, friend or community member. The findings of this study highlighted the importance of social capital, in the form of social networks, in finding jobs, accommodation, and providing information both before and after migration for young migrants. All participants in this study were introduced to or linked with their jobs through their social networks. They acknowledged and emphasised the importance of their social networks in helping them get jobs and accommodation, among many other things in the city. The role of social networks in migration decision-making and as a source of support to migrants, both internal and international, has long been documented. Roschelle (1997) claimed that social networks are a form of social capital and their role is especially important among more socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Migration networks influence prospective migrants' movement and behaviour in decision-making, serve as important information conduits between the origin and the destination, and affect migrants' ability to adapt to new living and working conditions. The findings confirmed the importance of social networks in migration, echoing findings of other studies on this topic in the Vietnamese context (L. A. Hoang, 2011; Karis, 2013; Winkels & Adger, 2002) and other examples elsewhere in South Asia (Goss & Lindquist, 1995; Hugo, 1993). A different observation on the role of social networks in this study was the increasingly important role of friendship networks compared to kinship networks, which traditionally have been the most important source of support to new migrants.

Social capital, in the form of social networks, had subsequent economic effects through paid employment. It helped to generate economic capital. This study's findings confirmed that most participants improved their financial situation after migration. All respondents had paid employment and their income was sufficient to at least cover their living expenses in the city. In addition, a few participants were able to reserve some surplus to keep as savings for the future, or to remit to their

parents in the villages. This echoed the findings of other studies on internal migrants in Vietnam (such as De Brauw, 2010; Le & Nguyen, 2011; Rigg et al., 2012).

The process of capital accumulation occurred gradually because the participants needed to first secure jobs, meet their basic daily living needs, and then begin to generate surpluses. The gradual accumulation process of economic resources among migrants has been shown in many other empirical works (Naila Kabeer & Mahmud, 2004 ; Rigg et al., 2012). Though it can be said that most study participants had an improvement in their financial situation, ‘upward movement’ was not yet clearly observed because they could not make a significant amount of money due to their relatively low wages. This is because they were mainly employed in low-skilled jobs. Nevertheless, their small amount of economic capital resulted in important social and economic improvements for themselves. They had become autonomous and independent from their parents. This caused the participants a significant role-change within their families, from dependent child to independent, confident member of society after migration.

Being independent economically and socially gave young migrants a stronger sense of self-esteem and autonomy, and caused them to start identifying themselves as independent adults. In particular, a few participants had become the main source of cash income in their families. Such role-changing was very significant and meaningful to most participants, as it was an important marker of becoming “mature” and “grown up” (*trưởng thành*). This also marked an important, upwardly-mobile step in the social ladder, defining a new social standing for the participants by migrating out of their villages. In addition, the increased economic resource also enabled the participants to establish new social relationships in the city while still maintain their old connections in the villages, hence, strengthening their social capital. It can be said that the conversion of social capital into economic capital, and social and cultural capital, that was established by Bourdieu (1986) was clearly observed among the study participants. The relationships between different forms of capital and their correlations with the outcomes of migration for young people is illustrated in Figure 8.1.

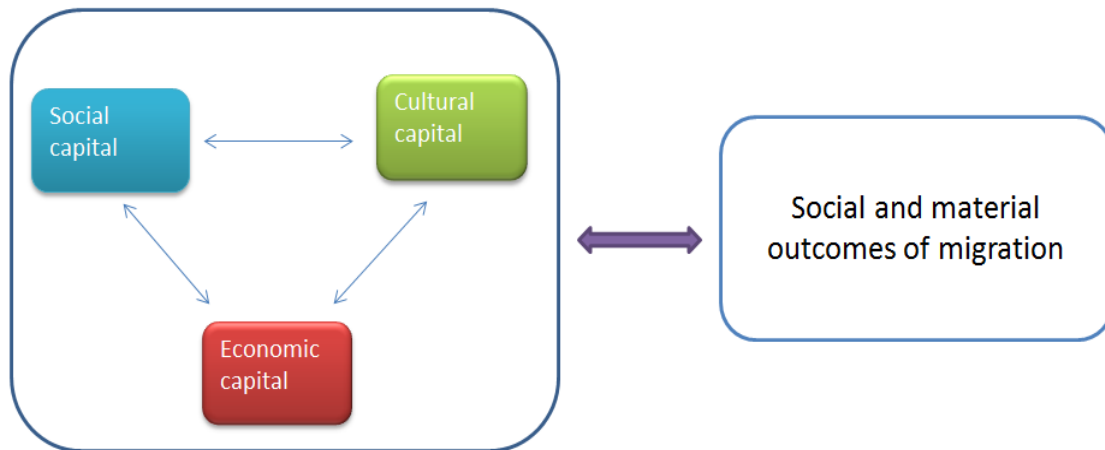


Figure 8.1 The inter-relationship between capital and migration outcomes

Figure 8.1 shows that different forms of capital, namely, social, economic and cultural capital, are convertible into each other. Such resources shaped the social and material outcomes of migration for the young migrants. In turn, the migration outcomes brought about changes to the volume of such capital for the participants over time. In this study, with the exception of one participant who claimed that her overall situation remained the same after migration, most participants experienced an increase in their economic capital, which helped to improve their social positions and social relationships. However, it should be noted that an increase in economic and social capital did not automatically result in higher cultural capital—in the form of job skills and qualifications. Most participants had taken on low-skilled and manual jobs. Although they demonstrated their desire for career development in the future, as shown in Chapter 7, there was still little evidence to convince that they could break the manual job cycle. The strong agency to improve their social and economic position on the social ladder will be discussed in the following.

8.3.2 Exercise of Agency

The young people in this study demonstrated their agency in the context of encountering a number of structural challenges and barriers in contemporary Vietnamese society. Their agency was observable in at least three arenas: their migration decision-making; their everyday capacity to survive or even thrive in the city after migration; and in their changing identities as a strategy to ‘fit’ within the new surroundings. Recall that the motivations that drove the young people in this study to migrate to

the city were multiple and complex. It was not simply economic drive, as traditional studies on economic migration usually reveal, but rather the young people tended to search for better lives, better futures, autonomy and independence. The latter reasons were also reported in a study of Belanger and Pendakis (2010) on young unmarried women in Vietnam. In this study, the decision to migrate for most respondents was very individual, not a collective decision made by their families as a strategy to maximise economic gain for the household, as claimed by the new economics of labour migration (NELM) framework (Stark, 1991). Rather the decision to migrate for most participants was made of their own volition, with some consultation and advice sought from their parents, friends and other people who had migration experiences in the community. In some cases, some respondents still decided to leave for the city, against their parents' wishes. This echoed research findings of Beynon (2004) and Gaetano (2004) on young, unmarried, female rural-urban migrants in China, who wanted to get out of their village life. The expression of agency of the participants in this study was consistent with the argument of Goss and Lindquist (1995, p. 345) in their application of structuration theory, in which they argued that movement is the "outcome of a complex combination of individual actions and social structures [... in which] the capacity for such action is differentially distributed according to knowledge of rules and access to resources".

Furthermore, the respondents expressed their agency through their capabilities to learn many new things in order to live in the new surroundings. They learnt how to share accommodation with others to whom they were not related; they learnt to follow strict schedules that were very different from the flexibility of farming work in the past; they learnt to follow new rules and regulations at work; they learnt how to eat and sleep in between their work shifts, to keep up with a new, busy life schedule; they also learnt to adapt, considering the fact that they were different and poorer compared to many urbanites. There were other, basic things they needed to learn in their new urban lives, such as how to catch a bus and ride a motobike; or just how to buy vegetables and groceries, to bargain to get cheaper prices. They made efforts to make themselves more comfortable within the new urban life, to feel 'at home' or in Bourdieu's words, to 'act at ease'. In addition, the fact that all participants were unmarried enabled them to have more free space and less familial responsibilities to manoeuvre, and to try new things. This was in keeping with Askland's argument that "youth can act as a significant force in an individual's response to cultural change" (2007, p. 243). Arriving in the city as young, emerging adults, the participants in the study had the potential to energise and excite their habitus in accordance with the

new environment to which they had been introduced. Children and young adolescents have, as noted by Rapport and Lomsky-Feder (2002), “fewer vested interests in, and motivations to, preserve the existing social order than do adults, and thus are less anxious about change” (p. 245). At this point in the course of life, young, unmarried people are carefree and yet to be bound with adult responsibilities for their families (as married people usually are). Young people have the chance to migrate, to explore opportunities and alternatives before settling down to family life. Their agency is coupled with high levels of mobility and openness to the modification of life conditions and social reality. Their response to cultural change will therefore differ from that of adults whose “habitus tends to ensure its own constancy and its defence against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 601).

In addition, exercised agency among the participants was shown strongly through their determination to improve their employment prospective through various alternatives. They sought to improve their job skills to increase the opportunity to get other, better jobs in the future. They undertook various actions to improve their employment situation by self-learning, looking out for new job opportunities, taking on second jobs, and living a hard life on a tight budget in order to save up for other investments in the future, such as paying for vocational training courses; financing further, more distant migration; migrating overseas; or opening their own business. In particular, the ability to save for the future demonstrated their ability to prepare for and take control of their futures, rather than being passive individuals. It can be said that accumulating and saving for the future was a strategy of these young migrants to find their ways to the future. They manifested their positive and strong senses of responsibility for their futures, making efforts to move ahead in life rather than expecting or being reliant on structural support.

A number of structural challenges that faced the participants were identified in this study. The first and most obvious was poverty. Being born into and growing up in a poor family and poor region, of a less-developed country like Vietnam, limited their possibilities for overall development. As children of poor farmers in Vietnam, they did not have many choices other than working on the farm after dropping out of school as their parents did. Being poor and having limited capital disadvantaged them in the globalised, a labour market that demands high-skilled workers. In order to improve their

situations, they needed to improve their cultural capital which comes in the form of knowledge, skills and qualifications through investment in education and training. However, there was a shortage of flexible and subsidised vocational training programs available to them. Most participants had to work long hours, leaving them with no or very limited available time to attend a vocational training program, which usually require fulltime attendance. Furthermore, vocational training programs were costly, and the participants did not receive any incentive supports from the government. The high cost of a vocational training program was one of the major barriers preventing the participants from acquiring skills that they needed. Most importantly, in reality, having graduated from a vocational training program does not guarantee them a job. Statistics on unemployment in Vietnam (2014) show that the unemployment rate among those with newly acquired college and university qualifications was very high, at 7.68 per cent—the highest unemployment rate among working-age groups. These shortfalls in the existing vocational training system in Vietnam—namely, lack of flexibility, cost, and lack of connections with industries—failed to encourage young people to enrol in vocational training before or after their migration, creating an endless poverty cycle and making it hard to break the low-skilled employment cycle for young people.

It is suggested that when discussing structural barriers for migrants in the context of Vietnam, one must consider the household registration system (Catherine Locke, 2008; Le et al., 2011). The household registration system has been used as a powerful legislative tool to control and restrict rural to urban migration in Vietnam, which creates numerous issues and problems for the migrants, especially in accessing public social services in urban areas such as healthcare and education, as shown in the literature review chapter (Chapter 2.) However, this system has relaxed a great deal over the past decade (Locke & Nguyen, 2014) letting people move freely across the provincial borders without strict restrictions, as there were before. Many inter-provincial migrants nowadays do not bother to register themselves with the local authorities at their new destinations like before. Most employers no longer require their potential employees to show their residential status or require urban residence as a condition of employment. The household registration system still applies restrictions to the healthcare and education entitlements of the migrants and their dependents; however, this system did not bother any of the participants of this study. This might be due to the participants being young and having relatively good physical health, so they rarely needed to get access to the public healthcare system. In

addition, none of them had any dependent children who needed access to schooling in the city. Unlike many previous empirical studies, which claimed the crucial role of household registration in the daily life and work of migrants, this study shows that the young migrants participating in this study were no longer being bothered or restricted in their movement by this statutory system. Nevertheless, the urban resident status still carries an important symbolic value that most migrants expressed a desire to achieve. Being an urban resident is like being embedded with a marker of better social standing in the context of the rural-urban divide in Vietnamese society. The preference for urbanity over rurality can explain why the participants were more likely to actively embrace urban values and norms rather than rejecting them.

8.3.3 Changing identities, sense of belonging, and worldviews

Identity is one of the major focuses of examination set out by this study. The new experiences of living and working in the city and beyond had brought about changing identities, senses of belonging, and worldviews of the young migrants participating in this study. On migrating to the city, the participants carried forward their rural habitus, and at the same time encountered new dispositions in urban areas through adopting, accepting, or filtering the different values and norms of the new surroundings, as their habitus was both “conservative” and “dynamic”. Recall that habitus refers to the principles of generating and structuring practices and representations, subsequently producing identity through particular dispositions and structures of perception that are associated with a sensory environment. The participants had gone through the process of ‘orientation’ and ‘disorientation’ on relocating from their original rural socio-economic field to the urban field. Their day-to-day social and work experiences in the new non-farming, commercial, industrial-production and service environments in the city exposed them to many new things, norms, and values. The result of this process produced a transformed habitus which comprises both core rural dispositions carried forward and newly adopted urban dispositions. The process of new identity formation through the transformation of their habitus is visualised in a diagram in Figure 8.2.

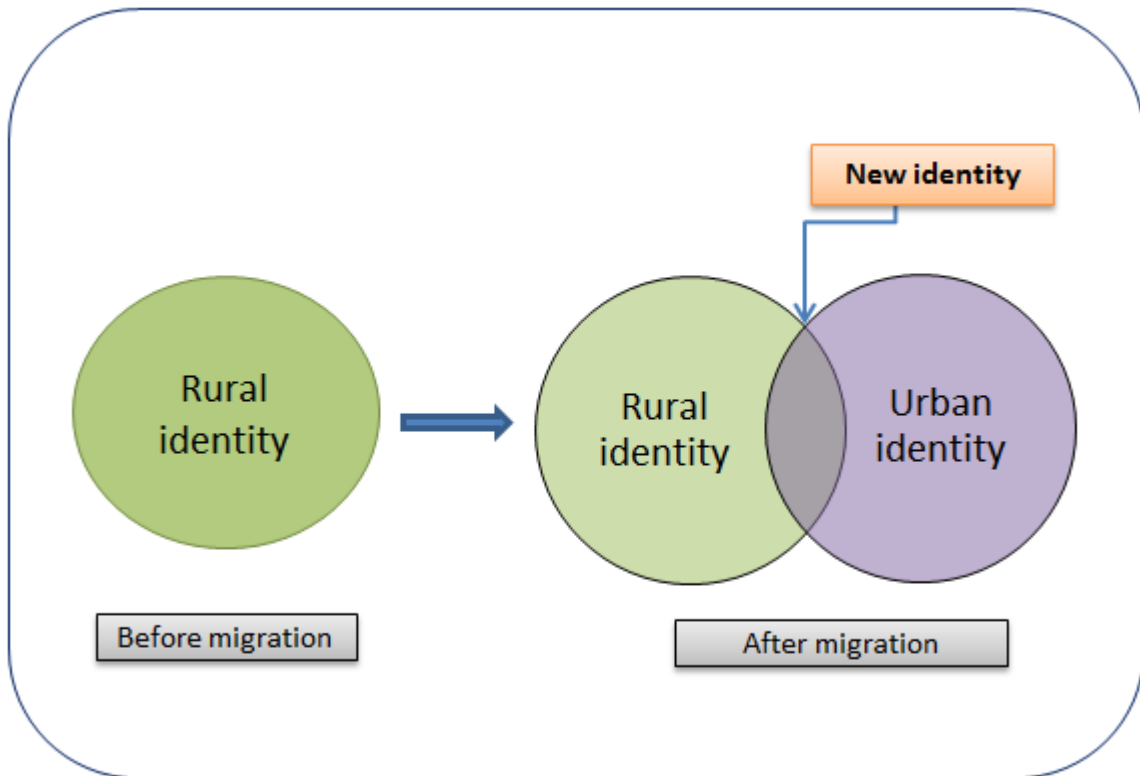


Figure 8.2 Newly formed identity as perceived by the young migrants

Figure 8.2 shows the process of changing identities of young migrants after migrating to the city. On leaving their rural home for the city, the young migrants carried with them their rural habitus in the forms of habits, norms, attitudes, viewpoints, and other embedded dispositions such as manners and ways of behaving. Such dispositions were transposed to the new urban socio-economic field, in which they were exposed to and interacted with new urban dispositions. As a result of this process, a new, transformed habitus was reproduced through the process of adaptation and rejection. This process occurred both consciously and unconsciously, as some elements/characteristics can be purposely adopted or forgone, but some cannot be under the conscious control of the individuals. Elements that can be consciously changed are the ways of dressing, hairstyles, and clothing, but elements that cannot be or are very difficult to change, and take a much longer time to change, are manners, embedded ways of being, accents, and so on. The new identities of the young migrants were reconstructed and reconfigured slowly through the process of habitus transformation.

The study participants had different sets of dispositions as they lived across two social spaces, their hometowns and the city. There was a strong link between the migrants and their hometowns through home visits, telephone calls, exchanges of gifts and goods, and even knowledge and technology transfers. Therefore, their social dispositions both performed the old embodied habitus which were established during childhood, and the newly developed habitus in the urban field. The trans-local living resulted in some mixed and also mis-matched self-identities of the participants. While in their hometown, the participants were seen as proactive, dynamic people who tried to ‘get out of the village’, ‘to go for earning a living’ (*đi kiếm ăn*) or get ‘out to help their families’ (*đi để giúp đỡ gia đình*) and get ‘out to know here and there’ (*đi cho biết đây biết đó*) and therefore, they were considered more or less ‘brave’ (*mạnh dạn*) or ‘successful’ young persons. This ‘success’ was often seen and measured by the villagers by looking at remittances and other goods that the young migrants sent home to their parents. In addition, other visible, positive outcomes of their migration were exhibited through their possession of new material goods such as motorbikes, mobile phones, and new clothes, as well as the embodied features such as ‘a fairer skin tone’, ‘appearing more polite’, and ‘being more confident’, the way that urban people are. They were no longer seen as a ‘genuine’ rural person.

By contrast, the everyday lives of the participants in the city were not as ‘rosy’ as they were perceived to be by the villagers. In the city, participants were still regarded as poor country boys and girls who came from the villages; living in congested, crowded and low-quality lodge houses; doing hard, heavy and dangerous jobs but being paid low wages. Such first-hand social experience could only be felt and lived by the participants, which strongly impacted on who they felt they really were (their self-identities). The multiple dispositions of migrants have been emphasised in a number of studies on transnational migration, as migrants straddle two social spaces: their homeland and the new country of residence. This study supports this view by showing that the young migrants adopted new urban habitus while at the same time consciously and unconsciously maintaining their rural dispositions. This was a part of the process to find out who they were and redefined their identities as growing up into adulthood.

It should be noted that the young migrants in this study experienced quite a smooth transition to city life, rather than the often assumed interrupted experience of international migrants, who struggle due to cultural shocks and huge differences between their own culture and the new destination’s

culture. Though going through challenging and hard times when newly arrived in the city, such as experiencing homesickness, boredom, and loneliness, none of the participants experienced strong disjuncture or disruptions as international migrants usually do. They did not experience the situation of ‘clumsiness’ or the strong feeling of being ‘out of place’, as many international migrants usually do (Noble, 2005, 2013; S. Taylor, 2013). This can be explained by the fact that there are not such major cultural differences between Hanoi and that of participants’ hometowns, as the environments are close in proximity. Moreover, life in the city of Hanoi was not unfamiliar to most participants, as they learnt about the city through schooling, media and information from other returned migrants in their villages. Importantly, most participants knew someone in the city who helped to orientate them to city life, both before migration and after their arrival. The social networks played important roles in helping the new migrants have a more smooth transition from rural to urban life.

Nevertheless, far from feeling well-matched to live comfortably in the city, or to feel that the city was their new home, many participants were yet to ‘feel the game’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) in their daily city life. Many participants found it difficult to fit into city life: they at times felt boredom, loneliness, dissatisfaction, and nostalgia about their past village life. Though just a few hours away from their hometown, there were many new things that the migrants had to learn to adapt to, as mentioned in the earlier section on their agency. Such new learning through ‘disorientation’ and ‘re-orientation’ fed into their new, embedded qualities and perspectives. The process of new identity formation, developing a sense of belonging, and being accepted in a new place usually takes time and training, as Bourdieu suggests:

To be able to use a tool (or to do a job), and to do it ‘comfortably’—with a comfort that is both subjective and objective, and characterised as much by the efficiency and ease of action as by the satisfaction and delicacy of the agent—one has to have ‘GROWN into IT’ through long use, sometimes methodical training... (2000, p. 143).

This suggests that young migrants need to “grow” into the urban social and economic fields in order to act at ease or “comfortably”, as though they are at home in the new environment. This is consistent with what Noble (2013) demonstrates with the experience of Michaele, who migrated to Australia and lived there for almost four decades, but still sometimes felt that it was not “homely”,

though his habitus had grown into the new society in order to fit in. Habitus is not simply the embodiment of a socio-structural location (class, gender, ethnicity), it is also the capacities which generate improvised human conduct, the ‘practical mastery’ in and of social spaces, manifest in our actions, modes of appearance and bearing—posture, manners, ways of speaking—which make social life possible (Bourdieu, 1991) without the clumsiness of the peasants described in Bourdieu’s work (Bourdieu, 2000). In this regard, the participants of this study showed the dynamic nature of their habitus through their bearings and learning capabilities, designed to achieve recognition and acceptance in the urban socio-economic field.

The lived working and living experiences after migration shaped the ways in which young migrants formed and reformed their identities. Their migratory experiences also strongly influenced the worldviews of the participants, in particular, the ways in which they saw and planned their futures. The young migrants moved to the city full of hopes and aspirations for a better life. Their aspirations for the future had become more crystallised and more realistic after spending some time working and living in the city. They had a clearer idea and more defined plans for their futures, taking into consideration their accumulated capital, such as how much money they had or were able to save up; who they knew and could get help from; and what kind of job skills and qualifications they obtained. A hierarchy of future-making was observed here. Those who had accumulated some good savings or could mobilise loans and other support from their networks revealed that they planned to open their own businesses. On the other hand, those with less financial capability wanted to maintain their current waged jobs in order to save up more, as well as improve job skills, before thinking of other plans. The role of capital in defining future directions of the young migrants was more clearly seen among those who wished to migrate further away. Quite a few participants showed their desire to migrate overseas for ‘a life-changing opportunity’; however, only two of those, who possessed higher economic and social capital, had a clear road map to do so, while those with less money and limited social networks aimed at migrating further domestically, such as to Southern Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City). The hierarchy of international migration destinations is defined by economic resources, as discussed in Van Hear (2014) in which he emphasises that those with higher capital in the South tend to migrate to more advanced countries in the North, while those with less financial ability migrate to less-advanced and closer countries in the region.

Overall, all participants emphasised good jobs as being central to building their futures. Good employment did not only bring about good incomes, but importantly, it ensured them a social standing and a sense of independence and belonging. This echoes the finding of the second Vietnam Youth Assessment Survey (GSO, 2009b) which highlighted employment as the top priority concern of young people in Vietnam²³. This finding is also consistent with the broader literature on young rural-urban migrants elsewhere. For example, it found that young migrant workers in the apparel and textile industry in China desired more ‘proper’ jobs, opportunities to learn new things, and to become independent (Centre for Child Rights and Corporate Social Responsibility, 2012).

It can be said that the experiences and social and material outcomes of migration among the young migrants were largely shaped by the resources that these participants possessed and could mobilise, both before and after migration. Such resources are largely contributed by the socio-economic background of the migrants, as Van Hear (2014) suggests. The migratory experiences in turn influenced the way in which the participants saw their futures, formed their new worldviews, and shaped their identities across the two interlinked social spaces, the rural and the urban.

8.4 Implications

Some implications can be drawn from this study: empirically, methodologically, and conceptually, as well as for policy and practice. Empirically, this study contributes to the scholarship on economic internal migration of young people in developing countries by providing insights in the lived work and social experiences as well as the various transitions that young migrants go through that influence their identities in different ways. Young migrants in this study migrated to the city for various reasons, but they shared a common goal of searching for a better life and better future through employment; however, their limited social, economic and cultural capital makes it difficult for them to realise their dreams. As evident in chapter 5 and chapter 6, they live in crowded, low-quality housing, doing low-pay jobs in harsh conditions, and are sometimes vulnerable to accidents. Importantly, young migrants deal with lots of obstacles to enhancing their capabilities. Though living and working in the

²³ The second Vietnam Youth Assessment Survey surveyed about ten thousand young people, aged 15-24, across 61 provinces in Vietnam.

city, all participants maintained strong ties with their hometowns. On relocating to the city, most participants expanded their social networks with friends, co-villagers, and workmates, but their interactions with the local residents and local communities were limited. Though facing many challenges in life, the study participants demonstrated strong agency in order to achieve their personal development and reach toward their life goals.

The second major argument of this thesis is that young migrants undergo a complicated process of identities formation and reconstruction as a result of both relocating to a new place and transition to adulthood. Their habitus was reproduced on the basis of trans-local living, with modifications through a process of transposing: maintaining the core, old rural dispositions in combination with the adjustment to and adoption of new urban dispositions. In general most migrants of all ages usually go through challenging times of re-identifying and adapting themselves to new surroundings. This process is even more prominent among young people as they are in the in a critical stage of life-transitions to adulthood. Therefore, together with redefining themselves in a new social, economic and cultural context of urban life, young migrants also go through a time of ambivalence and conflict in their own mental and psychological thinking as demonstrated in sub-section 5.5 in chapter 5-the emotional experiences..

Methodologically, the photo-voice method was shown to be a useful and interesting tool of data collection, in addition to the other two more-frequently used qualitative research techniques, participant interviews and field observation. The photovoice method is usually used as an independent research approach to community development, rather than being combined with other methods of qualitative research as it was in this study. It shows that the application of an adapted photovoice method in this study adds value, gaining a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of the lived experiences and identities of the participants. In addition, it made the field study a more participatory and interesting experience for both the studied participants and the researcher. Through participating in the photo-voice activities, the respondents shared more stories and added different insights and reflections about their lives on top of what they had shared in the oral interviews. In addition, in some cases, new meanings and values were explored during photo discussions between the participants and the researcher, because free discussion created space and opportunity for the participants to think more deeply and reflect on their experiences. Such insights and added nuances would not be possible with

only the conventional methods of participant interviews and observation. The process of adapted photovoice was also an effective way to develop a better rapport with the participants, as well as helping to maintain and develop relationships with the participants both during and after the completion of data collection. For instance, some participants continued to communicate with me occasionally through mobile phones and emails, after the field research had been completed.

Conceptually, this study contributes to migration studies in the way it applies Bourdieu's conceptual framework, using the three inter-related concepts of habitus, field, and capital in understanding experiences and identities of youth internal migrants. Bourdieu himself used these concepts in his own studies on displaced and marginalised populations. In addition, many existing empirical studies on migration (in particular, international migration) use different elements of this conceptual framework, of which 'habitus' has been more often used than any other concept to understand the 'transnational identities' of international migrants. However, 'habitus' is yet to be widely applied in migration studies in the South East Asia region. In addition, it is argued that agency is undermined under this theoretical framework, according to many of Bourdieu's commentators (Bottero, 2010; Jenkins, 2002), even though Bourdieu recognises the opportunity for critical reflection in times of crisis. For example, Crossley (2001, p. 97) points out that Bourdieu underestimates the level of reflection and conscious calculation that is part of people's everyday life. Bourdieu contends that the scheme of the habitus, the primary forms of classification, "owe their specific efficacy to the fact that they function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 466). In this study, however, the participants appeared to have attained what Noble and Watkins (2003, p. 530) called 'agentic reflection'. Agentic reflection refers to "the kinds of ordinary reflection that social agents continuously engage in... it is an awareness of what we have done and what we can do" (Noble & Watkins, 2003, p. 531). In other words, the studied participants demonstrated their agency on various occasions, as previously shown. On top of the theory of practice, this study also adopted different elements of 'agentic reflection' as suggested by Noble and Watkins (2003).

The application of Bourdieu's conceptual framework in migration studies is yet to become popular in the context of Southeast Asia, making the application of his concepts an exciting yet challenging task. My personal experience in using the habitus concept in understanding identities of the

participants revealed many differences, as compared to what has been revealed among international migrants. As the participants in this study migrated within the same country, their habitus did not go through as much ‘disruption’ or as many ‘disjuncture’ moments, or ‘crisis’, as often claimed by international migrants in the literature that uses Bourdieu’s approach. In addition, the “clumsiness” or the sense of being “out of place” was not observed among the twenty young migrants who participated in this study, though of course, they experienced various aspects of cultural difference after their migration. Furthermore, the participants of this study were young and they showed a high learning capability and ability to adapt to the new living environment. Such circumstances created a condition in which their habitus had gone through smoother transitions rather than being disrupted in between the social spaces.

Furthermore, there have been some criticisms about elements missing from the concepts, such as the ‘gender blind in habitus’ concept, and the definition of Bourdieu’s ‘field’ concept does not cover geographic borders, which is crucial in the study of migration. In terms of gender, Bourdieu’s oversight means that “he significantly underestimates the ambiguities and dissonances that exist in the way that men and women occupy masculine and feminine positions” (McNay, 1999, p. 107). Such issues were addressed while analysing the data of this study: through attention to the ways in which male and female participants’ experiences at work and in everyday life were similar or different to each other (as shown in Chapters 5 and 6); and through consideration given to geographical borders, to highlight the differences between rural and urban fields that are emphasised as important contributors to forming participant identities.

Turning to policy and practical implications, a few recommendations can be drawn from this research. First, it is essential for young people to be exposed to different employment options, by orienting them on career pathways before they join the workforce. This should aim to help young people make informed decisions before migrating and before joining the workforce. This study shows that, when it comes to choosing employment options before leaving the villages for work in the city, young people seem to lack information and are missing their active agency before migration. Their choices and options of work were heavily dependent on offers and information provided by their social networks, such as friends, villagers, and relatives.

Second, vocational programs with more flexible and practical training should be available for young migrants to access. Most young migrants in this study went straight into jobs in the city, without having any kind of skills training before commencing their jobs. This led most of them to undertake low- or unskilled jobs that offered low payment and were unstable. The participants showed their eagerness for taking vocational training in order to work towards better jobs; however, they either could not afford it or could not manage their time to take it, as there were no flexible training programs to participate in while maintaining their current jobs. More importantly, the low likelihood of securing a job after graduation did not encourage participants to invest their time and money in vocational training.

Third, young migrants need support not only from their families and community but also from the larger social structure to develop their full potential into the future. Being young also means being disadvantaged in terms of a low level of accumulated resources (economic, social, and cultural), and a lack of work experience to compete in the job market. This study shows that the participants mainly received support in the forms of introduction to jobs or initial financing for their migration from their own families, friends, or villagers. However, they needed to receive greater investment from the larger social structure to help equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to maximise their abilities and personal development. They also needed more options to choose from before joining the workforce.

Lastly, the evidence of this study indicates that the law and regulations on employment conditions and labourers' rights protection should be strictly monitored and enforced. As evident from the findings, the majority of the participants, except for the workers in foreign-invested factories, did not have any written labour contract that specified the regulated working hours or defined their working terms and conditions, so that in cases of violation, their rights could be protected by law. In particular, it was easy for the employees to be exploited due to the unequal power relationship between the migrant workers and their employers, particularly in the context of a private, domestic working environment. The issue of prevalent violation of the labour laws in the informal sector in Vietnam has been reported in many other studies, but not much has been done to improve the situation so far. Most noticeably, construction workers should be well aware of the risks and health hazards that they will be exposed to at work, in order to be very cautious and protect themselves against having accidents at

work. Safety procedures at the construction sites should be observed by the employers and strictly monitored by the relevant governing authorities.

8.5 Limitations of the study

The study addresses the research questions adequately, though there are some methodological limitations that I would like to point out. Adopting a qualitative research approach gives in-depth and nuanced insights into identities, and a detailed account into the lived day-to-day experiences, both at work and out of work, for these young internal migrants in one of the major cities of Vietnam. However, caution should be taken in generalising this study's findings, as it employed a relatively small sample size of twenty participants. In addition, there was no non-Kinh ethnicity participant in this study, which might have left out the very different experiences of young ethnic minority group migrants compared to Kinh people. The study set out to see how young people have constructed and reconstructed their identities in a changing living environment from the countryside to the city and in transition to adulthood. A longitudinal approach to trace the changes of the participants across time (before and after migration) might give clearer evidence of such changes, both visible and embodied; however, a longitudinal study is not possible within the time-scope of a doctoral study. In addition, though field observation was conducted in most cases, some work sites of the participants were not accessible for observation. Regarding the sample, one of the characteristics of the participants was 'never been married', even though the study did not set out to research only single young people, and participant recruitment also did not aim to recruit only 'unmarried' participants. It might be interesting to include some participants who are married in such a study, as marriage is an important life event, and it might be interesting to compare and contrast the experiences and identities of young married and unmarried people.

8.6 Recommendations for future research

There has been considerable research on a wide range of issues relating to rural to urban migration in Vietnam, both analysis from large-scale survey data and small scale, in-depth studies on the situation and experiences of migrants in Vietnam. However, little quality research is available on young migrants, who increasingly dominate the internal migrant population. Existing research on young migrants mainly focuses on their reproductive health and an understanding of contemporary

experiences of the current migrants. A prospective, large-scale longitudinal study on a cohort of young migrants is necessary to track the change and trajectories of young migrants over time, in order to identify factors that help them become successful migrants, and identify challenges and obstacles that prevent their full potential development. Currently, “Young lives” is a large-scale longitudinal project that tracks changes and development trajectories of the younger population (children up to fifteen years old) on a global scale, including Vietnam. A similar longitudinal research project on a cohort of young migrants would be very helpful in providing a better and fuller understanding of young migrants, who are growing in number in contemporary Vietnam.

Second, the majority of migrants, including participants in this study, aim for better futures and try to use migration as a strategy to get ahead in their lives. One of the dreams that many respondents in this study had (which was also shown in studies elsewhere) was to start their own business. However, there is limited understanding in this area. Questions such as ‘what is required and how would returned migrants go about starting up a small business for themselves?’ and ‘what are the available credit services for them?’ are still left unknown. An investigation of business start-ups in rural areas, their challenges, issues and successful stories, might be helpful for young migrants as well as returned migrants who intend to run their own businesses in their villages.

Third, some participants saw international migration as a very tempting option that they wanted to take if they could afford it. Emigrating to work in higher-income countries such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and so on, was considered to be a life-changing opportunity to escape poverty and change their difficult situation; however, the migration cost was far too high and the recruitment process was tricky. While international migration has become a more and more popular option for escaping poverty in the global South, research on this area so far mainly focuses on the experiences of the migrants in the destination countries or the impacts (economic and social) that remittances sent home by the immigrants bring about. However, how the international migration regime works, such as the recruitment process in the origin country, costing, and regulations that international migration agencies need to follow, needs more investigation. This would provide potential migrants correct and useful information, so as to reduce the risk of falling into debt due to taking loans to finance their international migration.

Lastly, in terms of the sample, non-Kinh ethnic minority groups should be included in future research to see whether there are similarities or differences between Kinh and non-Kinh people in their migration trajectories and experiences. This study did not have any ethnic minority participants.

8.7 Conclusion

This study addresses two research questions: one is to understand the social and working experiences of young people who migrated from the countryside to the city; and the other is to see how such migratory experiences influence the ways in which young migrants shape their identities. Using a qualitative research approach, employing the three research techniques of participants' interviews, adapted photovoice, and field observation, the study revealed various insights into the respondents' experiences of living and working and the complex process of identities formation and reconstruction after migration. Their experiences and identities were understood through the conceptual lenses of habitus, field, and capital in Bourdieu's theory of practice. The participants left their villages with a hope for better jobs, and to build better lives and better futures in the city; however, their lived experiences were full of hardship and difficulties. Due to a lack of skills, qualifications, and work experience, most participants were employed in low- or unskilled jobs that offered low pay, harsh conditions, and a lack of opportunities for career development and advancement. Social networks were demonstrated to be very important in connecting young people to jobs, accommodation, and other things in the city. In other words, the study demonstrates that the existing social and economic resources before migration played a salient role in shaping the experiences and outcomes of the young migrants. On the positive side, it showed that most participants experienced an improvement in their economic capital, resulting in an enhancement of their social positions as well as their social capital and the potential for the improvement of their cultural capital. We saw the conversions of different types of such capital, from economic capital into social capital and cultural capital and vice-versa (Bourdieu, 1986). However, it should be noted that the economic and social capital were among the necessary conditions to make changes in cultural capital, but not automatically; rather, this required an investment of time and personal capability to make it happen. While the various forms of existing capital brought about social and material outcomes of youth migration, the migratory experiences of working and living in the city in turn strongly influenced the newly established social, economic, and

cultural capital of the participants, as well as making significant impacts on their identities formation and their worldviews.

The study shows a complex process of self-identities construction and reconstruction of the young migrants, in which the concept of habitus was utilised to view identities in the context of ‘trans-local living’, which was reproduced in the new socio-economic field both strategically and unconsciously. The participants had gone through a process of sifting, negotiating, and performing their identities differently in the new urban context which was very different to their childhood environment in the countryside. Their new transformed identities were the results of a combination of their old rural habitus that slowly changed overtime, the gradual adoption of new elements through daily experiences in the urban environment, and also a product of their transition to adulthood. This thesis contributes to the scholarship of internal migration in developing countries through its insights into the lives of young migrants at the individual level, to give an understanding of their lives, their voices, their challenges and needs. Methodologically it contributes a new approach to inquiry into personal experiences of individuals through combining traditional qualitative techniques of participants’ interviews and observation with the photovoice method. The adapted photovoice method used in this study provided more depth and nuanced understanding of the experiences of the participants, and also helped to develop a rapport and connection with the participants both during and after fieldwork. It proved to be an important complementary method to the other traditional and more popular research methods.

Some important implications for practice and policy of this study include endorsing career orientations for young people: exposing them to more information on employment options and pathways in order to help them make informed decisions before joining the workforce; and emphasising that regulations on employment conditions should be observed: particularly, safety at workplaces should be strictly regulated and monitored by the relevant authorities. Importantly, young people in this study faced many challenges that limited their potential for development; hence, they needed support from different levels, from family to the community to the larger social structure, to help them in building a better life. Changing identities is a big challenge for young migrants; therefore, emotional support from family, peers and community is also important to smoothing out the transition period and avoiding stress and mental health problems.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Ethical Clearance form



THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
Institutional Human Research Ethics Approval

Project Title:	Understanding Experiences And Social Identity Construction Process Of Young People Migrating From Rural to Urban Areas In Vietnam
Chief Investigator:	Ms Thi Thanh Thao Dang
Supervisor:	A/Prof Paul Henman, Dr Peter Westoby, Dr Diane Hafner
Co-Investigator(s):	None
School(s):	School of Social Work and Human Sciences
Approval Number:	2012001178
Granting Agency/Degree:	Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training; UQ Research Higher Degree
Duration:	31st December 2016

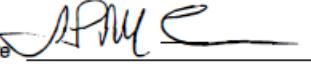
Comments:

Expedited Review - low risk.

Note: If this approval is for amendments to an already approved protocol for which a UQ Clinical Trials Protection/Insurance Form was originally submitted, then the researchers must directly notify the UQ Insurance Office of any changes to that Form and Participant Information Sheets & Consent Forms as a result of the amendments, before action.

Name of responsible Committee:
Behavioural & Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee
This project complies with the provisions contained in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and complies with the regulations governing experimentation on humans.

Name of Ethics Committee representative:
Associate Professor John McLean
Chairperson
Behavioural & Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee

Signature  Date 25/10/2012

Appendix 2. Research project information sheet



School of Social Work and Human Services

HEAD OF SCHOOL

Professor Howard Karger

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Telephone +61 7 3365 2068
Facsimile +61 7 3365 1788
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Participant Information Sheet

Young migrants

Title of the Research Project: Understanding experiences and social identity construction process of young people migrating from rural to urban areas in Vietnam

Researcher: Mrs. Thi Thanh Thao Dang

Contact Details:

Thi Thanh Thao Dang, PhD Candidate

School of Social Work and Human Services

University of Queensland

St Lucia, Queensland 4072, Australia

Tel: +61 450083782

Email: thi.dang2@uq.net.au

What is the purpose of the study?

I am seeking your assistance in a research project to understand the experiences of working and living in the city of young migrants moving from rural to urban areas in Vietnam for employment purposes. This research also attempts to understand the process in which young migrants construct their social identities.

The Data Collection Process

Data will be collected through participant observations, photography, and in-depth interviews. The photography will be taken by the participants on their own, independent from the researcher reflecting their life and experiences in the city. Photographs will be developed and discussed with the participants individually. Selected photographs will be used for the thesis writing and analysis with participant's permission. The in-depth interviews will take approximately 60 - 90 minutes. In-depth interviews will be audio-recorded with participant's permission. Interviews will be conducted in a place that is convenient for the participants.

What do we want you to do?

If you would like to participate in the project activities including photography activity and an interview, read the Consent Form, sign it and contact Thi Thanh Thao Dang to arrange a meeting time and date convenient for you. Return the Consent form using the pre-paid envelope distributed to you or email to: thi.dang2@uq.net.au, telephone: 04.3 833 8187 or meet me in person.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in the study is voluntary and anyone who agrees to participate may refuse to answer any questions or attend interviews at any time, refuse to the usage of pictures that you have taken. You may also withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

What are the benefits of the study to you?

The main benefit to participants will be the opportunity to engage in a research project which informs migration practice and self- reflection of identities, capacity building on photography ability.

Confidentiality and privacy of data

All information provided by participants will be kept strictly confidential and no names of any other identifying information will be included in any report on the study. All data (transcripts and consent form) will be stored in a locked area to which only the researcher and her supervisors have access for supervision purposes.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of the study will be reported as a thesis as a requirement of the Doctor of Philosophy Program of The University of Queensland. Subsequently, research findings may be presented at conferences, forums and in published academic peer-reviewed journals. A copy of the thesis will also be made available at the library of the Vietnam Information Development Centre (VDIC) in Hanoi which is managed by the World Bank in Vietnam and is open for public access for free. No personally identifying information will be used and only pseudonyms will be used in the analysis and written reports. Any close-up photography will be made digitally blurred to avoid recognition.

The Researchers

Mrs Thi Thanh Thao Dang, a PhD candidate of The University of Queensland, will be conducting the research.

Ethical Review

This study has been reviewed by the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Queensland in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council Guidelines. The project has been approved by this Committee (Approval No. 2012001178). If you have any concerns about the manner in which this study is being conducted, you can contact the ethics officer of the University not involved in the study, on telephone number (+61 7) 3365 3924.

If you have any questions about the study or your participation please contact Mrs Thi Thanh Thao Dang on telephone number (+84 4) 3833 8187.

Thank you for your assistance with this research project.

Thi Thanh Thao Dang, PhD Candidate, UQ

Appendix 3. Participant consent form



School of Social Work and Human Services

HEAD OF SCHOOL

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Consent form for
Research participants

Title of the Research Project: Understanding experiences and social identity construction process of young people migrating from rural to urban areas in Vietnam.

Participant's Name: _____

You are being asked to be a part of an independent research project that has been approved by the School of Social Work & Human Services, The University of Queensland. This is an important project that will help promote a better understanding of youth experiences and self-identities of young people who migrate from rural to urban areas in Vietnam. Please read the attached participant information sheet for more detailed information about the research project and the following participation consent requirements. If you would like to participate in this research project you are kindly asked to notify the researcher by signing and returning this form to me using the pre-postage envelope distributed to you to my postal address: A2/72 Dich

Vong Street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi. Alternatively if you have any further questions please feel free to contact Thao Dang on phone: (+84.4) 3833 8187, email: thi.dang2@uq.net.au, or in person.

As a participant in this research project I agree that:

- I have read the information sheet and I agree that I have been given clear information, both written and verbal, about the study, and understand the participation requirements involved.
- I understand that participation is voluntary. I may refuse to answer any question and I remain free to withdraw from the study at any time without explanation.
- I am aware that the photovoice exercise and interview in which I will participate will be audiotape recorded and transcribed.
- I understand and agree to let the researcher assume that permission is granted to use my photographs and accompanying narrative(s) from the photovoice exercise for the purposes of this research unless otherwise notified in writing.
- I understand that all information from the photovoice exercise and following interviews will remain confidential to the research team and that all information will be securely stored with all identifying information removed and stored separately in the research office of the chief investigator of this project.
- I understand that none of the information that I provide will be described or portrayed in any way that may identify me in any report on the study.
- I am aware that I will not personally benefit materially from participating in this study.
- I am aware that I may ask any further questions about the research study at any time.

By signing and returning this form, I agree to participate in the research project titled: Understanding experiences and identities of young people migrating from rural to urban areas in Vietnam.

Participant Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 4. Interview Guide

1. Biography information (Age, Gender, Employment, Number of years since moved to Hanoi).
2. What is your job? (from here I can ask further eliciting questions such as:
 - How did you find a job?
 - How much do you earn in the city?
 - How do you spend your money?
 - What did you do in the village? Etc.
3. Describe a normal day of your life in the city
4. Life in the city:
 - jobs
 - living arrangement,
 - relationships,
 - activities (daily, leisure, social activities)
 - food, dresses
 - services that you use in the city
 - association/club/group affiliated?
 - material things that you have got in the city
 - hobbies
5. Things that you do in the city but do not do in your hometown?
6. Things in the city that you like? Things in the village that you like?
7. How often do you visit home? How do you communicate with your parents, relatives and friends back in the village? (telephone, mail? visit?)
8. Some differences between you and your peers/siblings/villagers who stay in the village?