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Women's and Men's Economic Roles in Northern Viet Nam During an Era of Market Reform

Kim Marie Korinek

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

**University of Washington
2002**

Program Authorized to Offer Degree: Sociology

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Abstract

Women's and Men's Economic Roles in Northern Viet Namⁱ During an Era of Market Reform

Kim Marie Korinek

**Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee:
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This dissertation examines men's and women's economic roles during northern Viet Nam's economic reform and transition from socialism to market economy. Quantitative and qualitative data analyses examine three dimensions of men's and women's economic status—labor force participation, historical economic roles, and occupational status outcomes—in order to address questions of gender egalitarianism and the impact of social institutions upon women's socioeconomic status.

Viet Nam has experienced great social and economic upheaval in the late 20th century, including decades of war, Marxist-Leninist revolution, land reforms and economic collectivization, and, eventually, economic transformation incorporating privately-owned, market-oriented economic forms. Many households faced persistent challenges in meeting household subsistence needs over this period, challenges reflected in economic participation patterns—especially intense and persistent employment among women. Ideology and doctrine of the socialist period emphasized gender egalitarianism and universal participation in economic production; however, persistent gender-segregated patterns in the social division of labor and inequalities in socioeconomic status characterized both the socialist and market reform periods. Limited gains in women's economic status, specifically their subsuming professional services occupations, appear to have been period-specific, coinciding with the upheaval of war, large-scale military mobilization and expansion of the socialist administrative system. Military service and professional employment are less common among recently married cohorts than they were during

the mid-1960s to 1980s. Rather, there has occurred a renewed 'agriculturalization' of the local economy, and increase in family entrepreneurship.

Labor force participation is nearly universal for adult men and women in the Red River Delta. Across the life course women labor with great intensity, their employment relatively impervious to changes in family composition. That both men and women work with greater intensity when young children are present conveys a response to heightened expenditures and economic demands in the household.

On average, women's occupational status outcomes are lower than men's, given women's greater concentration in agricultural employment. More salient than gender differences are disparities contingent upon workers' family social class backgrounds. Specifically, workers from urban areas, and whose parents worked for the government, obtained high levels of education, and/or obtained communist party membership, experience favorable occupational status outcomes.

¹ I adopt the Vietnamese language use of monosyllabic word construction in this dissertation. While commonly in Western texts the country name is spelled "Vietnam," Vietnamese language separates syllables, such that Vietnam is "Viet Nam." I use this approach in writing all place names and proper names throughout this dissertation. I also adopt the Vietnamese practice of placing given names after the surname and middle name, respectively. In conversation it is common to refer to and address an individual by his or her given name, preceded by a gender and age specific term of address. In translating these terms of address I use the terms Mr. And Ms. in conjunction with an individual first name (all of which are pseudonyms, used to protect the privacy of our respondents). The Vietnamese language also features several vowels that are not used in English and uses diacritical marks to denote the tonal inflection of a syllable or word. I have chosen, in consideration of convenience in printing and in consideration of the dissertation's likely readership, to omit these diacritical marks and vowels.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Figures.....	iv
List of Tables	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review: Women’s Status and Gender Inequality in Developing Countries.....	14
2.1 Chapter Introduction.....	14
2.2 Economic Development and the Undermining of Women’s Status in Subsistence Production.....	18
2.3 The Transition from Socialism to Market Economy: Erosion of Women’s Gains and Gender Egalitarianism?	24
2.4 Social-institutional Contexts of Economic Participation and Shifting Demand for Women’s Labor.....	34
2.5 Patriarchal Settings and Cultural Explanations: Men’s Favored Positions in Families and Beliefs about Women’s Nature.....	39
2.6 Chapter Conclusion.....	45
Chapter 3: Gender and Economic Participation in Contemporary Viet Nam: Patterns of Change and Continuity in Women’s and Men’s Social and Economic Roles	46
3.1 Chapter Introduction.....	46
3.2 Physical Geography and Climate and their Relationship to Social Organization in Northern Viet Nam.....	48
3.3 Viet Nam in the Twentieth Century: From Colony to Market Economy.....	53
3.4 The Vietnamese Family and Kinship.....	62
3.5 Gender and Work Activity in Recent Vietnamese History.....	74
3.6 Confucian and Traditional Ideological Systems—Their Implications for Gender Roles in Northern Viet Nam.....	81
3.7 Socialism and Shifts in Gender Ideology—Limitations in Achieving Egalitarianism.....	87
3.8 The transition from Socialism to Capitalism in Viet Nam: Implications for Women’s Status in Economic and Household Production.....	95
3.9 Concluding Statements.....	103

Chapter 4: Research Methods and Data.....	112
4.1 Chapter Introduction.....	112
4.2 Comments on Quantitative and Qualitative (Mixed-Methods) Approaches	113
4.3 Issues of Data Quality and Availability in the Viet Nam Context	116
4.4 The Vietnam Longitudinal Survey: Survey Design and Data Collection.....	117
4.5 Qualitative Methods	120
4.6 Measurement and the Multidimensionality of Economic Participation	123
4.7 Exploring Men's and Women's Economic Roles in Recent Vietnamese History Using Cross-Sectional Data	134
4.8 Applying Occupational Status Measures to Model Status Attainment in the Red River Delta	135
 Chapter 5: Society and Economy in the Red River Delta: A Portrait.....	 140
5.1 Chapter Introduction	140
5.2 Geography and Population Density of the Red River Delta	142
5.3 The Organization of Agricultural Production and the Socioeconomic Status of Agricultural Workers.....	143
5.4 The Social Organization of Agricultural Work in the Red River Delta	147
5.5 Landscape, Architecture and Infrastructure in the Red River Delta	150
5.6 Economic Participation and Occupational Structure	154
5.7 The Economic Well-being of Households and the Threat of Poverty	156
5.8 Economic Strategies in the New Market Economy	158
5.9 Gender and Participation in Education, Political and Economic Institutions	159
5.10 Community Study of Loc Hoa Commune: Tradition and Change where Urban meets Rural	160
5.11 Van Giang district, Ninh Binh town: Facing the New Market Economy in a Provincial Red River Delta Town	171
5.12 Xuan Thanh Commune, Nam Dinh Province: Adapting to Market Reform Economy in a Remote Rural Village	186
5.13 Concluding Remarks	196
 Chapter 6: Piecing Together a Living: Economic Participation, Working Hours and Multiple Jobholding in Viet Nam's Red River Delta	 212
6.1 Chapter Introduction.....	212
6.2 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review.....	214
6.3 The Vietnamese Socioeconomic Context of Labor Force Participation.....	224

6.4 Variable Measures and Hypotheses.....	228
6.5 Results.....	237
6.6 Discussion and Interpretation through Qualitative Results.....	248
6.7 Chapter Conclusion.....	260
Chapter 7: Men's and Women's Economic Roles in Recent Northern Vietnamese History: An Analysis of Four Marriage Cohorts.....	274
7.1 Chapter Introduction.....	274
7.2 Review of the Literature.....	276
7.3 Methodological Approach and Analyses.....	287
7.4 Results and Discussion.....	290
7.5 Conclusion.....	297
Chapter 8: The Impact of Social Origins, Human Capital and Political Capital on Occupational Attainment in Vietnam's Red River Delta.....	302
8.1 Chapter Introduction.....	302
8.2 The Structure of Employment and Nature of Occupational Status in Viet Nam.....	304
8.3 Literature Review: Occupational Attainment and Stratification in Developing and Market Transition Societies	316
8.4 Statement of Hypotheses and Research Methods.....	329
8.5 Results and Discussion.....	347
8.6 Interpretation Through Qualitative Results.....	365
8.7 Concluding Remarks.....	378
Chapter 9: Conclusion.....	398
9.1 Overview of Dissertation Objectives.....	398
9.2 On Labor Force Participation and Gender in the Market Reform Era.....	399
9.3 On Historical Shifts in Men's and Women's Economic Roles.....	403
9.4 On Occupational Status Attainment Processes and the Transmission of Status across Generations.....	407
9.5 Reconsidering Gender Egalitarianism in Economic Activity.....	408
9.6 Directions for Future Research.....	411
References.....	415
Appendix A: In-depth Interview Schedule.....	432
Appendix B: Table B.1.....	441
Appendix C: Table C.1.....	442

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Number	Page
3.1 Seven Regions of Viet Nam.....	106
3.2 Mother, Father and Daughter Operating “bun cha” restaurant.....	108
3.3 Family Using Rented Rice-husking Machine in Village Meeting Place.....	109
3.4 “Happy Family” billboard.....	110
5.1 Men and Women Tending Fields, Ninh Binh Province, Viet Nam’s Red River Delta	199
5.2 Agricultural Plots in Xuan Thanh Commune, Nam Dinh Province, Viet Nam’s Red River Delta	199
5.3 Map of 10 VLS study communes in the Red River Delta provinces of Nam Dinh, Ninh Binh, and Ha Nam	200
5.4 Man Hauling Rice Shafts with Shoulder Pole	202
5.5 “Cong nong” soil tiller	202
5.6 Man Irrigating Fields with Water Scoop, Ninh Binh province, the Red River Delta	203
5.7 Migrant women outside bus station, Ha Noi, Viet Nam	203
5.8 Main street running through Loc Hoa Commune, Nam Dinh province	204
5.9 Agricultural Products Shop in Loc Hoa Commune	204
5.10 Tailor’s shop, Loc Hoa Commune	205
5.11 Merchants’ Houses, Van Giang Street, Ninh Binh town	208
5.12 A row of houses, Van Giang District, Ninh Binh town	208
5.13 AIDS awareness poster, Van Giang district, Ninh Binh town	209
5.14 Bridge over the Red River, Ninh Binh town	209
5.15 Motorbike Taxi Drivers, Ninh Binh town	210
5.16 Husband and Wife Operating Noodle-making Machine	210
5.17 Woman Raking Drying Rice Shafts, the Red River Delta	211
5.18 Adolescent woman sewing a conical hat	211
6.1 Economic Activity Rates by Gender, Age, and Presence of Children, Vietnam’s Red River Delta, 1995.....	267

6.2 Teenage Girl Selling Foods and Watching her Younger Sibling, Loc Hoa Commune, the Red River Delta.....	272
6.3 A grandfather watching his grandchild, and a market stall, Ninh Binh town.....	273
7.2 Occupational Structure of Red River Delta Workers Across Four Marriage Cohorts, 1945-1995.....	300
8.1 Indicators of Socioeconomic Status for Workers in Major Occupational Groups, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	383
8.2 Mean Occupational Prestige Score for Men and Women.....	385
8.3 Mean Occupational Prestige Scores, by Parental Status Measures, Employed Persons in the Red River Delta, 1995.....	387
8.4 Occupational Prestige Score Distribution of Male and Female Workers, Age 15-65, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	389

LIST OF TABLES

Table Number	Page
3.1 Characteristics of Vietnamese Households, by Region, 1992-93.....	108
3.2 Women's Rates of Economic Participation Across Selected Countries, 1970 and 1994	111
4.1 Comparison of Economic Participation Measures Calculated from VLS Data, Vietnam's Red River Delta, Men & Women Age 15-65.....	138
4.2 Logistic Regression Comparing Measures of Economic Participation among Persons Age 15-65 in Vietnam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	139
5.1 Annual Per Capita Household Income Levels and Proportion of Income by Different Sources, 10 VLS Red River Delta Communes.....	201
5.2 Activity Status During the Previous Week, by Gender, Persons Age 15-65, Viet Nam's Red River Delta.....	206
5.3 Economic Activity Status and Employment Structure of Communes/Districts in Qualitative Research, All Persons Age 15-65, 1995.....	207
6.1 Participation Rates in Economic and Other Primary Activities Among All Persons Age 15-65, by Age and Gender, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	264
6.2 Descriptive Statistics, All Respondents and the Economically Active, Men and Women, 1995 VLS Survey.....	265
6.3 Labor Force Participation Rates of Persons Age 15-65, by Age, Gender, and Presence of Children, in Vietnam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	266
6.4 The Components of Work Duration: Multiple Jobs and Hours Worked by Employed Persons, Vietnam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	268
6.5 Logistic Regression: Economic Activity Participation Rates Among Persons Age 15-65, Vietnam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	269
6.6 OLS Regression: Average Hours Worked per Week among Employed Persons Age 15 to 65 (dependent variable—summation of hours worked in primary and secondary activities), Vietnam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	270
6.7 Binary Logistic Regression: The Log-Odds of Multiple Jobholding by Employed Persons Age 15-65, Vietnam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	271
7.1 Age at First Marriage by Marriage Cohort, Ever Married Men and Women, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	299

7.2 The Changing Gender Structure of Occupations among Young Adults, 1945-1995, Viet Nam's Red River Delta.....	299
7.3 Social Composition of Workers Across Occupational Groups, 4 marriage cohorts, 1945-1995.....	301
8.1 Measures of Socioeconomic Status by Primary Occupation for Employed Persons in Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	382
8.2 Occupational Prestige Characteristics for Major Occupational Groups, Male and Female Workers in Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	384
8.3 Bivariate Statistics, Occupational Prestige and Representation in High and Low Status Positions among Social Groups in Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	386
8.4 OLS Regression: The Predictors of Occupational Prestige in Viet Nam's Red River Delta, All Workers (Men and Women), 1995.....	388
8.5 OLS Regression: The Predictors of Occupational Prestige in Viet Nam's Red River Delta, Women and Men, 1995.....	390
8.6 OLS Regression: The Predictors of Occupational Prestige in Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 3 birth Cohorts Ages 25-34, 35-44 and 45 to 55, 1995.....	391
8.7 OLS Regression: The Predictors of Occupational Prestige in Viet Nam's Red River Delta, Urban and Rural Workers, 1995.....	392
8.8 Multinomial Logistic Regression, the Determinants of Sales and Services Occupations, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	393
8.9 Multinomial Logistic Regression, the Determinants of Working in Agriculture (Relative to Professional, Managerial and Clerical Jobs), Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	394
8.10 Multinomial Logistic Regression, the Determinants of Handicrafts, Textile and Food Production Occupations, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	395
8.11 Multinomial Logistic Regression, the Determinants of Transportation, Construction and Other Labor Occupations, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	396
8.12 Comparison of Mean Occupational Prestige Scores for Respondents with Upper Secondary Schooling and Higher, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	397
B.1 Logistic Regression Comparing Measures of Economic Participation among Persons Age 15 to 65, in Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995.....	441

C.1 Detailed Occupations by ISCO and Occupational Prestige Scores.....	442
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Chapter 1. Introduction

The Red River Delta of northern Viet Nam provides a rich setting for addressing how gender status and roles, family structure and kinship ties, and community social structure shape men's and women's economic participation, economic roles and occupational opportunities. As a result of economic reforms initiated in the mid-1980s, individuals in the Red River Delta now have greater autonomy in making decisions about employment. In addition, because the once collective and redistributive economy has gradually liberalized and transformed into a market-oriented system wherein households function as independent economic units, freer from communal direction and control, the current analysis of economic participation demonstrates how various social groups have been incorporated into economic production and have been able to take advantage of opportunities in the era of reform. Drawing upon previous research on gender stratification in developing societies, I also analyze women's socioeconomic status and occupational positions relative to men, and explore how gender stratification is shaped by traditional gender work and family roles, obligations to kin and village, and the uneven experience of economic development across geographic areas.

A central objective of this dissertation is to explore current patterns and determinants of economic participation, economic roles and socioeconomic status within the Red River Delta region. Similar to existing research concerned with economic transition and its social ramifications in Asian societies, this dissertation explores gender as a salient component of socioeconomic stratification processes. My own research has been enriched through several models of sociological research formulated to study gender, socioeconomic status and economic

participation. For example, Brinton et al.'s (1995) comparative research on women's labor force participation in South Korea and Taiwan, demonstrates the interplay of labor supply, labor demand, cultural ideology and global economic forces as they combine to exert powerful influences upon women's labor force participation. Their work demonstrates that individual characteristics, alone, do not suffice to explain labor force participation; rather, important contextual, labor market factors that shape labor demand situations are operative in shaping women's employment. Altogether, the comparative analyses by Brinton et al. (1995:1125) demonstrate that analyses incorporating the intersection of labor supply, demand factors, and the structure and organization of firms aid in understanding the myriad factors underlying gendered patterns of employment during periods of economic transition.

Henderson, Entwistle and colleagues' (1995; 2000) research on gender, households and work in China similarly provides a fine model for analyzing men's and women's differential access to employment opportunities and their differential contributions to household production and income generation in the era of transition from socialism to market economy. Specifically, by demonstrating that gender composition of households is consequential to households' strategies undertaken to diversify their economic production, and by further demonstrating that women are more likely to be confined to 'inside' work (i.e., agricultural fieldwork and household-based work) than men, and are less likely to bridge employment sectors and occupational gaps by holding several, diverse jobs, their work demonstrates how women's status positions may be undermined as households strive to survive and prosper in the new market economy. Their work is also influential in that it addresses transformation in gender roles and the definitions of economic activity that accompany large-scale transformations in economic systems—such as China's transition to capitalism.

In this work I undertake detailed explorations of the factors influencing individuals' economic participation and occupational status positions, as well as the economic roles that young people have fulfilled in local economies during recent history. These explorations are viewed primarily through the lens of gender, although diverse lenses, focused upon the diversity of experience across geographic-ecological areas, and social class boundaries, for example, also inform the analyses. The research methods undertaken are intended to explicate how geographic disparity in occupational opportunities and the demand for labor, as well as family composition and role obligations, generate the current configuration of socioeconomic status positions. Because socioeconomic status, in particular the status of women vis-à-vis men, is wrought with both conceptual and methodological complexities, the dissertation is devised to measure multiple dimensions of socioeconomic status, and to highlight how women's socioeconomic status is sensitive to social demographic contextual factors such as geographic location and local occupational structures (Mason 1986). In sum, the central objective of the dissertation is to address the following questions: What factors account for socioeconomic inequalities within this region of nascent economic development and transition? How do community- and family-contextual features, as well as historical shifts in the demand for labor, contribute to women's economic roles and socioeconomic status positions relative to men? How does the organization of household economic activities and family composition influence economic participation and occupational status outcomes across social categories?

Previous research has demonstrated that socioeconomic stratification, and gender stratification in particular, becomes more unequal within societies undergoing market transition and economic development (Boserup 1970; Tinker 1990; Xie and Hannum 1996; Bian et al. 2000; Michelson and Parish 2000). The household responsibility system that has evolved in the

wake of China's post-Maoist market reforms serves as a useful template for understanding the Vietnamese experience with *doi moi* market reforms that have allocated private land use rights to households and enabled citizens to form private, entrepreneurial ventures (Kervliet and Porter 1995:7). I examine women's and men's individual, familial and social characteristics approximately one decade after the initiation of economic reforms in the Red River Delta in order to delineate the determinants of men's and women's economic participation and occupational status. I also examine how the positions of young men and women in the labor force have changed over the recent decades of historical change; these analyses provide insights into the ways that men's and women's employment opportunities have been altered by the unique conditions present in times of war, socialism and economic reform.

A region steeped in decades of political upheaval and war, followed by a centrally-planned, socialist economic organization under which regional poverty reached devastating levels, the Red River Delta has experienced a difficult set of economic circumstances that have only begun to improve over the last two decades. Given its status as a developing country, Viet Nam provides an interesting case for assessing the interrelationship among gender and socioeconomic status. Furthermore, Viet Nam's cultural history is characterized by both a patriarchal ideology that has engendered a preference for sons and degradation of women's status relative to men (Haughton and Haughton 1995) as well as socialist political doctrine emphasizing gender egalitarianism (Ungar 2000; Wiegersma 1988). The seeming contradictions that might arise from such a distinct combination of ideological perspectives invoke complex questions in attempts to understand and measure women's and men's status positions in society. While previous research has established that marked socioeconomic inequality exists across occupational groups and geographic locations in post-*đổi mới* Viet Nam (Dollar and Litvack

1998), little research has been conducted to determine the extent to which socioeconomic stratification in economic participation, occupational status, and income generation are gendered processes. Relying on quantitative, demographic techniques of analysis, as well as qualitative, in-depth interviewing techniques, I sketch a portrait of work activity and the social-demographic features that shape economic participation in the towns and villages of the Red River Delta. I explore gender differences in economic behavior throughout these analyses, seeking to delineate the ways that traditional gender roles and local opportunity structures shape outcomes in urban and rural locales.

Three areas of inquiry concerning men's and women's orientation to work activities and economic participation are developed in this dissertation. First, I consider economic participation as a multidimensional variable that can be disaggregated into three quantifiable components, specifically, the rate of employment, duration of work (measured as average hours worked per week) and occupational multiplicity, or involvement in multiple jobholding. This disaggregation allows for an examination of variability between men and women, urban and rural, young and old, in their levels of workforce participation in the Red River Delta. This is a region where labor force participation is practically universal among adults, and women have historically been very active labor force participants (Pham Van Bich 1999; Wiegersma 1988). However, the recent dismantling of socialist production cooperatives and slow pace of economic development in the region have brought into focus conditions of labor redundancy and widespread underemployment. Careful examination of these three components demonstrates the approaches men and women use to 'piece together' their working lives. The results reveal dramatic variation across social groups in the intensity of their economic participation, as well as the importance of combining multiple jobs in order to accumulate enough productive work to make a living. I also examine, through a

combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, the impact of family structure upon economic participation and the question of how ‘maternal role compatibility’ is managed among women performing the dual roles of mother and worker. What stands out in these analyses is the relative absence of a gender difference in labor supply, and a continuity of women’s employment across the life course—beginning, on average, at an earlier age than men’s employment, and extending later into adulthood. As such, women’s “equality” in labor force participation, coupled with marked gender inequality in the domestic sphere, represents their central role in producing income within families facing extreme financial need and hovering close to the level of subsistence.

Another pronounced finding is that both men and women appear to modify and heighten the intensity of their economic activities in response to the presence of children, whose education and subsistence needs pose additional demands upon household resources. Although the fathers of young children demonstrate a more marked increase in economic participation, it is remarkable that mothers of young children also persist in working, or actually increase their working hours, despite the rising demands of domestic duties associated with raising young children. Rising expectations and high costs of higher education in the new market economy context have placed a new burden upon men and women to labor in order to save money for educational expenditures (Vo et al. 2001). The phenomenon of multiple jobholding is very important to household economic strategies in the Red River Delta, and demonstrates how, by working in jobs that span occupational realms, women and men attempt to edge above poverty and subsistence-level incomes. Interestingly, certain groups of women who have achieved relatively high status occupations are more likely than similarly situated men to work in two occupations. Thus, the responsibility for maintaining production in the traditional, agricultural sphere appears to be more heavily undertaken by women, even those who have attained high status, remunerative jobs in

more modern sectors of the economy. Exploring the ways that women experience the multiple challenges of employment, often working simultaneously in several jobs, and caring for children, either on their own or by securing care in their families and communities, I reconsider the notion of ‘compatibility’ between working roles and mothering roles in this less developed country context. Qualitative results are valuable for revealing the pressures that women face as they continue to work, uninterrupted, across the life course. There are numerous risks and burdens—financial, physical, and emotional—experienced by residents of the Delta, particularly women, as they make efforts to combine economic activity and family responsibilities associated with tasks of social reproduction. Especially challenged are women in unique, disadvantaged family structural situations, whose husbands are absent, and/or who face multiple challenges of caring for several children and working in multiple jobs.

The second major topic of analysis in the dissertation addresses women’s and men’s incorporation into the labor market and how their initial occupational roles are shaped by historical contexts such as the experience of war, wartime labor mobilization, the organization of labor into collectives and responses to Soviet-style central planning. Over the past fifty years Viet Nam’s economy has undergone vast changes; retrospective analyses of respondent’s occupation at the time of their first marriage reveal the diverse roles that men and women have played in distinct historical periods—those periods defined by the French war (or First Indochinese war) and the American war, the Socialist era of collective agriculture and cooperative labor organization, and finally, the most recent period of market reform and re-introduction of household economic production. Analyses of changes in the occupational structure across marriage and birth cohorts reveals how national and regional economic change influence the demand for particular types of labor—such as army participation for men and

agricultural production for women. This historical analysis demonstrates that patterns appearing to be novel, such as the feminization of agriculture, may in fact represent a return to traditional patterns that were interrupted by war and the ‘experiment’ with socialist production. These analyses also touch upon the important role that wartime military mobilization has had upon men’s (and a small subset of women’s) occupational histories. The findings demonstrate how recent, massive military demobilization encouraged a temporary shift in young men’s approaches to labor force participation, specifically a turn toward participation in military institutions, which in turn temporarily allowed for women’s heightened participation in relatively high status services and government sector occupations.

In the final substantive chapter I examine the occupational attainment process and status transmission across generations within the Red River Delta in order to understand which social groups have achieved high status positions within the socialist and market reform economies and whether these status attainment patterns are novel or represent a continuation of previous patterns. I focus attention upon gender stratification in occupations as well, to explore whether women are marginalized in low status occupational fields and to determine whether men, more so than women, have obtained favorable positions within a social-political system that has espoused gender egalitarianism as a central value. The inquiries in chapter eight utilize international classifications of occupational prestige, as well as categorical occupational measures that emphasize the importance of obtaining work outside of traditional agricultural tasks. While several researchers have examined stratification in educational attainment in contemporary Viet Nam (Truong et al. 1998; Nguyen Lan Phuong 2000), few have systematically addressed the extent to which educational inequalities across rural and urban areas, social classes, men and women, eventuate in occupational status inequalities. In addition, these analyses allow me to enter the case of Viet Nam into discussions on market transition theory, as articulated by Nee

(1989, 1991), Walder (1995, 1996), Bian and Logan (1996) and others, by examining the influence of political capital upon occupational status outcomes in this post-Socialist country.

Among the major findings, and confirming previous studies (Haughton 2000; Ungar 2000; Le Thi Nham Tuyet 1996) is that occupational attainment is a gendered process, as women's work continues to be more heavily concentrated in agricultural production than men's. Furthermore, compared to women, men's attainment of high prestige occupations is less dependent upon attainment of high education levels. Educational attainment is central to the process of occupational status attainment in the Red River Delta; this is particularly true for the few women who hold high status positions. Consistent with results obtained for post-socialist China (Nee and Yang 2001; Parrish and Michelson 1996), parental socioeconomic status, and particularly parents' possession of political capital (i.e., Communist Party membership and government employment), is instrumental in the attainment of occupational status in the current period. Parents' high status background and ties to the current political establishment through Communist Party membership exert both indirect and direct influence upon children's occupational status. High status parents are able to provide higher levels of educational attainment to their children, on average, compared to parents with lower levels of education and occupational prestige. The relationship between family socioeconomic status and education attainment is likely to become more sharply delineated as the costs of education become increasingly stratified in the new market economy. In addition, in-depth interviews describe the mechanisms operating in families where children of high status families are embedded within social networks linked to government workers, decision-makers, and otherwise influential persons who are able to assist in securing employment.

Prior to presenting the data analytic objectives described above, I include chapters that

outline the social, demographic and economic conditions that characterize contemporary northern Viet Nam, focusing upon the villages and towns of the Red River Delta and women's contemporary and historical economic roles in this area. To provide a framework for exploring women's economic activities in the Red River Delta, chapter two reviews existing research in the field of gender and development and gender stratification, as well as research on subsistence economies and household organization of labor and decision-making. My summation of this literature provides an overview and framework for understanding the diverse measures of women's socioeconomic status and gender inequality that exist in the research literature and how the empirical research record substantiates major theoretical stances on the causes and consequences of gendered inequalities in socioeconomic status. Having outlined several theoretical statements on how economic development, economic transition, patriarchal social systems and other institutions and processes shape economic participation and gendered work roles, I turn to a review of sociological and historical works depicting the institution of the family, gender roles in family and society, and trends in men's and women's status positions and economic participation in recent Vietnamese history. This body of work describes women's and men's division of labor across occupations and between the public and private spheres, their distinct roles in society and the family, ideological and public policy statements, thereby providing an historical and ideological groundwork to frame the current analyses.

The central research questions herein are examined through analyses of survey data collected in the Vietnam Longitudinal Survey, which was conducted in the Red River Delta provinces of Nam Ha, Ninh Binh, and Nam Dinh from 1995 to 1998. The VLS contains data on social, economic and demographic characteristics for approximately 4,500 persons age 15 to 65 residing in 10 communes of the Red River Delta. Quantitative analyses of the VLS are

supplemented by qualitative analyses of over 100 in-depth interviews and focus group discussions that were conducted in three communes of the Red River Delta during the winter and autumn seasons of 2001. These in-depth interviews concentrate on work histories, the gender division of labor in households, and perceptions of regional and community-level economic change during the post-reform era. Guided by a mixed methods approach, I combine both types of data in order to interpret the scope, meaning, and determinants of women's and men's economic activities as they are understood and perceived by local residents and participants in the local labor force. A thorough discussion of my methodological approach, and issues of measurement and interpretation, is provided in chapter four.

The results of in-depth interviews with men and women provide myriad insights into women's productive work roles and their ability to combine extensive labor force activity with childcare and diverse domestic duties. By focusing upon a subset of these in-depth interviews we are able to visualize with greater clarity the demands placed upon women during distinct historical eras (e.g., the American war, the collective period, the current era of economic reform) and how gender identities underlie and are transformed by participation in diverse economic activities. These interview results, presented throughout the dissertation, demonstrate the widespread experience among women of caring for their families, and especially young children, without a great deal of assistance from, and oftentimes in the absence of, male family members. Women demonstrate many capabilities and forms of economic autonomy, such as operating family farms when male relatives have departed for work or for war, caring for sick and frail relatives where public institutions offer little social and financial support, and starting and operating successful small businesses in the new market context. However, most women and men are reluctant to recognize women's central economic role in families, and few changes in the

division of domestic and childcare tasks appear to materialize when women subsume the role of primary income-generator within the household. A vocabulary of women's duty to sacrifice for the good of the family imbues many interviewees' understandings and rationales for their own work contributions, and so few women demand greater recognition of their contributions and greater egalitarianism in the distribution of household resources.

The dissertation documents the extensive economic contributions of Vietnamese women during each stage of the life course. Women's labor force participation is not only persistent across the life course, but in many instances it is more intensive relative to the economic participation of men who were disproportionately dislocated from the governmental and cooperative sectors that were dismantled in the late 1980s, and many whom were demobilized from the armed forces and met substantial challenges in re-entering the civilian labor force. Women's productive work is often intense and managed in conjunction with childcare and other domestic responsibilities; however, this intensity of activity is only made possible through the mostly unpaid childcare and domestic labor performed by other women in the household or local community. Altogether, the dissertation reveals that family role obligations, gender status, and socioeconomic status within a context of shifting, market-oriented imperatives are important features shaping modes of participation in the emergent market economy of northern Viet Nam.

Men's and women's economic roles have undergone important transformations in recent Vietnamese history. Collectivization and several decades of war mobilization from the late 1950s through the early 1980s brought men to distant fronts of military service, often leaving women in villages to manage household economic duties. Through these changes women's economic roles diversified and occupational multiplicity was common. The implementation of socialist policies to reduce women's social reproduction duties have provided some relief in the time required for

childcare and other household chores. However, women active in the labor force continued to perform most household responsibilities, especially when husbands were absent from the household. In general, women made strides into male-typed employment during the war years, and at the same time they combined employment with social reproduction tasks; this has left an important legacy in the villages and prepared women for performing a diverse set of occupational duties. Men's and women's economic participation and roles in Viet Nam have shifted dramatically over the past several decades, mirroring major historical events and the institutional shifts that have occurred as the country has experienced war, collectivization and development of a market economy.

In its entirety, this dissertation aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of the historical events, features of community economic structure, familial relationships and role expectations, and individuals' social status characteristics as they influence men's and women's economic participation outcomes in the Red River Delta. Moreover, this work stands as a contribution to building an international, comparative framework for theorizing gender stratification, and societal stratification during periods of economic transition, more broadly.

Brinton (1988:302), has noted that,

“a research tradition that concentrates almost exclusively on the explanation of differences in economic outcomes between individual men and women in one culture makes it difficult to develop a theory of gender stratification that confronts issues of micro-level interaction within the macro-level institutional setting.”

Research in the sociology of gender and stratification has taken great strides in this direction; my intent is to enrich this field of study by drawing the recent experiences of Vietnamese women and men into the realm of sociological analysis. These are multi-faceted and challenging tasks, and thus the results presented here represent one small contribution to the work on gender stratification and Vietnamese society that has been conducted, and that which is still underway.

Chapter 2. Literature Review: Women's Status and Gender Inequality in Developing Countries

2.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

Sociologists have long recognized gender as a focal point of societal differentiation. As such, extensive research efforts have illuminated the ways that gender operates among myriad social categories to influence socioeconomic status outcomes such as occupational prestige and economic participation. Papanek's (1990:163) comments assert the variable role of gender as a delineating feature of social groups, operating among, and in interaction with, diverse social distinctions:

“Gender differences, based on the social construction of biological sex distinctions, are one of the great ‘fault lines’ of societies—those marks of difference among categories of persons that govern the allocation of power, authority and resources. But gender differences are not the only such fault line; they operate within a larger matrix of other socially constructed distinctions, such as class, race, ethnicity, religion and nationality, which give them their specific dynamics in a given time and place.”

Thusly, within specific social locations and historical periods, and especially in societies undergoing economic development and transition, the relative degree of gender differentiation in access to power, prestige, and various social resources represents a crucial dimension of social stratification.

This dissertation aims to delineate several dimensions of women's and men's status positions in economic production activities in Viet Nam's Red River Delta. Such an effort is intended to assess the extent to which gender acts as a pivotal ‘fault line’ determining outcomes in employment and socioeconomic status within a sociocultural system that incorporates Confucian, Socialist, and most recently, market economic, principles into modes of social organization. Furthermore, through this work I aim to generate a comprehensive understanding

of the processes influencing socioeconomic status in northern Viet Nam by jointly analyzing three central dimensions of individuals' positions vis-à-vis economic production—labor force participation and occupational status positions in the current period, and the shifting economic roles of young men and women across distinct eras in recent history. Each of these dimensions relates to men's and women's relative amount of economic power in the household and the broader community. Furthermore, I emphasize a variety of social-demographic factors shown to impinge upon both men's and women's involvement in productive activities—such as family structure and social class background—in order to build a comprehensive model of socioeconomic status determination. The analyses, by systematically comparing men and women, offer a gendered perspective, and by simultaneously disaggregating men and women along additional 'planes of cleavage,' such as class background and rural-urban location, enable us to comprehend whether gender operates differently across divergent social groups (Blumberg 1995:9).

Although gender is frequently a fault line of great importance in delineating access to institutions, privileges and resources, especially in the developing world, recent research has suggested that highlighting gender at the expense of other social distinctions, such as social class and social ecological factors, can be detrimental to appropriately addressing more salient inequalities in particular regions of the world (see, for example, Knodel and Jones 1996). Rather than assuming that gender is pre-eminent among lines of social division, and rather than assuming that economic participation is consistently an important stage on the route toward women's emancipation, the objective herein is to critically examine the salience of gender in socioeconomic status attainment processes in conjunction with a constellation of social and demographic characteristics that also operate to influence status outcomes. Furthermore, I examine economic participation as a complex, at times problematic, outcome variable that also

ought to be disaggregated and viewed holistically in relationship to other forms of social activity, such as domestic production and political participation.

The empirically measurable indicators of gender inequality within societies and women's socioeconomic status in relation to men are diverse and numerous. Involvement in the labor force and occupational status, which extend beyond employment relations to shape economic power dynamics within the family and local community, have been a preeminent focus of concern in efforts to analyze gender inequality in socioeconomic status. Yet conceptualizing and measuring the relative status of men and women in order to arrive at meaningful conclusions on the degree of gender inequality in a given society continues to pose challenges. Mason (1986:287) asserts that, "gender inequality is empirically, as well as conceptually, a multidimensional phenomenon." By recognizing this multidimensionality, and by explicitly identifying the spheres and parameters of concern in our research, we are better equipped to formulate holistic, precise understandings of the processes that place women in positions of subordination and dependence relative to men (Ireson 1996:6). Whyte (2000:159) concurs, pointing out that an assemblage of statistics on gender inequalities in different work domains rarely 'reveals a clear or consistent picture,' and thus 'we need to assemble as many meaningful indicators as possible.'

Clearly, a diverse set of approaches to operationalizing women's status is necessary to develop an all-encompassing picture on the degree of gender inequality in a full range of social institutions, such as the family, the workplace, and organizations such as education and government. However, if we fail to use adequate procedures to specify and organize our definitions of women's and men's status, we run the risk of generating a complicated cacophony of voices rather than definitive, empirically-validated observations on women's positions relative to men's within specific institutional realms and socio-cultural settings. This chapter presents a

brief and selective review and organization of research purporting to identify and measure the factors influencing women's status and gender inequality in societies undergoing economic development and transition.

By way of organizing the extensive literature on a topic featured in multiple disciplinary fields ranging from women's studies to sociology and economics, I attempt to impose a framework that delineates research based upon its distinct explanation for the emergence and maintenance of gender inequality and women's relatively low economic status positions compared to men in less developed countries. Briefly, these explanatory frameworks include the following: 1) the undermining of women's subsistence production through economic development processes (i.e., the feminization of agriculture perspective, originating in Boserup); 2) the erosion of egalitarianism during the shift from socialism to market economy; 3) changing economic relations and shifts in the demand for women's labor; and 4) the culture of patriarchy and ideological prescriptions for gender role performance.

Clearly, the array of potential measures for women's socioeconomic status, and gender inequality, considered more broadly, are many. Within this review I restrict the content to research that pertains to market-oriented work activities and orientation to the labor force. Thus, most of the literature that I review treats as outcome variables occupational status positions or economic roles, labor force participation, and allocation of time to employment/work activities. Certainly, differentiating social reproduction and economic production activities poses a significant challenge, particularly in less developed countries where much labor is undertaken in the informal, household sector. Recognizing that women tend to perform a severely disproportionate amount of social reproduction tasks in households of developing countries, nonetheless, I delimit my own inquiries to male and female differences in work that generates income for themselves and their family, either cash or in-kind income, and irrespective of

whether or not the worker is compensated. A summation of all the research findings on related topics concerning gender inequality, for example, the allocation of food and education resources to young men and women within households, or men's and women's land inheritance rights, is beyond the scope of this paper. Also beyond the scope of this review is research concerned primarily with how characteristics of women's employment, such as their movement out of village-based subsistence labor and into factory systems operated by multinational corporations, influences their personalities and identities (see, for example, Ong 1987). While admitting that women's status in one realm of economic life, such as the educational system, is intricately intertwined with their status in the workplace, their formation of identity, and their roles in household decision-making processes, I choose to focus on those works that most closely approximate the work that parallels my own in this dissertation.

2.2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE UNDERMINING OF WOMEN'S STATUS IN SUBSISTENCE PRODUCTION

The works of Ester Boserup (1970, 1981) are regarded as path-breaking for establishing a paradigmatic framework explaining how demographic changes (e.g., rising levels of population density and major migrations) shape modes of technological and economic development, and in turn, how economic participation opportunities come to be stratified along the lines of gender in regions undergoing economic development and structural diversification away from subsistence agricultural production. Drawing upon societies from Asia to Africa to develop a typology of farming systems, Boserup synthesizes empirical observations that delineate how technological developments and the emergence of the formal sector and wage employment alongside informal sector, cottage industry and agricultural work, influence the gendered nature of employment opportunities. Her first, comparative and descriptive works argue that 'the introduction of modern technology and cash crops benefited men rather than women by creating a productivity

gap between them; women were relegated to the subsistence sector of food production using traditional methods of cultivation” (summarized in Beneria and Sen 1981:281). Thusly, development processes, Boserup reasons, effectively undercut women’s traditional control over economic resources in the household and subsistence economy by removing the production of many valued resources from the domestic sphere.

Boserup’s perspective has proven widely useful for understanding patterns of economic participation, occupational attainment, and household income dynamics among women and men in developing countries such as contemporary northern Viet Nam. At the same time, feminist scholars (see, for example, Beneria and Sen 1981:285; Huntington 1975) have cautioned that Boserup’s analyses are at times under-theorized and fail to explicate the great diversity across farming systems that do not fit into her dichotomous typology, as well as the specific mechanisms whereby farming systems evolve and modernization processes undermine women’s economic independence. She commits, the authors argue, a form of ‘technological determinism’ and overlooks the social relations of production and reproduction. Beneria and Sen also fault Boserup for failing to emphasize the connection between commercial cropping (mostly by colonial interests) and the process of capital accumulation. Injecting their own theoretical interpretation, they note: “women’s loss of status results from the interweaving of class relations and gender relations” (p. 288).

Nonetheless, most scholars of gender and development agree that Boserup’s work is foundational to the field and set a course for charting women’s ‘underdevelopment’ in the process of economic development. Specifically, her early works substantiate the declining position of women in societies shifting from subsistence production to market-oriented agricultural production by pointing to historical changes in the status of women in African and Asian agricultural systems. Specifically, Boserup notes that, traditionally, women had access to land

and could support themselves and their children through subsistence agriculture and own-use production. In other words, they did not have to depend entirely upon the labor of their husbands and male kin, who tended to enter cash crop production and the monetized economy, for their livelihoods (Boserup 1981, 1985). A critique of Boserup's early analytical frameworks (Huntington 1975:1008) notes that even where women produced substantial economic worth in 'female farming' systems," women's status most often remained subordinate, rather than independent and self-sufficient, because the system was male-dominated and women's labor power disproportionately enriched their husbands by providing them with the bulk of food for consumption and leisure time. In societies such as these, Huntington adds (1975:1007):

"women's farming is the source of whatever wealth there is, and, despite women's rights in land tenure, men control women and women's production through their subordination in marriage, much as peasants are the traditionally subordinated producers of wealth for land-based aristocrats."

Any modicum of women's economic self-sufficiency was eroded where formal land reforms invited the privatization of land and marketization of production, and in turn "men [became] owners of the land, either as individuals or as heads of families, and women no longer had any claim to the land if the men want to dispose of it or if they become widowed, divorced, or abandoned (Boserup 1985:389)." In addition, the emphasis on producing cash crops, rather than just providing for household subsistence needs, increases women's work burden, as they were induced to use more labor-intensive methods (e.g., such as the use of fertilizer and intensive weeding) and to expand cultivation to lands more distant and difficult to cultivate. Finally, in certain of these contexts there is a heightened incentive for women to bear many children so that family labor supply is greater. Thus, another result is that women's responsibility for performing economic production and social reproduction tasks increase in tandem. Taken a step further along the pathway of agricultural evolution, where agricultural production becomes modernized and mechanized, and the need for labor inputs is reduced as a result, and where men

simultaneously take on those high status roles with access to mechanized equipment and market-participation, women's contributions are devalued and they tend to be trapped in insecure, inferior positions relative to men.

Boserup's analyses also encompass changing patterns of gender stratification in nonagricultural work activities that have characterized many developing countries. To the extent that the work performed by men and women is segregated, women tend to work in low-skill, low productivity, labor-intensive tasks, compared to men. This differentiation is also an extension of women's traditional roles in subsistence production (1970:117):

"We found a similar division of labour in the trade sector in many countries, where men are employees in the modern shops while women handle small-scale market trade in food and other daily necessities. This type of polarized division of labour creates a wide gap in productivity and income between men and women in the same sector, lowering the position of women in relation to that of men. The gap between the productivity and earnings of men and women is further widened because those few women who are employed in modern industry are mostly doing unskilled jobs."

Twenty years after her initial writings on the subject, Boserup (1990:16) continued to make observations substantiating the central arguments of her analytical framework. She witnesses that within agriculture, across diverse geographic and cultural contexts, a gendered division of labor maintains men's favored positions because men moved out of subsistence roles prior to women and subsequently tend to be concentrated in relatively productive, technologically-advanced positions:

"where land preparation for paddy production has been mechanized, men ride tractors while women continue to work with hand tools, performing the back-breaking, tedious work of weeding and transplanting...However, some women can escape work in the fields while others must work hard on family land, for wages, or both" (16).

Boserup's writings also comment upon how the movement of labor migrants out of rural areas tends to 'corner' women in subsistence production activities near the home, while men more

readily enter migration streams and undertake relatively technologically-advanced and lucrative employment opportunities in cities.

Scholars conducting research in diverse international settings have identified emerging and increasing trends in agricultural feminization, as men are drawn disproportionately into rural-urban migration streams and more modern sectors of employment, while women are disproportionately marginalized in the traditional tasks of agriculture, often taking over the spheres of agricultural work formerly occupied by men. I highlight here several research projects that extend and test the assumptions and central concepts first conceptualized in Boserup's work. Ross (1986), for example, is one of numerous scholars whose comparative-historical analyses are consistent with the gender and development perspective, by pointing to women's and men's relative equality in pre-industrial societies and shifts toward heightened political and economic status differentiation. Utilizing Murdock's data on pre-industrial societies, he notes that heightened inequality between men and women in social and political participation emerges alongside increasing social complexity, rising population size and density, and increased commercial activity. Thus, his findings provide empirical verification to Boserup's assertions through the application of quantitative, comparative data.

In her work on villagers in Ghana, Bukh (1979) demonstrates how the rise of commercial cropping and labor migration—both processes that represent how industrialization processes predominantly incorporate male workers while women continue to work primarily in the household-based subsistence economy—invited an intensification of women's labor in subsistence production. At the time of her research Bukh found that village women had to work much longer hours than they did in earlier times, prior to the onset of large-scale migrations, when their husbands and sons continued to live in the household. Furthermore, the pressure upon

Ghana families to keep their children in school increased during the 1970s, as a result of new, off-farm opportunities, and so women felt an additional pressure to heighten their production of salable crops at the same time that children, who had assisted in production, were devoting more time to school attendance.

Kandiyoti (1983) has examined the gender implications of economic development in rural Turkey, demonstrating that in Turkish farming households, with advancing market penetration in agricultural production, women's labor is intensified and agriculture is increasingly feminized, especially where male out-migration is heavy. At the same time, Kandiyoti observes that while women's work intensifies, men's control over the cash nexus becomes more pronounced as their access to the monetized economy is relatively gender exclusive. This incorporation of cash income into rural household economies, and the downplay of agricultural subsistence, thus operates to degrade women's economic power within the family unit.

Focusing upon and critically analyzing the precise mechanisms of agricultural feminization in Andhra Pradesh, India, Da Corta and Venkateshwarlu (1999) question popular interpretations of "green revolution," high-yield technologies as fueling the feminization of agriculture. A popular, in the authors' words, 'neo-liberal,' view is that women are empowered through the 'green revolution' approach to farming because it generates greater demand for women's performance of 'female-typed' labor tasks on capitalist farms. The Andhra Pradesh analyses demonstrate, to the contrary, that a rise in exclusively female-typed tasks was not the primary factor underlying feminization. Rather, work that had previously been 'joint,' or performed by both men and women, was increasingly being performed exclusively by females. Furthermore, agricultural tasks that had formerly been performed solely by men were becoming 'joint' in nature, being taken over, in part, by women. Da Corta and Venkateshwarlu offer occupational wage differentials as an explanation for the feminization process, and note that the

capitalist class had a vested interest in substituting male labor with cheaper, female labor. Specifically, wages offered in off-farm labor and exclusively male tasks were so much higher than those offered in 'joint' tasks that demand factors pulled men away from certain types of agricultural labor. These were forms of labor, though, that women felt compelled to undertake, even though wages were low and work conditions were poor, due to their impoverished conditions. Each of these studies, in turn, explicates one or more of the mechanisms whereby economic development and the emergence of more modern employment and the cash nexus contributes to a dynamic leading women to be increasingly dominant in agricultural production tasks.

2.3 THE TRANSITION FROM SOCIALISM TO MARKET ECONOMY: EROSION OF WOMEN'S GAINS AND GENDER EGALITARIANISM?

The implementation of centrally-planned, socialist modes of economic production in countries such as China, the former U.S.S.R. and Cuba, as well as Viet Nam, met variable degrees of success in increasing remuneration for women's economic participation and removing social reproduction functions such as childcare from the household sphere. Even at the height of the socialist experience, in both China and Viet Nam, women still received less pay than men and were concentrated among the lower-paid positions in agricultural collectives, such that "any alteration in the relations of production had left the sexual division of labor largely untouched (Croll 1981:365; see also, Wiegersma 1988, Davin 1976). Thus, to assume that implementation of collective work organization and redistribution of agricultural products actually achieved gender egalitarian outcomes would be incorrect. What was accomplished, as chapter three will describe in greater detail, was an unprecedented, public remuneration of women's work activities, and a reduction in women's time devoted to the tasks of social reproduction by channeling certain responsibilities to paid civil servants. Nonetheless, now that many of the state socialist societies

have, or are currently, dismantling socialist production relations in favor of market-oriented economic production with private entrepreneurship and land ownership, a new area of inquiry concerning economic status outcomes for men and women and post-socialist stratification orders has grown substantially in the social sciences. The 'official' return of production and labor allocation functions to the household opens a window of opportunity for understanding how family relationships and socialist regimes, in turn, generate gendered inequalities.

Vietnamese scholars, themselves, have pointed to research on market transition in China and the formerly socialist states of Eastern Europe as providing useful models for analyzing changes in their own country, and for developing an understanding of the extent to which women gain or lose status in the shift to a market economy (Tran and Le 2000:92). China scholar Elisabeth Croll has written extensively on women's economic participation under socialism and in the post-Mao era of market reform. In her earliest works on the subject, Croll established the marked difference that existed between socialist gender egalitarian ideals and the reality of implemented policies and their outcomes. In a comparative analysis of China, the Soviet Union, Cuba and Tanzania, she points out that across all four countries women continued to receive systematically less pay than men in agricultural collectives, usually because women were allocated positions deemed the least demanding of strength, skill, and work experience (1981). This was also true in Viet Nam, according to Tran Thi Van Anh (1999), who notes that heads of cooperatives assigned work based upon workers' perceived abilities. As a result, women were assigned tasks traditionally performed by women (e.g., transplanting, weeding, breeding livestock) and men those traditionally performed by men (e.g., plowing, carpentry). Marked payment differentials separated these occupational titles, with men's jobs being evaluated (by male leaders in cooperatives, nonetheless) as more demanding and difficult, and hence deserving of higher payments. Furthermore, attempts to supply rural communities with socialist institutions

intended to replace household social reproduction functions, such as crèches and nursery schools, public dining halls and other forms of service provision, were weak, at best, especially in certain rural areas of China. As a result, women, especially those newly entering the paid labor force and those who had a large number of dependent children and therefore little choice but to remain home and sacrifice payment of workpoints, faced a new ‘double burden’ in combining work for the collective and traditional forms of childcare and domestic chores (see also Selden 1985). Furthermore, irrespective of official statements of doctrine praising efforts taken to achieve equality in the household, none of the societies in her analyses experienced a significant shift in the traditional gender division of labor within the household between husband and wife. This being the case, Croll (1981:365) concludes, “the sexual division of labor [was left] largely untouched” during the era of socialist production.

Another shortcoming in reaching gender egalitarian ideals in the implementation of socialist economic production programs is that women continued to be underrepresented in leadership positions of worker brigades and labor departments. For example, few women were trained to use farm machinery that might have enhanced their chances to be awarded more highly remunerated positions (Dodge 1966). These findings demonstrate that it is important to be aware when discussing the influence of market transition upon ‘emerging’ gender inequality that marked inequalities between men and women in remuneration for economic participation, involvement in workplace leadership roles, performance of household chores, and engagement in political organizations persisted in China, the Soviet Union and other societies throughout the state socialist period. Most often, traditional ideologies about women’s deficits in being able to lead and make decisions fueled disparities in social and political participation. However, women frequently site the labor-intensive tasks of childcare and housework as having prevented them from attending meetings of worker brigades or attempting to take leadership roles in the local

community. Already facing a ‘double burden,’ of work for the collective and work in the domestic sphere, political participation was most likely perceived to be a ‘triple burden’ that would only increase demands upon time and energy to insurmountable levels.

Gendered inequalities in political participation and remuneration for work tended to persist in many state-socialist societies, and the social division of labor, with women performing the bulk of domestic labor, remained relatively intact. Within China, the introduction of market reforms has demonstrated, rather consistently, that inequalities across households in income, involvement in market activity and other socioeconomic outcomes have heightened in the post-reform period (Khan et al. 1992; Bian et al. 2000; Cao and Nee 2001). Yet there is evidence that inequalities between men and women have remained quite stable from the onset of reforms in the late 1970s into the early 1990s. Specifically, Bian et al. (2000) find that the gender wage-gap in Tianjin, China’s 3rd largest city, remains stable, with men’s wages, on average, being 15% higher than women’s, controlling for job characteristics and background factors. Analyzing the first and current job possessed by five cohorts of men and women, Bian et al. find that men in cohorts entering the labor force prior to 1965 have first occupations with greater decision-making power and greater market involvement than women. However, for the two cohorts entering the labor force since 1965, women’s disadvantage in first job status has been reversed. Rather than interpreting this finding optimistically, as an accomplishment of market reforms, Bian et al. point out that men continue to experience greater upward mobility into powerful and prestigious occupations over their course of their working lives. Furthermore, the Tianjin data demonstrate that men predominate in top decision-making positions (i.e., administrative roles) in all cohorts, for both first and current jobs, leading Bian and colleagues to conclude that “it is hard to find any support for the view that state policy specifically favored women’s chances of achieving administrative positions during those periods (p. 122).” The findings from Tianjin fail to support

conclusively the market transition theoretical position that the market mechanism will reduce favoritism and reward workers according to their skills sets and educational capital (both of which women possess levels that are commensurate to men's). Consistent with conclusions made by Walder (1996), neither the market nor the state has operated as 'equalizer' in China's gender stratification order. Rather, gender inequalities in occupational status have remained relatively fixed over time, and for current occupational positions Bian et al. (2000:131) actually observe that, through social capital and preserved remnants of the redistributive, institutional order "men are more able than women to move into jobs with power, jobs with market connections, and jobs in the state or new sectors, consequently obtaining higher wages." Such findings are not surprising, given that research such as Honig and Hershatter's (1988) in-depth analysis of women's experiences in work units revealed that decision-makers in work units consistently discriminated against women in job assignments and promotions.

Aiming to delineate how patriarchy in the Chinese context impacts socioeconomic status outcomes of men and women, and whether economic development weakens the tendency toward son-preference in patriarchal social systems, Michelson and Parish (2000) analyze data from the 1991 China Health and Nutrition Survey to assess men's and women's occupational outcomes in rural areas of eight provinces. Their results demonstrate the favorable position of men in locating nonfarm employment, reflecting what they term a 'queuing process,' in which, "men move into the best locally available jobs first, and women follow only after vacancies emerge as the local demand for labor increases—for example when men move into even more lucrative positions" (2000:145). When the privatized sector first emerges in a particular setting, men move into private-sector jobs before women, and women only enter after the sector is more fully developed. This process bears strong similarities to women's labor market mobility pathways and the process of gender 'queuing' for high status positions in the formal sector of advanced capitalist countries

(Reskin and Roos 1990). The obstacles to entering nonfarm employment that women experience relative to men is magnified for those who are married; this holds true even for positions in the state sector—potentially the most gender egalitarian economic sector. The authors interpret this marriage handicap as arising through various mechanisms, most likely increased employer discretion in hiring for the most valuable jobs, and the belief that married women's work will suffer as a result of her performance of household (i.e., maternal) duties (p. 147).

Further considering women's and men's employment outcomes in rural China during the market reform era, research conducted by Entwisle and colleagues (1995, 2000) has explored gender roles in household production during the 1990s, specifically examining whether women and men are both benefiting from newly emerging work opportunities in rural areas, or whether women are being disproportionately relegated to traditional agricultural work, "down on the farm," while men access new, more modern and more remunerative, work opportunities. Analyzing data from the China Health and Nutrition Survey, Entwisle et al. (1995:47) address labor allocation within household enterprises in rural households located in eight provinces of China. Their analyses demonstrate that men are three times more likely than women to be working in household businesses, whereas women are twice as likely as men to work exclusively in agriculture. Irrespective of their educational level, women are more likely than men to labor solely in agricultural work and to be left out of household business activities, a pattern which the authors suggest derives from rural women's positions as "outsiders" in their marital households, the undervaluing of women's educational attainment relative to that of men, gender role expectations which hold women accountable for the care of children and elderly dependents, and therefore less capable of entering into household business responsibilities, and power differentials within households which favor men in accessing more lucrative, "get ahead" opportunities in household businesses.

The matter of market transition and development is also relevant to the situation in the People's Democratic Republic of Laos. Having conducted decades of research among rural Laotian peasants, as well as among Hmong and Khmu minority groups, Ireson (1996) provides an elaborate account of rural Laotian women's positions in the system of gender stratification. Laos' history of French colonial occupation, socialist revolution and recent market-oriented reforms provide striking parallels to the case of Viet Nam. Sketching the multifaceted inequality between men and women in terms of women's relatively restricted political participation, school attendance and attainment, Ireson elaborates upon women's extensive engagement in economic activities in the village and the pathways whereby certain women made gains in economic status during the Pathet Lao period (particularly daughters of high ranking civil servants). In discussing Laos' post-1979 economic liberalization and its effects on rural women, Ireson notes that the pace of change has been slow, with rural areas hampered by poor infrastructure. Official socialist ideology and the Lao constitution recognize the importance of women's roles and gender equality; local women comment that, in being expected to labor in both the public and domestic sphere to 'build socialism,' they have been 'liberated to work harder;' at the same time, persistent gender stereotyping extends women's household and childcare activities into the public sphere such that gendered occupational segregation mirrors women's household roles. (Ireson 1996:48-50).

Ireson also suggests that at one time Laos' agricultural cooperative system, similar to that which prevailed in Viet Nam until the early 1980s, forced greater recognition of women's work through its remuneration with work points. However, in the current period, while agriculture grows increasingly feminized, it is also the case that agricultural work is again becoming hidden and overlooked, receding into the hidden category of housework or 'unpaid family labor.' Ireson examines, in turn, how socialism and economic liberalization have influenced three realms of

Laotian women's traditional work activities (i.e., agriculture; forests, crafts and marketing; and social reproduction tasks). Among her findings relevant to the work at hand, are gender disparities in workpoint remuneration. Specifically she finds, similar to the Chinese and Vietnamese case, that women and men were allocated qualitatively different tasks in the collective, and that men's jobs systematically were awarded more points. In addition, blatant discrimination against women occurred in numerous instances, such that men were paid more workpoints for precisely the same type and amount of work performed by women. Furthermore, Laotian people's ability to earn a livelihood in the highlands through swidden cultivation and foraging has been curtailed, beginning in the collective period and more so in the economic liberalization period, because the Laos government implemented a ban on swidden farming in the late 1980s and has allowed foreign logging companies to log major forested areas. This has undermined women's ability to deliver forest products to the household economy, while at the same time the presence of foreign companies have opened new lines of economic activity—such as road construction and wood gathering—that are accessible to men. Within the family realm, Ireson comments on a powerful legacy of women's visible participation in cooperatives and involvement with activities of the Lao Women's Union as having strengthened women's power in other domains and into the period of economic liberalization. In summarizing her analyses, she asserts that women have gained opportunities through the socialist experience, but warns that capitalist development in the region has potentially damaging consequences for women's economic status positions that arise through the increasing feminization of agriculture and depletion of natural resources.

Among workers in the former Soviet Union and Eastern European state socialist societies it is also the case that women have often suffered disproportionately in their labor market outcomes relative to men during periods of structural adjustment and market transition. The

transition to more privatized economies has relegated women to relatively low-paying and temporary jobs and lengthier periods of unemployment. The reinforcement of patriarchal relationships in households and places of employment are markedly stronger than those that prevailed during the Soviet era (Beneria 1999; Moghadam 1994;). Whether or not women's economic status is jeopardized in market transition and the industrial restructuring that accompanies transition policies may depend on the extent to which pre-existing occupational gender stratification patterns "match" the direction of economic restructurings. For example, Reuschmeyer (1994) maintains that the reduced status of women in the former German Democratic Republic results in part through industrial restructuring, wherein textiles, electronics and light industry sectors, those most adversely affected in the unification process, were dominated by female workers; whereas industries dominated by men, such as transportation and construction, have received more state and market-driven support in the period of market transition. By comparison, Fong and Paull (1994), while recognizing women's greater representation among the unemployed in post-transition Eastern European countries, look upon women's prior concentration in administrative and entrepreneurial activities and men's relative concentration in heavy industry and construction as differentially protecting women from job loss and improving their chances of re-employment. They highlight women's more advantageous orientation toward, and stronger propensity to engage in, the emerging private sector due to their previous concentration in industries that have grown in the market reform period. Their perspective suggests, that women's socioeconomic status positions relative to men's may not *necessarily* be threatened in the course of economic development and transition. Rather, the extent to which women's pre-existing education and skill sets, and their concentration in occupations/industries meld with changes in the macro-level economy, are important features influencing their relative socioeconomic status outcomes in periods of economic transition. In

other words, local demand for women's labor, and the particular types of labor that women have the ability and training to perform, are central to understanding how women will fare, relative to men, in economic participation and occupational status outcomes. This theme will be developed in greater detail in section 2.4.

Under the various socialisms, one of the routes taken to heighten women's economic status relative to men was the implementation and subsidization of public sector services, most notably crèches and kindergartens for childcare, to alleviate women's disproportionate burden in performing social reproduction tasks. However, with the dismantling of socialism, many such facilities, too, have been quickly dismantled. Social scientists such as Fong and Paull (1994:239) and Moghadam (1994:9) have noted that within former state socialist countries women workers benefited from an 'array of social policies intended to allow them to combine jobs and motherhood,' such as development of a dense network of childcare institutions and extensive maternity leave policies. While implementation of these 'mother friendly' policies throughout Eastern Europe encouraged women's full participation in the labor force by partially removing the childcare function from the private sphere and from mothers' role obligations, and placing it within the public, collective sphere, the post-socialist era has witnessed a return to family-based childcare in some countries, such as Poland and Hungary, due to kindergarten closures under budgetary pressures and increasing fees (Fong and Paull 1994; Kostova 1994; Reuschemeyer 1994). Female unemployment, employer discrimination against women workers, and weakened state-subsidies for kindergartens and other institutions, may, according to Moghadam, bring a 'return of the grandmother' in childcare arrangements, and perhaps a more complete return to patriarchal arrangements in which women remain at home to care for their children while husbands serve as the primary or sole breadwinner in the paid labor force. A similar process of eliminating state-subsidized childcare, and implementing more sizable fees for services, has taken

place during Viet Nam's market reform period (Goodkind 1995a). As in the other market transition economies, working age women stand to lose status and opportunities through these policy shifts as they are increasingly faced with having to perform economic activities that are compatible with their maternal role obligations. Furthermore, young adult women and the elderly are also likely to have their time and energies imposed upon, providing free childcare in fulfilling their duty as 'sister' or 'grandmother,' while at the same time infringing upon personal opportunities for political participation or, for young women, school attendance and employment outside of the domestic sphere.

2.4 SOCIAL-INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS OF ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND SHIFTING DEMAND FOR WOMEN'S LABOR

Blumberg (1984:52) posits that in terms of economic participation and the sexual division of labor, the characteristics of women's labor supply are less important than "the nature of the *demand* for labor by those who have the power to command it" (italics in the original). Alluding to historically and geographically diverse scenarios, such as the United States and the U.S.S.R. during World War Two, Blumberg demonstrates that in many instances women are found working in 'modally male' and apparently 'incompatible' roles where historical and structural features shape demand for women's involvement in production activities. In such cases of high demand for women's production activity (for example when an activity is especially economically valuable or when there is a shortage of other workers), mothering and other typically feminine roles may be overridden and role "incompatibility" reduced because, "childcare arrangements will be adjusted to accommodate their production" (Blumberg 1984:55). That is, barriers to women's employment may be effectively reduced as a result of heightened demand for their labor. Conversely, as the demand for women's labor wanes in the public sector we might expect that institutional supports and ideological statements favoring their participation

will weaken and consequently there will be a retreat of women from the public sector and higher status occupations into traditional work performed on the farm and in the domestic realm.

The works of Goldin (1991), Schweitzer (1980) and other scholars that have explored the impact of World War II wartime production and military mobilization upon women's employment demonstrate the importance of period-specific macro-level demands for labor inputs upon women's labor force participation and their occupational outcomes. These works demonstrate that married women's rising level of labor force participation in the 1940s was not induced solely by the widespread absence of male workers resulting from armed forces mobilization. Rather, it was part of a broader, long-term trend associated with women's rising levels of education and the rise of the clerical sector. The post Pearl Harbor military mobilization did create a unique demand for women's labor in blue collar, skilled trade professions that induced a relatively temporary shift in women's occupational outcomes. Just as women were increasingly welcomed and accommodated in these traditionally male-dominated professions during wartime, through the dissolution of marriage bars, implementation of employer-provided childcare programs, and general employer acceptance of female workers, so were they dismissed and discouraged from such employment with the post-war return of male workers. Thus, the extent to which the World War II wartime production effort served as a 'watershed event' that 'marked a break with the past,' and 'redefined women's roles' was delimited to a relatively unique set of historical circumstances (Goldin 1991: 747). Rising married women's labor force participation, overall, was part of a longer-term, broad historical trend; however, women's work in war-related industries subsided dramatically in the 1950s as socio-historical conditions again achieved a degree of peacetime 'normality.'

In their work comparing the employment of married women in Korea and Taiwan, Brinton and colleagues (1995) emphasize how contextual features of the firm and employment

relations channel women's labor supply. For example, they note that the predominance of small, informal enterprises in Taiwan fosters flexible and tolerant arrangements for working mothers; that conducive locations and dispersion of economic development in Taiwan are relatively conducive to married women's employment by facilitating work scheduling and commuting with greater ease and less maternal-laborer role conflict. By comparison, married women in South Korea face institutional contexts that dampen their employment opportunities, due to an abundance of highly educated male workers, whose numbers exceed the demand for available high-skill, professional jobs. Thusly, bars to married women's professional employment in South Korea continue to be erected. In each case, the demand for female paid-labor is a powerful force shaping women's employment, and this demand for female labor is realized in institutional policies and contexts that are more or less conducive to women's full participation.

Brinton's analyses of Japan (1988, 1993), where industrialization has failed to eliminate a sharp gender wage gap, and where most women continue to labor at piecework or in family enterprises, also illustrate how women's labor force participation and occupational achievement are contingent upon the 'social-institutional' context and demand for their labor. Specifically, Brinton notes (1993:12) that women in Japan, and especially urban women, face a dual economic role, the first—working in low-wage employment, is not to supercede the second—providing for her husband and raising 'quality' children. This strong emphasis on family and mothering accounts for the sharply-delineated, M-shaped curve of women's lifetime economic participation. It also offers a partial explanation for women's concentration in family-business and piecework employment. Firms featuring life-time employment and other formal sector organizations are incompatible with women's tendency to take maternity leave and time away from labor force participation to care for children (they are also less likely to hire women—hence women's low representation in administrative, managerial and sales occupations). Laboring in the piecework

and family-business sector, or filling a 'slot' in low-pay, low-skill white-collar job, is more flexible and compatible with child-related departures from the labor force. Brinton (1993) highlights two elements of Japanese social-institutional contexts that explain women's relatively low status positions in the labor market; specifically, the competitive educational system that require families to invest in children's development of human capital at an early age, and firms' emphasis on life-time employment, which diminishes women's chances for being hired in formal sector firms and their opportunities for re-entering firms after having children. In essence, firms' demand for women employees do not compete with demands emanating from Japanese households for women to nurture family and invest in the development of sons' human capital. Furthermore, as Japan faces a rising labor shortage and the demand for greater female labor force participation would seem imminent, resistance continues to developing institutions (e.g., subsidized daycare) that would facilitate married women's employment, thereby suggesting that the social-institutional context is resistant to change, even in the face of demographic imperatives.

For agrarian societies in the early stages of industrialization, the degree to which capitalist labor relations have been implemented and men and women labor for wages are important social-institutional features shaping men's and women's labor force participation. In an analysis of the gender division of labor in three rural regions of South America, Deere and Leon de Leal (1981) find that the extent to which capitalist labor relations have penetrated an area has a significant effect on the gender division of labor. Comparing a region that is 'noncapitalist,' with smallholdings and reciprocal exchanges, to a region that is predominantly capitalist with a mix of independent producers and wage laborers, and one that features advanced capitalist relations in which wage labor relations dominate, the authors find marked differences in the gender division of labor. Specifically, they observe that, 'the development of capitalist relations of production leads to a less rigid or delineated sexual division of labor in productive activities'

(349). A technical division of labor remains, however, and consistently women's tasks are seen as less important, as 'helping out.' To the extent that a type of gender egalitarianism emerges, this Deere and Leon de Leal reason, is 'the effect of rural poverty, as well as the effect of rural proletarianization; both require all family members to participate in the productive process in order to generate the household's subsistence" (354).

Also underscoring the role of capitalist relations in rural, industrializing countries in shaping women's incorporation into wage labor is the work of Diane Wolf (1992), which examines young women's participation in manufacturing and assembly jobs that have opened up through processes of rural industrialization on the island of Java. The location of textile, food and garment factories on Java, with a predilection to hire young, unmarried women as workers, has altered the occupational opportunities available to young women in rural villages. Rather than take on work in agriculture and cottage industry, as their mothers and grandmothers have, by taking jobs in factories girls experience life outside the confines of their parents' households. Furthermore, their jobs generate cash income that is a valuable source of insurance for their families, especially as parents enter their elder years. In these ways, and because the factory women tend to work at later ages, having accrued meaningful work experience, and at times significant savings of cash income, these factory daughters' gain in social prestige and economic power relative to those workers who remain in traditional village production. However, Wolf makes the point that gains in factory women's status and income savings comes at a price to their families, who continue to provide lodging, meals, means of transportation, and other costs of 'social reproduction' that the girls' factory wages do not cover. The exchange, then, is a delicate one—factory daughters' incomes actually exact a toll on labor supply in their village household of origin. Here we see how the 'development' of young female factory workers takes place at the expense of rural households which must provide for the girls' subsistence, cope with the loss of

their labor contributions, and at the same time cope with the introduction of modern employment and consumption patterns alongside their traditional production technologies. Wolf also makes the point that young women's autonomy is limited by models of discipline imposed upon them in the factory setting which limit their freedom of movement and potentially threaten their health and well-being to an extent perhaps greater than that experienced in traditional village employment. As such, while rural industrialization appears to broaden the occupational opportunities of young women, there are limitations upon the autonomy and earning power generated by occupations in these modern settings.

2.5 PATRIARCHAL SETTINGS AND CULTURAL EXPLANATIONS: MEN'S FAVORED POSITIONS IN FAMILIES AND BELIEFS ABOUT WOMEN'S NATURE

Many societies, particularly those within East Asia, have evolved a set of beliefs and institutional practices that operate to maintain patriarchal social relations. As such, the preference for sons within families tends to generalize to preferential treatment and higher status positions for males relative to females in the wider society. This gender disparity emerges in part through the differential allocation of resources and opportunities to sons and daughters in households. Furthermore, in many patriarchal social systems, both men and women have evolved ways of thinking about the 'nature' and strengths of women and men, and their appropriate roles, which perpetuate gender differentiation in economic roles and gender inequality in resource allocation and patterns of compensation for employment. The male-centered familial ideal, and the emphasis on hierarchical relations and fulfillment of filial obligations, tend to be incorporated into wider social structures such that women's roles of inferiority relative to their husbands and other male kin are adapted and replicated in workplace settings and labor force structures.

In rural settings of patriarchal societies the practice of patrilineal descent and inheritance patterns usually results in sons, often the eldest son, being the sole or primary inheritors of family

land. While the institutions for dividing land among children are diverse, in general women tend to inherit little or no land from their family of birth. Most often in societies of patrilineal descent daughters are expected to marry and join their husband's family. Thus, women's access to land operates largely via husbands and male siblings; as a woman her rights to ownership are limited and potentially her autonomy and initiative in making decisions about land-use are limited.

Women who separate from their home village when they marry cannot continue to cultivate the land that had been 'theirs,' and thus if she becomes a farmer her economic status is particularly compromised—not only because she labors intensively in a low status position, but also because she is dependent upon her husband and parents-in-law for providing access to their plot of land.

In the public, formal sector sphere, patriarchal, and more specifically—Confucian, ideologies may be invoked in hiring decisions and thereby shape women's chances to enter occupations that emerge in the course of industrial development. Observers of post-reform China suggest that once monitoring of local employers by state labor bureaucrats had been diminished in the post-1978 era, there emerged a greater tendency to favor men over women in hiring decisions (Liu 1995, as summarized by Michelson and Parish 2000). Such outcomes suggest that a turn toward private, market-based decision-making in hiring, without state-sponsored bureaucratic management, may be one process whereby patriarchal ideals re-emerge to a greater extent and thus diminish women's opportunities in the post-reform era workforce. Differential evaluation and treatment of women is also apparent in the household economy. Specifically, Croll (1994), Judd (1994), and Entwisle et al. (2000) conclude that patriarchal ideologies have fostered an advantage for male household members such that young men are more likely to leave their home village while their female counterparts remain behind in the increasingly feminized agricultural workforce.

Gallin's (1995) analysis of the shift from agricultural to off-farm employment that occurred over several decades in rural Taiwanese villages demonstrates a process of rising gender inequality in economic roles that can be attributed, in her analysis, to discrimination rooted in ideological beliefs about the 'nature' of men and women. The analyses of Hsin Hsing village depict a 1950s rural Taiwan, facing population pressure, underemployment and male-dominated migration to urban centers, that bears striking resemblance to villages in the Red River Delta during the 1990s. However, the abandonment of rural areas and dramatic urbanization, originally lauded, was arrested through rural development programs designed to invigorate agriculture and bring industrial development to the countryside. Subsequent economic development in the village favored men among the entrepreneurial class, while women more often worked, without pay, in family members' businesses or as piece-rate workers in non-family businesses (men, she notes, more often obtain wages while women work by the piece). Gallin elaborates on the ways that patriarchal ideology has served as a foundation to women's marginalized economic positions that have taken shape in the course of industrial development. Many women in Gallin's study perceived injustice in the non-remuneration of their work; they believed their work was unrecognized and invisible to their husbands and larger community, being categorized as simply another form of housework. Furthermore, men far outnumber women in white-collar and skilled blue-collar work. Women workers were often placed in positions as 'helpers,' relative to men as 'masters,' in an arrangement that was conceptualized as consistent with Confucian ideological traditions. A 'gender logic' emanating from traditional ideologies that favor men in the public sphere also pervaded gender discrimination in hiring and wages, as men were consistently viewed as 'naturally' stronger and more capable than women in certain jobs; they were also consistently viewed as *the* breadwinner of the family and hence deserving of higher wages than those paid to women (Gallin 1995:127).

The patriarchal family is perhaps the most fundamental source of women's subordination and the control of their labor; and the Confucian family of China and its cultural offshoots, according to Greenhalgh (1985:265), have "evolved some of the most patriarchal family systems that have ever existed." In interpreting the Taiwanese culture and gender stratification patterns in the late 20th century, Greenhalgh (1985) suggests that Taiwanese women's subordinate status positions are rooted in traditional, patriarchal family systems that were reinforced through capitalist development processes initiated in the 1950s. Greenhalgh describes the traditional Taiwanese family, in which parents undertake divergent strategies in raising sons and daughters, given their emphasis on patrilineal descent and the belief that children are obliged to repay obligations to their parents and lineage. In traditional families, because daughters were short term members of the family lineage (*chia*), parents were not inclined to 'waste' educational resources upon them and so restricted their activities to housework and childcare—as a forms of 'debt payment' for parental investments that would be lost upon their marriage and departure from the family of birth. With massive industrialization of Taiwan beginning in the 1950s, parents' treatment of their sons and daughters shifted, Greenhalgh illustrates, such that parents invested in daughters' education to the extent that limited education would open participation in the paid workforce, and in turn bring financial returns (payments of 'debt') to the paternal household. As a result, young women left school early, moved into poor paying and low status jobs, and sent remittances back to their parents, which would in turn be used, not to their own benefit, but to invest in the future of their brothers and other members of the paternal family. Thusly, the remuneration of the Taiwanese woman's work is infrequently her own, but rather is funneled to her parents, to repay a debt of moral obligation, and once she has married and her debt 'repaid,' her opportunities for labor outside of the household are greatly limited in a labor market that discriminates severely against married women, whom, it is widely maintained, should confine

their labor to the family/household realm. Greenhalgh's analysis of how young women's orientation to the 'outside world' could be altered so markedly, in order to enhance daughters' channeling of material wealth to the parental household, is a stark example of how patriarchal social systems exert a strong influence upon women's economic roles. Furthermore, her work also demonstrates how an increase in labor force participation among women may not necessarily generate a concomitant elevation of their economic status.

Turning to South Asia, Cain et al. (1979) recognize that patriarchal social relations, along with class formation, operate to shape men's and women's relative economic mobility in a highly segregated labor market. Focusing on households in rural Bangladesh, Cain and his colleagues outline the myriad ways that kinship and patrilocal residence, men's monopolization of political positions, and Islamic ideological beliefs sanctifying male dominance, operate alongside men's control of economic resources (property, income, women's labor) to denigrate women's status and restrict their socioeconomic mobility. Through analyses of time allocation data and life histories, Cain et al. demonstrate that patriarchy serves as a system of stratification operating independent of social class in shaping structured opportunities in the labor market, the education system and other social institutions. The findings of Cain and his colleagues demonstrate that women specialize in labor located close to the home and work approximately the same number of hours per day over the course of a year as men; however, women's greater focus on home production contributes to an undercounting of their work. The interaction between class and gender effects is vividly apparent, however, given that poor women devote twice as much time to income-generating work (most commonly wage work) than better-off women. Cain et al. (1979:417) conclude that the sexual division of labor is rigid and inflexible, arises from patriarchal social relations, and maintains women's subordinate roles within the household and community.

Within India, capitalist penetration of the traditional lace-making industry, alongside the impoverishment and unemployment of rural laborers as a result of capitalist agricultural production, are viewed by Mies (1982) as systems that have operated jointly to deeply weaken women's economic status positions. Women's undertaking of lace-making for export production in Narsapur, Mies suggests, has been driven by the polarization of wealth visited upon the Indian countryside through capitalist farming, which left many men and women "pauperized" and landless, and requiring some other source of income besides the traditional sources of subsistence from farming. Under the capitalist system of outsourcing textile-production labor to poor women's living rooms, women's work is 'pushed underground' and is not even recognized as work. Due to their poverty and relatively secluded position in the household, the lace-makers are placed into a position so subordinate that they are willing to accept extremely low wages and to work under inadequate conditions for very long hours. Thus, Mies (1982:173) concludes:

"The pauperization of peasants provides the lace exporters in Narsapur with an almost unlimited reservoir of very cheap female labour. The women of the poor peasant and agricultural labourer households have to take to lace making to supplement their husbands' insufficient income. As they are defined as housewives, this production does not upset the patriarchal reproduction relations within the family and it prevents the women, at the same time, from demanding a just wage."

The status of the lace-makers, like other women employed within their homes in export-oriented production that pays low wages by the piece rate, we see how the introduction of capitalist relations, coupled with existing patriarchal social systems, might act to confine women in toiling labor that offers little opportunity for advancement, economic power, or 'autonomy.' Thus, the principles that are lauded and thought to accompany women's labor force participation often do not materialize, and while women's labor may generate money income necessary for household survival, her status position vis-à-vis men in the household, and her class position as an impoverished laborer in the wider society, are not altered.

2.6 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to provide an organizational framework for the body of theoretical and empirical works exploring the determinants of economic status differentials between men and women, and gender inequalities in economic roles and participation. Delineating categories of explanation is a difficult task given that most approaches to understanding gender inequality—cultural, social-structural, evolutionary—are not mutually-exclusive, but rather feature complex and multifaceted explanations. As Deere and Leon de Leal note (1981:339), even in those contexts where cultural features are strongly implicated in women's subordinate socioeconomic status positions, 'the variation in the sexual division of labor over time and across classes suggests that the division of labor by sex in productive activities is not just culturally determined, but is itself responsive to material conditions of production.'

By way of an introduction to a study of men's and women's economic roles in Viet Nam, the literature encapsulated in this review, I believe, suggests the ways that cultural systems, social-institutional contexts, and processes of economic development and transition each, in turn and in tandem, operate to shape the obstacles and opportunities that men and women encounter as they participate in economic activities.

Chapter 3: Gender and Economic Participation in Contemporary Viet Nam: Patterns of Change and Continuity in Women's and Men's Social and Economic Roles

"If you have a son, you can say you have a descendent. But you cannot say so if you have even 10 daughters"

--Vietnamese folk proverb

"You dress in your best gowns and loaf around, while I have to soak in sweat working in the paddy." --Wife to her husband as spoken in a Vietnamese folk song.

*A woman should be polite and proper,
Be sure to observe the Three Bonds.
Though you share the same mat, the same bed with him,
Treat your husband as you would treat your king or your father.
As a subject be loyal, as a daughter be filially pious,
As a wife strive to build a relationship based on respect.
Do not take pride in money,
Do not become conceited because you are smart or clever.
The way to be a good concubine or wife is to obey
Just as the way to be a man is to worship one's king as one's father.
-- from 'The Song of Family Education,' by a 15th c. mandarin*

"If women are not free, half of the nation is not free."

--Ho Chi Minh

3.1 Chapter Introduction

The passages above, drawn from diverse sources of Vietnamese cultural life, depict the contradictions and struggles that arise in defining gender roles for economic and social participation, struggles that emanate from the rural village, to the circles of elite intelligentsia, to the highest seats of government. Viet Nam scholars have commented on an apparent distance separating actual social relationships and practices and ideological principles—especially those defining proper roles for women. Jamieson (1993:18) notes:

"The role of women was a source of tension in society. There was often a grating disjuncture between ideological ideals and sociological reality. Vietnamese myth, legend, and history are filled with stories of strong, intelligent, and decisive women. In

all but the uppermost strata of society, men and women worked side by side. Women performed many arduous physical tasks, ran small businesses, and were skilled artisans. Yet ideologically...women were subordinate to men in the nature of things. Like children and younger brothers, they were supposed to be submissive, supportive, compliant toward their husbands. Husbands were supposed to teach and control their wives as they did their younger brothers and their children."

In this chapter I provide a brief overview of changes in Vietnamese economic and social institutions that have occurred over the 20th century and the implications that these changes have had for men's and women's orientations to economic activity. I also incorporate statements on traditional Confucian philosophy and modern ideological perspectives on gender that emanate from socialist doctrine and feminist circles, and their place in processes of socialization and efforts to define the proper domains of men and women. While brief and selective, the intent of this overview is to elucidate the macro-social contexts and ideological frameworks, including those that occur through social policies and institutional frameworks, that influence men's and women's economic activities in the late 20th century. I have consulted a diverse body of literature in the social sciences and humanities, written by both Vietnamese and Western scholars, which I believe is relevant to understanding current approaches to economic activity in the Red River Delta. Because numerous scholars assert that women face particularly disadvantaged positions in the workplace and in household economic production, I will trace several lines of reasoning that link women's status positions to patriarchal social relations and shifting demands for women's labor across the wartime, collective and market reform periods, as well as cultural and ideological systems that foster stereotypes and differential role obligations.

I begin the chapter with a general overview of geographic and demographic characteristics for the region, followed by a brief elaboration of recent historical changes, including a discussion of the Socialist collective period and nascent period of market economic reforms. In the subsequent sections I review research on the institution of the Vietnamese family

and how notions of filial piety, patrilineal descent, and obligations to family in the traditional and modern periods have structured men's and women's economic opportunities and prescribed the social and economic roles that they undertake. In the next section I elaborate upon gendered roles and social class divisions in social reproduction and economic production activities, focusing upon continuity and change in these roles and divisions over the collective and market reform periods. I focus attention upon how the shift to socialist production, while it increased their participation in economic life, actually yielded limited gains for women's 'emancipation.' Furthermore, several of the chapter sections address the major tenets of Confucianism and Marxist-Leninist philosophy and how these worldviews have served to shape social life, family relationships and men's and women's positions in Vietnamese society, as well as public policies aimed toward reshaping the role of the family in society and gender roles within the family.

3.2 Physical Geography and Climate and their Relationship to Social Organization in Northern Viet Nam

Often conceived of as the cultural crossroads of East Asian and Southeast Asian societies, Viet Nam bears both striking resemblances and remarkable differences compared to other nations in the region, both Southeast Asian and Sinitic cultural traditions (Reid 1988, Chandler et al. 1987). Among the commonalities, quite salient to the organization of social relationships and economic activity in the region, are the physical and climatic environments that prevail in the region. In general, Viet Nam and its Southeast Asian neighbors are characterized by the following features: agricultural production in the form of either slash-and-burn or wet-paddy (i.e., swidden and sawah) rice cultivation; mountain ridges, river valleys and deltas as geographic features delineating fertile niches and less fertile periphery areas; ecological fragility and the monsoons as defining features of a marked, life-defining seasonality. These aspects of physical environment and climate suggest that, "the relationship of land to people, the general ecological balance, and

the margin of surplus have ordered many of the priorities by which Southeast Asians live their lives (Chandler et al., 1987, p. 3).

In terms of basic demographic features, Viet Nam is currently the 17th most populous nation in the world. With a population of approximately 79 million persons and land area of 329,560 square kilometers (i.e., slightly larger than the state of New Mexico), Viet Nam is a densely populated nation, a demographic feature which has impacted social organization, economic activity, especially agricultural practices, and even government policy on issues such as population resettlement and family planning (United Nations 1999). Geographically, the country is divided into 7 distinct regions (See Figure 3.1). These regions vary in their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Summary data from the World Bank's Vietnam Living Standards Survey (VLSS) provides an overview of regional differences that capture the social and economic landscape of Viet Nam (See Table 3.1). Important regional patterns include the sizeable variations in population density, labor market structure and economic well-being, which derive in part from stark differences in physical and climatic conditions across regions, as well as different historical trajectories pertaining to military conflict and economic development. Nationally, agriculture employs the majority of workers. The most diversified and industrialized economies are observed in the Mekong Delta and Southeast regions, whereas agriculture is most predominant in the Northern and Central Uplands regions. The Southeast region scores highest on socioeconomic indicators (such as poverty incidence and stunting among children), whereas the North Central coast region demonstrates the greatest degree of socioeconomic deprivation. While indicators suggest intermediate levels of socioeconomic well-being, at least three features stand out in the Red River Delta region—its high levels of literacy, very densely settled populations (even in rural areas), and relatively low standard of living compared to most of southern Viet Nam.

At the present time, approximately three-quarters of the Vietnamese population reside in rural areas. Within predominantly rural areas like the Red River Delta, large proportions of the population perform some role in the cultivation of wet-rice agriculture, rice being the staple food and a principal export for the country. Although Viet Nam has emerged as the world's third largest exporter of rice since the mid 1990s, many Red River Delta families continue to face acute food shortages, especially when beset by a season of severe climatic variation, pestilence, or other environmental difficulties. Following cultivation practices in the Red River Delta, the production of rice is largely accomplished as a result of an extremely labor-intensive process featuring very specialized tasks, limited technological inputs, and marked seasonal variation in the demand for labor. The channeling of rivers and streams via the lengthy dike system that has been constructed through the Red River Delta, along with intensive labor inputs, allow for the cultivation of two to three crops of rice each year. Viet Nam is one of few nations in the world whose density of settlement, climatic conditions, and labor force has enabled such intensive cultivation of the land. In a process akin to the 'agricultural involution' Geertz (1970) describes in his study of Indonesian agricultural production, in which peasants invested intense amounts of labor to heighten outputs on small plots of land, productivity in the Red River Delta is increased through a process of seedling transplantation and careful tending of rice fields throughout multiple growth seasons. Agricultural families often possess relatively small plots of land, yet the rice they cultivate, in addition to cultivating garden vegetables and rearing small livestock, provides for much of the family's own consumption needs and minimal amounts of surplus for sale on the market.

In his classic study of peasant life in the Tonkin Delta, prior to the onset of socialist revolution and collectivization of agricultural land, Gourou (1955) pointed out that the long-established population density and near 'demographic saturation' of peasant communities marked

the area as unique in the region, and lent great resemblance to rural Chinese settlement patterns. Also resembling Sinitic development patterns were the extensive network of dikes and canals for the regulation of rainwater in the region. The elaborate irrigation system is one element of infrastructure and social organization that allowed for intense cultivation, crop rotation and high population densities. However, while crop-devastating floods have been prevented through the peasants' innovative solutions to hydraulic problems, up to the present time most peasants have persisted only by performing long hours of labor-intensive agricultural production and barely eking out subsistence-level incomes. Due to the small size of many peasant landholdings in the *doi moi* era, and the predominance of production for own consumption, Gourou's observations from the 1930s are akin to contemporary conditions in remote areas of the Delta, in which the peasant economy features, "agriculture of subsistence which is limited to feeding those who practise it" (Gourou 1955: 108). These conditions of high population density, and the pressure to eke out subsistence-level harvests from small plots of land, are echoed in Scott's (1979) depiction of agriculturalists in the Tonkin Delta during the colonial period of the 1910s to 1930s. Scott describes northerners as relatively impoverished and having less secure food supplies than their counterparts in the southern region of Viet Nam (then known as Cochinchina). These divergent subsistence conditions, and the fact that the Mekong Delta has much more abundant land relative to its population base, are among the foundations of regional income equalities that persist in the contemporary period.

In the Red River Delta, even at the close of the 20th century, rural populations adopt practices akin to those delineated by Boserup (1981:121) in her description of 19th century European peasants attempting to meet subsistence and consumption needs in the industrializing context. That is, efforts are made to "intensify agriculture and use the off-season of one labor-intensive crop to work on another, and they could intensify they system of agricultural husbandry.

Or some of the family members could work in the new factories or on the farms with ‘put-out’ work from the new factories, while the remaining family members did the agricultural work.”

The organization of agricultural work in the context of high population density, coupled with rising levels of male out-migration from the Red River Delta, imposes difficult working conditions upon the local population, in particular women who constitute the majority of the agricultural labor force. A recent study conducted by Le Thi Nham Tuyet and colleagues at the Research Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development (Le Thi Nham Tuyet 1996) illustrates how the challenges of agricultural production in a context of population density has been heightened through the socialist approach to land re-allocation (a result of the 1988 Land Law), and the seasonal labor migration of male workers. Summarizing their findings from survey, focus group and interview research conducted among women in nine communes of the Delta, they conclude:

“The reason for the fragmentation of land into small plots is to pursue socioeconomic equality between households [by distributing land not only according to total area, but also its degree of risk for flooding and its soil quality], but this equity principle asks a heavy toll from women as their workload increases in a considerable way... The division of labor is changing and the workload of women in agricultural production is increasing to unacceptable dimensions in the Red River Delta. The important determining aspects are: the land allocation policy; seasonal labor migration of men; and, the impact of floods, draughts, and poor irrigation and drainage infrastructure” (Le Thi Nham Tuyet 1996:v).

This work illustrates how women’s status and economic positions in the Red River Delta have been marginalized through a combination of environmental and infrastructure conditions (e.g., small plots of land and reliance upon limited means of irrigation and transportation); altered labor practices to enhance participation and competition in the market economy (e.g., use of pesticides to increase yields, seasonal male labor migration); and the persistence of traditional gender ideologies that devalue women’s work yet holds them accountable for nearly all agricultural production and social reproduction tasks. Observing that approximately 50% of

households in the nine communes that they studied had men who migrated on a long term basis to earn cash, while women tended to specialize in the subsistence economy, Le and her colleagues suggest that a process of agricultural feminization and intensification of women's labor participation is underway. Economic hardship deriving from insufficient agricultural production drives this division of labor and expansion of economic activity beyond the rural village. Where economic conditions are especially difficult and normative definitions are accommodating, large numbers of women, too, have become labor migrants. Le Thi Nham Tuyet (1996:39) thus notes:

“The main motive to migrate is that the peasant households urgently need cash which cannot come from selling of rice, as many families (approximately 55%) in the Red River Delta face a rice shortage. Agricultural inputs, land and water taxes, fees, education, installments on debts have to be paid in cash. The gender specialized character of the seasonal migration might be related to Confucian notions that women should stay at home and the actual practice that, in fact, men are more redundant in view of the division of labor than women. However, in some districts there is a tradition that mostly women migrate to work in Hanoi.”

The relatively newfound, spontaneous mobility of rural populations and heightened difficulties met by families in making a living solely through agricultural production has the potential to unsettle deeply held ideologies concerning the gender division of labor and men's and women's roles in economic production. I intend to explore these dynamics in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

3.3 Viet Nam in the Twentieth Century—From Colony to Market Economy

At the beginning of the 20th century northern Viet Nam, then “Tonkin,” the northern-most protectorate of French Indochina, was experiencing its third decade of colonial rule. During this time most peasants of the Red River Delta were laboring as wet-rice agricultural workers, their success in struggles to meet subsistence needs varied according to the occurrence of climatic disturbances and natural disasters, shifting household composition (i.e., the number of mouths to feed), and perhaps most profoundly, by landlords' demands for payment of taxes and rents on

their lands. That certain sources site the Vietnamese as the most heavily taxed peoples in the colonial world (an assertion that continues to be debated) speaks to the economic hardship and level of colonial exploitation faced by Vietnamese workers in the region (see for example Asean Focus Group 2002). Scott's (1976) study of the Vietnamese peasant during the early 20th century demonstrates that subsistence crises were not rare occurrences, despite peasants' 'self-exploitative' labor practices, in which all family members practically exhausted their own labor energies by combining agricultural work with economic sidelines in handicrafts, marketing and other activities, so as to 'keep their heads above water.' The harsh working conditions and threats to workers' survival faced by Vietnamese who labored on the various plantations cultivating rubber trees and other cash crops, and as miners of tin and coal, were uniquely difficult because many workers, among them many migrant and indentured workers, experienced unhealthy working conditions, brutal treatment by plantation owners and staff, and extensive physical separation from family and village (see for example Marr, 1985).

The peasant rebellions against French labor and taxation policies that punctuated the Vietnamese countryside during the early decades of the 20th century were among the events fomenting revolutionary social movements that eventually swept Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh into power, contributing to their defeat of French forces at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 and eventual formation of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam (DRV) as an independent, though disputed, political entity (for a more complete review of the Viet Minh's rise to power and role of Ho Chi Minh see Duiker 1995, 1996). The Viet Minh's ability to seize power initially in northern Viet Nam was achieved not only through revolutionary organizing both in Viet Nam and from centers of communist organizing abroad, but also due to the timely collapse of vichy France at the end of World War II and the subsequent decimation of Japanese military presence in Southeast Asia following Japanese surrender in 1945. The toehold that the Viet Minh established in northern

Viet Nam was retaken by the French colonial powers, setting into motion nine additional years of Vietnamese anti-French resistance. The exploitation of Vietnamese land and labor had reached unprecedented levels during the final years of World War II, when Japanese occupying forces confiscated rice and overtook croplands to plant jute and other nonfood crops to support the war effort. The resulting famine killed an estimated 2 million Vietnamese, and fueled support of the Viet Minh nationalist movement (SarDesai 1992). It was during these formative years of Vietnamese socialism that women began to assume important roles in the nationalist and socialist movement fronted by Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh.

An accurate, detailed account of the ways the American war impacted, and continues to impact, the lives of Vietnamese living in the Red River Delta is beyond the scope of this paper. It is an understatement to note that during the war the Red River Delta economy was devastated through loss of life, destruction of infrastructure, military mobilization that left women, children and elderly people to maintain village and household production, and displacement of refugees from centers of population to avert death in the U.S. bombings. In subsequent portions of this chapter I discuss in greater detail the ways that women engaged in the war effort, both in terms of economic activity and more direct participation in commando and combat units. In addition to the socialist organization of production that was unleashed on the northern provinces in the 1950s, and the rise in women's school attendance and literacy that followed the DRV's education reforms, the demands of war served to upset traditional lines of division between men's and women's domains of activity. Rather than to celebrate women's gains during this period, it is important to recognize that the war most often devastated families through casualties and separation, and many families in the Red River Delta continue to feel the damage of war—war widows struggling to make ends meet, young men and women raising children affected by Agent Orange and other chemical defoliants with little if any support from governmental or non-

governmental organizations. Accounts of women whom I interviewed in the Red River Delta provinces elaborate upon personal experiences during and after the war; they also point to the fleeting, limited nature of the 'gains' women experienced in their working lives during the wartime era.

For instance, Ms. Phuong, a 47-year old mother with three grown children recounts that she left school at the age of 15, after having completed only seven grades of schooling. Given the healthy demand for women's labor in the late 1960s, Phuong and many of her young women friends were able to enter teaching and childcare positions—they even left school early in response to the exciting jobs that could be found in local kindergartens and nursery schools

"My parents wanted me to continue studying, but I did not want to because I wanted to be with friends who went to teach at the kindergarten, I did not want to go to school. My family's condition was poor, and it was wartime, so many people had difficult conditions. Now I feel sorry that I did not continue schooling in order to get a good profession."

At age 20 Ms. Phuong married a local man who served in the army for many years, including during the years that she gave birth to her first two children. His absence, coupled with her elder kin's ailing health conditions, placed her in a difficult circumstance. She was able to place her first child in the kindergarten and persist in her teaching work. When her other children were born, though, her parents-in-law and father had already died, leaving her without adequate childcare at home. Thus, Ms. Phuong explains, she had to give up her teaching work in the public sector and turn to family agricultural labor. Asked why her husband couldn't help during difficult times, she responded:

"Because he was in the army. Sometimes, he was away for 2 years [at a time, without returning home]. I had the first child in 1976 when my parents were still healthy. My mother-in-law died in 1979, then my father-in-law died in 1980. My father died in 1981. I had the second child in 1982. Therefore, I had to quit teaching to do agriculture work and take care of the children."

Rather than obtaining any sort of ‘liberated’ way of living as a result of working a public position as a teacher, or any modicum of autonomy due to her husband’s absence, Ms. Phuong describes the severe demands placed upon her time and energy due to the fact that she was responsible for running the household and caring for her husband’s family during his extended absence. The demands of caring for family drew Phuong back into family-based labor and she would have to give up her salaried teaching job in order to care for her children. Having returned to the household, she labored at numerous tasks in an attempt to raise enough money to feed the family, and to manage difficult financial situations, such as paying for her mother-in-law’s funeral with no contribution from her husband’s income. Ms. Phuong’s husband did not send money home to the family at any time while he was away serving in the army (she suggests that this is because he had no money to send).

Another woman, Ms. Van Anh of Ninh Binh town, born in 1943 and presently retired from her public sector job in the communications branch and operating a small rice-vermicelli restaurant out of her house, also recounted the challenging work that she performed during the war years, work that began during her teenage years:

“The time when I still lived at [my parents’] home I studied and worked in the fields, then, when I was an adolescent, I also went to work heaping earth and making preparations [for the war]. At that time when I was only an adolescent things were certainly very difficult here. At the time I went to work for the government office I worked following requirements, if work assignments required that I work then I worked, if it was urgent then I worked urgently. But at the time the war was going on the children were still small so it was more difficult then. The branch for building bridges and roads in places was very long it was for 4 or 5 months in a place and again it changed. When the children were small we did not have housing, we lived in a people’s boarding house.”

In her work pouring asphalt to construct and repair roads, Ms. Van Anh encountered great physical dangers--her own sister was killed while working on a similar type of work brigade.

Relying on the childcare provided by her mother and commune nursery schools, Ms. Van Anh’s

mothering duties subsided for a time and she was able to persist in performing very difficult and dangerous work for several years:

“At the time I was working only in the Ninh Binh area. It was very difficult then, when going to work we had leap over and go down into trenches [made from cellars]. The bombings were everywhere so that when I had to go to do repairs, there were times that they [the planes] would come and make bomb strikes while I was working. I also lost one sister who was sacrificed in the war.”

Ms. Van Anh’s account, in which she conveys that road construction during a period of heavy aerial bombing was deemed a form of work befitting a mother of two young children, demonstrates the seeming absence of gendered boundaries in work activity during the height of the American war. The demand for women’s labor in this instance appears to have lent a practically complete suspension of any traditional notion that a woman’s proper position is within the household, performing the duties of mother and wife.

The victory of the DRV and reunification of the country under the flag of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (SRVN) saw the expansion of collective production, central-planning and redistributive economy to diverse regions of the country and its intensification in the Red River Delta. Under the DRV system state monopoly in allocation of resources to industry and agriculture, and the organization of labor into industrial and agricultural cooperatives, were designed to meet production targets so as to make compulsory deliveries of goods to the state (de Vylder and Fforde, 1988; Marr, 1991). Economic activity no longer followed individual incentive and household organization, a factor that several commentators (see for example, Houtart and Lemercinier 1984) have pointed out, contributed to ‘foot-dragging,’ misuse of production materials (e.g., overuse and mistreatment of water buffaloes as draft animals), and other practices that jeopardized productivity. Labor, instead, was directed according to a central plan in which workers were organized into brigades and paid through a work-point system (Liljestrom et al., 1998; Fforde, 1994). While the essence of Viet Nam’s DRV model was Soviet-

style central planning emphasizing rapid industrialization, collectivization of agriculture, and central control of the entire economy (Ronnas and Sjoberg, 1991), local and provincial authorities often managed state enterprises, a large informal sector flourished throughout the country (particularly in the South after 1975), and a wartime command economy took hold for substantial periods of time (not only during the American war, but also during conflicts with Cambodia and China through the 1980s). Despite the pronouncements of central planning and related efforts to centralize the means of production under state control, a significant undercurrent of private market activity and non-collectivized agriculture persisted in both the North and the South of Vietnam ever since the DRV model was initiated (East Asian Analytic Unit 1997). A combination of factors kept the SRVN one of the world's poorest countries and in a state of chronic food shortage through the mid 1980s. A punishing U.S. economic embargo, rising inflation, the withdrawal of Soviet aid in unison with that country's economic decline, and low agricultural productivity each visited difficulties upon the fledgling socialist economy. The many black and "grey" market activities that came into existence under the collectivized system, acted both as partial causes and consequences of the failing redistributive system. However, these markets of semi-legality were heavily policed, critiqued, and weakly developed (Ronnas and Sjoberg, 1991), and thus the transaction costs of exploring market participation were high and most opted to "carry out their socialist duty," and operate within the legitimized, legal framework of state-owned enterprises and collectives, or joined the ranks of underemployed agricultural workers (Fforde, p. 3, 1994; Ronnas and Sjoberg, 1991). Nonetheless, substantial black and gray market activities contributed to further economic disturbances, and to the seeds of economic transition, as "commercial relations conducted 'under the counter' produced a wide gap between official state prices and prices paid on the 'free' or 'black market'" (Fforde, 1991, p. 103). "Fence- breaking" economic activities (in Vietnamese '*pha rao*') appeared through the 1970s and

1980s, in which individually-initiated economic action conducted outside the boundaries of official legitimacy and centrally-planned structures, brought Viet Nam to the forefront of economic reform; as a result, spontaneous, “bottom-up” innovations are credited as playing a crucial role in Viet Nam’s move toward economic liberalization (Bryant, 1998; de Vylder and Fforde, 1988; Fforde, 1994).

In subsequent discussions I elaborate upon the ideological underpinnings of several policies implemented by the Communist Party during the collective era. By way of introduction, it is suffice to say that the socialist government and its functionaries are praised by many feminist- and Marxist-minded scholars who perceived the work-point system, the nationwide establishment of policies and organizations supportive of women’s (especially mothers’) economic participation, and other measures as effective measures that minimized pre-existing social class and gender disparities in Vietnamese society (see, for example, Tran and Le 2000). Other scholars, especially those writing in the more recent period and thus possessing hindsight and scholarly distance to observe the initial economic changes with greater skepticism and more in-depth, systematic empirical data, are more critical in their assessments of Communist Party ideological frameworks and institutional reforms. Certain scholars, such as Ireson (1996), Croll (1981) and Pham Van Bich (2000) have commented upon the distinction and distance between ideological statements and the actual implementation of policies and lived experiences of men and women in the home, the workplace, and other social institutions under socialism. Croll (1981) notes that a common experience among socialist states including both the former U.S.S.R. and China is the persistent position of women in lower paid jobs on the agricultural collectives. This is because, Croll (1981:365) adds, “the jobs accorded to women were rated according to physical strength, skills, or experience required, they tend to be evaluated toward the lower end of the remuneration scales.” Several authors point to the remnants of gender stratification in labor

allocation and remuneration for work activities that persisted into the collective period, and the heightened workload that certain women faced when they were ‘emancipated’ through their work in the public sphere but remained heavily burdened by their responsibility for performing social reproduction duties (See for example, Wiegersma 1988 and White 1989).

The most recent period in Viet Nam’s process of economic transition was initiated by the official announcement of *doi moi* (i.e., literal translation: renovation) reforms in 1986. However, previous, piecemeal reforms had been implemented earlier in the 1980s; legislation such as Communist Party Decrees 25 and 100, both announced in 1981, recognized and legitimized production outside the dictates of the command economy and allowed households to engage in ‘output contracts’ in which over-quota production, in family gardens, for example, could be sold for private household gain. Such measures initiated production beyond that generated by the collectives’ work brigades. Each of these measures also yielded significant increases in food output, ameliorating inefficiencies in production management (Liljestrom et al, 1998; Fforde, 1991; de Vylder and Fforde 1988). The 1986 announcement of the *doi moi* reforms at the VI Party Congress essentially legitimized market-oriented activity (under the rubric of ‘market socialism’ or ‘state capitalism’) and made it formal, government policy. It also ushered in more far-reaching reforms, such as the 1988 and 1993 Land Laws, which effectively returned land use and transfer rights to individual households, and thereby reinvested the Vietnamese family household as the primary unit of economic production in both urban centers and the countryside. As the market economy becomes more entrenched in Vietnamese society, and as villagers increasingly look to entrepreneurship, labor migration and other, more ‘modern’ adaptations to poverty and population pressure in the rural areas, important questions arise concerning the persistence and flexibility of institutional forms and traditional ideological belief systems. Liljestrom et al. (1998:128) state the problem in the following terms:

“Whereas both the old rural family and the socialist production units were based on collective obligations, the Western idea about the market rests on an image of ‘an economic man’ who has to be liberated from networks of obligations, of other people as burdens, who limit his self-interest, independence, and individual freedom. An opposite strategy builds on collective self-interest, and in Vietnam it tends to be family interest (and class interest). The threat of poverty lends urgency to mutual obligations...people share annual celebrations of ancestors and recognize a common genealogy; they revive rites, they pay contributions to large, kin-based funds. They want to protect their families and be able to meet the challenges and risks inherent in the market model of modernization. It is debatable whether we are witnessing a momentary revival, or if features of the traditional family will persist.”

One of the themes underlying the core analyses of gender and economic participation in this dissertation is the influence of village and family institutions, and the differential role obligations they prescribe for men and women, upon orientations to economic production activities. Another central theme concerns the implications of the transition from socialism to market economy for women’s economic positions vis-à-vis men. In order to develop these themes more fully I undertake a review of theoretical, exploratory, and empirical works written to discuss the role of the family (both in its ‘traditional’ form and potentially ‘modern’ form) in Vietnamese society.

3.4 The Vietnamese Family and Kinship

The family, conceptualized both in its temporally-situated nuclear form, and as kinship groups and lineages extended across time and space, is an institution of utmost importance in Vietnamese society. Men’s and women’s roles as family members embed them in intricate webs of relationships and obligations that both circumscribe their activities and provide access to resources and external institutions. The words of Le Thi Que (1986:3) capture the centrality of the family in Vietnamese social life:

“if one takes into consideration the fact that the pivotal force of this society was neither a political nor an economic institution, but the institution of the family, then the essential train of the society resides in the preponderant influence of the family in all realms: religious, cultural, and social.”

The family household prevailed as a site of both social reproduction and economic production until the period of socialist collectivization initiated during the 1950s. Up to this time, and during the colonial period, most village households emphasized rice cultivation as a source of subsistence. Not only farmers, but also artisans, craftsmen and merchants, most often operated small-scale shops or farms with a few dependent relatives or apprentices; they did so by relying on their own, very limited, capital (Reid 1988:102) (See Figure 3.2). Le Thi (1996:65) notes that nuclear families still form the backbone in the development of a post-*doi moi*, commodity economy in the countryside; households are “bound to the economy of self-sufficiency,” and most households operate as autonomous, closed units of production, in which the hiring of labor is rare and incorporation into the market economy is very limited.

Certainly the family did not disappear during the collectivist period, although social welfare policies, patterns of migration, and work organizations did strengthen the role of non-familial institutions, reduce women’s performance of social reproduction duties within the domestic sphere, and increase the social distance between family members (especially husbands and wives). The work-point system is one feature of the socialist system that encouraged a movement of women into the public sector of employment where their work was compensated—not by men and elders in the family, but by the state redistribution mechanism. As Croll (1981) and Wiegersma (1988) have noted, women were consistently allocated positions that received relatively low pay compared to men. Nonetheless, these forms of economic participation heightened women’s public participation and substantial numbers of women even undertook leadership roles in workers’ brigades and other public organizations.

SRVN governmental leaders, like those in other state socialist societies, aimed to implement policies that removed social reproduction functions from the household sphere,

following Leninist doctrine (1969) that women's roles might only be redefined through "the transformation of sundry household chores into the great socialist economy." Among the efforts intended to enhance socialist production and minimize boundaries between social classes, and between men and women, was the creation of collective housing units for urban workers in state enterprises and production cooperatives. Living in these residential units, families were usually allocated a one-room space in a large, densely occupied housing block. Facilities for cooking—an activity of social reproduction that serves important functions in uniting the family and defining its boundaries—were collectively shared. However, while the delineation of public and private spaces was de-emphasized, the kitchen still remained the domain of women. Men did not take over women's jobs of cooking and housekeeping during the collective period—often because men's jobs and military service took them far away from their families. What collective housing, coupled with the large number of crèches and kindergartens established during the 1960s and 1970s, did accomplish was a minimization of many of women's social reproduction activities. Because the size of living spaces was reduced, and because many working mothers lived apart from their husbands and in-laws who would have demanded greater time and labor efforts, women were able to focus more attention on economic production. Childcare was often subsidized and subsumed by the state sector in both urban and rural areas; however, women took over at the end of the working day, and again their husbands were often absent. Even during their lunch-hour breaks, women would return home to manage household duties, feed and nurse their children, and then return to their job at a designated time with little time for respite in-between.

During the collective period it was also a common experience for husbands and wives to live separately—mostly due to the involvement of men in massive military mobilization efforts. As such, the 'incomplete' family became normative, and women grew accustomed to raising their children on their own, or more accurately, with the assistance of female kin and female civil

servants. Less a consequence of socialist production than the massive social upheaval brought on by the American war, the socialist era (1954-1986) did make the experience of familial separation commonplace, thereby weakening the ability of family members to unite in economic production and social reproduction efforts. Men's leaving their home villages, wives, and children to maintain the family household, in order to make a living, became an accepted feature of life during the collective period. Husbands' absence was frequently viewed as form of sacrifice for country and family—a perspective that is shared in the contemporary period among family members separated due to labor migration and various hardships. Many women I interviewed commented that their husbands were away for extensive periods of time—4 years, 6 years, even longer—and they took care of their children and in-laws with little or no assistance from the absent spouse. Visits tended to be infrequent and short, making fathers both emotionally and physically distant from their wives. Young soldiers often were not able to travel home when their children were born. The experiences of these women, and their reflections on their husbands' being absent for extensive periods of their children's lives, suggest a resignation and acceptance of family separation as a way to improve the family's economic well-being.

The family did remain an important institution and unit of economic organization over time, and increasingly so in the *doi moi* period. However, the 'hand-to-mouth' subsistence ethic that motivated many peasants' economic strategies during the colonial period, and continues to operate in particularly impoverished areas, has not ruled out reliance upon social institutions external to the nuclear family. Labor exchanges among extended kin and neighbors, rotating credit associations and mutual aid societies formed among friends, veterans' groups and women's groups, are just a few examples of social groups external to the family that have assisted family survival since the colonial period and into the modern era (Pham Van Bich 1999:14). Several aspects of the modern period, such as an underdeveloped market for credit and the rising

incidence of families disrupted by labor migration have induced conditions likely to increase families' reliance upon cooperative, nonfamilial arrangements to guarantee welfare, provide labor, and issue loans. My own observations and inquiries among residents of the Red River Delta demonstrate that nonfamilial, cooperative arrangements, such as reliance upon neighbors to exchange labor, and utilization of machinery owned by the village or private individuals to process harvested rice, assist in economic production processes (See Figure 3.3). These are functions that often were performed by agricultural cooperatives during the socialist period. Still, most families operate largely as self-contained economic units; efforts to pool labor, make loans, and make decisions concerning investment and diversification of production are largely accomplished by drawing upon other family members. The substantial majority of workers who report being self-employed or employed in a family business (i.e., 78% of employed persons in the World Bank's VLSS sample) demonstrates that the family household continues to permeate and direct most production relations, both in urban and rural locations. In general, the institution of the family in Viet Nam has operated alongside other village and state institutions to assist households in managing economic difficulties, from making loans to providing labor assistance in times of shortage.

Pham Van Bich (1999:18) uses the term "collective community" to define a central feature of the traditional family in the Red River Delta. By this, he indicates that,

"the hazardous natural environment and the often uncertain social [conditions] demanded the subordination of the individual to the collective discipline of the family... The collective community was highlighted by the absolutely dominant influence of the family as a whole vis-à-vis every one of its component members. The individual was not an independent entity; there was no individual in the Western sense, and certainly no free individual. Every facet of life was bound up with the family, to which a person owed complete allegiance."

One result of this communality over individuality ethic is the strong sense of solidarity and social obligation it fostered; "the family members would help one another in times of need and adopt a

united front vis-à-vis the outside world, whatever their internal differences might be (Pham Van Bich 1999:18).” The solidarity with family, both living members and deceased ancestors, is said to influence orientations to social and economic life. Pham notes that in the face of natural disasters, economic crises, and increasing population pressure in the village, the unemployed would at times refuse to move and uproot themselves to search for a job, and young people looked, often in vain, for work in their densely populated homelands (Pham Van Bich 1999:20). Attachments to family and village also were reinforced by the near impossibility of seeking, without state direction and permission, employment in urban centers and strict enforcement of the household registration (*ho khou*) system, which outlawed labor migration except in very unique circumstances. As mentioned earlier, men who joined the army have had an outlet for departing the home village and domestic realm. While some men may have departed reluctantly, their social participation widened their social networks beyond family and village and encouraged autonomy and an outward-looking orientation to the social world (see Vu 1991, for elaboration on men’s more outwardly-focused orientations).

Although the collective community of the family had the potential to provide a buffer against the vagaries of economic transition, natural disaster, and other external shocks to the family, in the lives of many individuals, disproportionately women, the communal nature of the household, and the requirements of filial loyalty and family sacrifice, constrained economic activity. This is particularly true among those aspiring to undertake work efforts in environments far from home, yet who feel obliged to remain near the home village (*nha que*) and provide care for elder family members. On the other hand, the desire to enrich the family by diversifying sources of income, even though this may entail traveling far from home, may also be legitimated by appeals to the collective community ideal. In describing their decisions to remain near their birth families, or to turn toward the household of their husband’s family, many women whom I

spoke with alluded to obligations to family, or to comforts and rewards derived from working close to their homes. One woman, 44 year-old Ms. Quy, who occasionally travels to Ha Noi to work as a scrap collector, harkened back to an earlier time when women were able to locate occupational sidelines in the village and did not have to depart the village:

"If the work of weaving sedgemats were to return we would rather stay at home and do that sort of work. Going away to work [in Ha Noi] is just the sine qua non condition. We prefer to stay at home, keep in close touch with the children, and fully grasp and efficiently handle family affairs. We go out to work with our mind not at peace but the fact is that we have to go."

A traditional system of patrilineal descent has created a pattern of residence and settlement among Vietnamese in which young men are most likely to maintain close residential ties to their birth parents, while young women tend to lessen ties to their birth families and take up residence in their husbands' homelands and households. Modernization has brought some changes to traditional manifestations of the patrilineal lineage system, in particular the rising prevalence of neolocal residence that began in the collective period and continues now that employment opportunities outside of family agriculture are more widely sought. However, the tendency of young women to be somewhat uprooted from their families, and hence their relatively established roles in family economic production activities, continues for many rural women. Young women are systematically placed in the situation of being relative outsiders in in-law family settings that are potentially tense, and which present challenging trials and re-socialization to the daughter-in-law role. Furthermore, Vietnamese women's lives have been sharply delimited by their marital status—"spinsterhood" remains a status feared and looked down upon, and divorce, while very infrequent, is most often a penalty visited upon women who are infertile, 'disobedient,' or who have disappointed husbands and in-laws in other ways (Frenier and Mancini 1996:24; Le Thi 1995). In a few rare cases, divorce or separation is simply a *de*

facto status for women whose husbands departed for work and subsequently abandoned them and their children.

Perhaps a more fundamental female disadvantage emerging from the patrilineal system of lineage is that daughters are frequently treated differently than sons, as ‘flying ducks’ in the words of one folk proverb, because they will one day leave their birth family and join another. As a result, investing in developing a daughter’s abilities and human capital has been regarded as a relatively unprofitable investment since she will eventually become ‘someone else’s child’ (Pham Van Bich 1999:29). For many reasons, the system of patrilineal descent fosters a preference for sons that may yield demoralizing, if not damaging, consequences for young women relative to young men. Several social scientists have noted that although socialist laws on marriage and family proscribe a two-child family, there remains a widely shared preference for couples to give birth to at least one son in order to perpetuate the family lineage and better guarantee old age social support. Not only do couples state their hopes for a son in the moments prior to a delivery (Vu 1991), they also exhibit systematic childbearing patterns that reveal the behavioral manifestations of son preference. Specifically, and despite the threat of monetary sanctions¹, many families in the Red River Delta continue to bear more than two children, often in an attempt to meet the moral and societal ideal of bearing a son to perpetuate the lineage. Haughton and Haughton (1995) analyze data from the 1992 Vietnam Living Standards Survey (VNLSS) to demonstrate that the fertility patterns of Vietnamese couples are consistent with attitudes strongly supportive of son preference. Specifically, they observe that couples exhibit a lesser hazard for additional births, beyond the legally allowed two children, if they have already

¹ While fertility control has been an issue since the early 1960s, it was in 1978 that Decree 29 was issued, vigorously advocating family planning and stipulating that families should have no more than two children, appropriately spaced, and that women should not give birth until age 22. Penalties, usually in the form of a one-time payment to the local government (often in the form of rice), vary markedly across jurisdictions.

given birth to a son. They also observe that contraceptive use is more prevalent among married women who have given birth to a son compared to those who have only given birth to a daughter(s) or who have not yet had children.

Many women, particularly those in rural areas, noted that the birth of a son is enthusiastically welcomed, while the birth of a daughter tends to be stoically accepted. This exchange with a rural woman from Xuan Thanh commune, Nam Dinh province, captures the lingering preference for sons, and the deterrent effect that the two-child policy exerts upon additional childbearing:

“--Do you want your son to have one more child if they have two daughters? --We don't allow that. Our daughter-in-law would loose her job if she has more than two children because she works for the State. --What about other families here? Certainly, they continue to give birth [after having two children]. The idea of having both a son and a daughter still exists, this is evident.--Regardless of whether she would loose her job, do you agree that having both a son and a daughter is better than just having daughters?--Yes, having both a son and a daughter is better because after getting married a daughter leaves home and becomes a member of her husband's family. Daughters then belong to husband's family. I still have a preference for having a son. “

It is telling that a strong preference for sons persists in Viet Nam even though women have long been fully engaged in economic participation and have achieved high levels of literacy on par with men. This seeming contradiction demonstrates that defining women's status, and advancements in such status, is fraught with difficulties because women's status is not unidimensional and women have not achieved heightened status consistently across all institutions and settings. In fact, gender roles that emanate from the family may be the most firmly entrenched and resistant to change in the face of economic development and societal modernization. As Jamieson (1993:310) has noted, on the extent to which family forms moved into the background during the years of war and socialist organization:

The penalties to civil servants are more severe, however, including threats to sever employment benefits and smaller salary increases (Goodkind 1995a).

“The family, with its complex network of emotional ties, remained the primary reference in one’s life and held first claim on one’s allegiance”...”All this was changing, but very slowly and at an uneven rate throughout the society. The family proved to be by far the most conservative element in the traditional system. And the mothers and wives—the women of Vietnam, were least exposed to the modernizing, Westernizing, institutionalizing influences. They had significantly less education and even less participation in the structures of society. Few women had exposure to the sources of socialization that inculcated a sense of modern civics, a sense of reciprocal obligations and duties with the larger community in a modernizing nation”

The persistence of son preference is linked to an overarching set of patriarchal social relations that many assert continue to profoundly shape gender roles across diverse settings. Perhaps the greatest ramification of son preference for adult women’s economic participation and employment opportunities lies in the distinct possibility that young men and women will experience differential treatment and differential access to household resources, thereby setting them on unique educational and occupational trajectories. Research by Truong et al. (1998) and Nguyen Lan Phuong (2000) demonstrate that evidence supporting the position that parents exercise preferential resource allocation and treatment of children based on the children’s outcomes is relatively weak for the current period. However, with rising and increasingly disparate expenditures being dedicated to children’s education, differential educational resource allocation across siblings is one realm in which lingering son preference may be detected.

Another aspect of family structure that has attracted considerable attention and debate in recent years is the extent to which Vietnamese couples follow patrilocal residence patterns. Because patrilocality is deemed to be one expression of Confucian sociocultural patterns, and because numerous scholars have pointed to the uniquely subordinate position of young women as daughter-in-laws when they join their husbands’ families, establishing the degree to which patrilocality characterizes Vietnamese living patterns has been a special concern in Vietnamese social science. Research by Hirschman and Vu (1996), conducted in one urban and one rural locale of both northern and southern Viet Nam, demonstrates that only about one-third of couples

ever resided with the husband's family at any point after marrying. However, most couples report having remained in frequent contact with both parents after marriage, a practice that is particularly feasible given that many couples continue to live in their home village after marrying. Hirschman and Vu (1996:249) interpret the low frequency of patrilocal residence as contradictory to expectations for a society with a "Confucian cultural heritage," yet other scholars (see for example, Pham Van Bich 1999) argue more fervently that Confucian ideals concerning filial piety and women's subordinate status in familial, hierarchical relationships are pervasive in Vietnamese society, irrespective of local residential patterns. Hirschman and Vu (1996:248-49) aptly point out that "family ties remain a very strong element of Vietnamese society," and that "the extended family [is seen] as a source of social and emotional support." Other scholars' observations emphasize the double-edge of filial obligations experienced by women, especially daughter-in-laws, irrespective of their household of residence (Pham Van Bich 1999). That is, the social and emotional support demanded by family members, especially by elderly members and in-laws, often maintains women's subordinate status in household relationships, demands greater labor contributions, and returns fewer rewards in the form of household resources.

Hirschman and Vu (1996), along with other social scientists, have noted the flexibility of co-residence patterns in Vietnamese society, suggesting that families formulate strategies they perceive to meet the present configuration of household members' needs—for shelter, economic assistance, childcare, and other necessities. In co-residence arrangements, and even where children reside close to kin, family members are available to provide unpaid labor for services, such as childcare and housework, that otherwise would have to be purchased on the market or provided by the State. As such, given that women already perform a vastly disproportionate share of domestic labor relative to men in Viet Nam, co-residence or living nearby extended kin may significantly heighten the time spent performing obligatory "social reproduction" work.

Women's propensity to work outside the household realm, especially their propensity to become migrant workers, may be hampered through such arrangements. On the other hand, the proximity of mother-in-laws, sister-in-laws and other female kin may enhance a woman's chances of ongoing economic participation, even after giving birth. However, it is important to account for the 'feedback' in this arrangement—that one woman's economic participation is made possible through the unpaid services of female relatives performing 'women's work,' rather than through efforts to achieve greater egalitarianism between husband and wife. Women and men reported that elder daughters, aunts, and most often mothers and mothers-in-law, provided care for children for extensive periods of time, thereby allowed work activity to persist practically uninterrupted. Recalling her own childcare arrangements and the common experience within her village, one woman from Xuan Thanh village noted:

"There was only their grandmother, they stayed at home with her all day long, she came here to look after the kids and returned home in the late evening... There are many cases in this commune, where both the husband and the wife go out to work, the husband works as a cyclo driver or as a motorbike taxi and the wife works as a junk collector, and their children are looked after by their grandparents."

Attempts to characterize Vietnamese society as more or less patrilineal, gender egalitarian, and/or patriarchal relative to the rest of Southeast Asia and China are fraught with difficulties. In part these difficulties stem from applying muddled concepts of women's status to a diverse set of historical, regional, and social class contexts. Another reason that it is difficult to arrive at hard and fast characterizations of the Vietnamese family due to the many counteracting forces, such as high levels of women's economic participation, women's traditional rights to inherit family land, and varying degrees of patrilocal residence and son preference, that shape family relationships of hierarchy and dominance. Haines' conclusion (1984:313) regarding the often contradictory behavioral proscriptions that appeared in the neo-Confucian Le dynasty legal

codes (1428-1788), states a caveat that is advisable for more contemporary attempts to reach an understanding of roles and relative status within more recent institutional arrangements:

“The important questions in assessing Vietnamese society may lie not in the discussion of whether or not Vietnamese society is or is not patrilineal, or is or is not equalitarian, but rather in how enduring and sometimes competing principles of lineality, seniority, and equality together form the underlying dynamic of Vietnamese kinship.”

The centrality of the Vietnamese family to economic production and the resistance of many traditional family features to change, such as preferences for male offspring, are topics of great contention in contemporary Viet Nam. Nonetheless, during the 1990s an official movement has been afoot to conduct research, implement policies and propagate messages with the stated objective of attaining a societal (and market socialist) ideal of ‘family happiness,’ or *gia đình hạnh phúc* (see Figure 3.4). Family happiness is portrayed as deriving from financial security and educational achievements that are accomplished in part through meeting an ideal family form (two children, adequately spaced) and through full economic participation by both parents. However, ‘family happiness’ is an ill-defined concept that arouses numerous ‘unquestioned assumptions’ and ‘unexplored contradictions;’ it is unclear whether promotion of certain family forms (e.g., the two-child family ideal) and relationships will further women’s economic power and elevate their status positions within households, or conversely, will place heightened demands upon women by making them responsible for maintaining Vietnamese family ideals.

3.5. Gender and Work Activity in Recent Vietnamese History

Historically and during the current period, Vietnamese women have participated in economic activities at very high levels. The data presented in Table 3.2 illustrate that by 1994

Vietnamese women had the highest rates of economic participation among women in the region, and they constituted a relatively large share of their nation's labor force. Furthermore, the table illustrates, perhaps surprisingly for a society with relatively low levels of economic development, that Vietnamese women's economic activity rates are significantly higher than those among women in the United States. These figures demonstrate that women are centrally involved in economic activities in Viet Nam; however, they do not delineate the content of women's economic participation, such as the sectors of their employment and the occupational roles they perform. Although economic participation as a route to economic power and social status is emphasized in gender stratification theories (see Blumberg, 1984, for example) the historic position of women workers in Vietnam suggests that while economic participation may elevate their status considerably, within the family, and in economic and political organizations, most women have remained in less influential and relatively inferior roles compared to men.

Because women in Southeast Asia perform vital economic functions, particularly in the cultivation of rice, they possess a substantial degree of economic power. The frequent practice of women managing family finances by holding onto income generated by household members is pointed out as another mode whereby women possess status and exercise economic power within the family (Endres 1999:156). It is important to understand the rationale for such a practice, namely the cultural belief that women are superior as managers of family finances, because in men's hands, money will 'run away,' to use the terminology of one male interviewee. Although this practice does sometimes derive from a belief that women are more responsible and thrifty with household finances, a positively evaluated trait, many men still maintain ultimate control over decision-making on household expenses. Furthermore, many men expressed the view that women could handle the day-to-day management of finances, or 'trifling' things, but that they lacked the forethought and vision to make far-reaching, important decisions about the household

economy and major investments. Although economic participation may bring a modicum of status to women, relative to men, their economic roles tend to be well-delineated and thus contribute to the notion that there exist ‘separate spheres’ of activity that are appropriate for men and women:

“Even the gradual strengthening of the influence of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism in their respective spheres over the last four centuries has by no means eliminated a common pattern of relatively high female autonomy and economic importance... It would be wrong to say that women were equal to men—indeed, there were very few areas in which they competed directly. Women had different functions from men, but these included transplanting and harvesting rice, weaving and marketing” (Reid 1988:146).

Thus, in spite of the widespread, nearly universal, labor force participation on the part of women in Viet Nam, a stark social and gendered division of labor remains, and men’s and women’s economic activities tend to be stratified according to prevailing gender norms. These gender norms prescribe particular economic functions for men and women, functions viewed as consistent with men’s and women’s “nature,” as well as the traditionally male-oriented, hierarchical character of Vietnamese family relations. Asked about gender-appropriate occupations for men and women, the individuals whom I interviewed, while voicing a diversity of opinions, did convey a degree of consistency in their viewpoints. For example, their comments convey widely held opinions that transplanting rice is work for women; that teaching is an occupational ideal for women; that men ought perform physically tasking jobs, as well as the work of political and economic administration. In general, the jobs deemed appropriate for women, mothers in particular, are those that reinforce their position as anchor of the family and domestic care-giver—that is, work that does not take precedent over, but is complementary to, performing maternal roles. Even the comments of a woman doctor, one of the highest status

positions to be attained in the Red River Delta economy, confirmed the position that women's work should be compatible with the mothering role:

"—I believe that, compatible with women's traits, the only job that is suitable is that of teaching. --Why?

--Because with teaching there will be plenty of time to look after the children; it is not like our job [that of being a physician]. Our work is very hard, we have to be on duty, we are also asked to go out, even at night. The weather is so cold and the patients are not able to come to the health station, so we have to go and make housecalls. In general, working in the medical branch is rather hard, it is only possible to have leisure if we work as teachers."

Faced by the relatively lucrative positions opening up through market-oriented activity, especially labor migration, women often do take jobs that place great demands on their time and remove them from the home for long periods of time. Such women may or may not have someone to share the social reproduction work that is seen to be their duty. For those women who do not have husbands present or husbands willing to perform domestic chores, elder relatives or adult children to assist them in domestic work and care-giving, their work load may be especially burdensome.

Prevailing gender norms, while varying in content across rural and urban areas, and between the northern and southern regions of Vietnam, also view household and social reproduction activities as falling primarily into the domain of women. Social scientists such as Pham Van Bich (1999) and Luong Van Hy (1992:69) have described the sharp division of mental labor and manual labor that was practiced in upper class households prior to and during French colonial occupation. Under such arrangements women managed the domestic economy and performed practically every form of household work--rice cultivation, trading and housework, while privileged husbands spent their days in scholarly pursuits and relative leisure. Women

were rather deprived of leisure time, spending the bulk of their waking hours in either fieldwork or market trading. Such arrangements suggest that economic participation, combined with tasks of social reproduction, rather than bringing liberation and autonomy to women, may have actually fixed them more tightly to the household domain. Another consequence is that women, once the hours of social reproduction work have been added to the hours of “full-time” economic activity, have had to work twice as many hours as men. The so-called ‘second shift’ (Hochschild 1989), in which working women undertake large, disproportionate amounts of domestic work after completing their work-days, while not unique to Viet Nam, is perhaps more burdensome, given the labor-intensiveness of tasks, such as preparing food, in developing countries and women’s nearly complete responsibility for performing all domestic work activities.

The gender division of labor in the traditional peasant family, compared to relatively well-to-do families of civil servants or the scholarly class, tended to be more egalitarian because all family members (children included) had to take part in the labor-intensive work of the harvest. However, of the many tasks integrated in the cultivation process, only that of transplanting—perhaps the most time consuming and physically demanding—has continually been viewed as the exclusive domain of women (Nguyen Tu Chi 1991). The consistency of this belief—that transplanting is naturally in the domain of women—persists to the present-time and is not violated without notice. One woman whom I interviewed commented with a degree of dismay that a man, whose wife had departed to work as a scrap collector in Ha Noi, actually worked successfully in transplanting rice in the village. Other women concurred that men could be found helping with the transplanting stage of cultivation, and that young boys were being taught to help with this task. Traditionally, the separate spheres of men and women have carried over into domestic tasks, and even the use of domestic space—young women and children ate separately, and the low status space of the kitchen was reserved for the women of the house and the guests

they received. However, as families take on new forms in attempts to rise to challenges of the new market economic context, prevailing gender divisions may become increasingly obsolete.

Tran (1995: 196) observes that gender roles and historically gendered patterns of economic activity influence contemporary patterns of labor division, occupational choices and opportunities that are available to men and women, even though “gender equality” is upheld by Vietnamese law:

“This division of labor has created a predominant social view about suitable professions for men and women...the Vietnamese consider that housework is not suitable for men. Consequently, an extended list of tasks—caring for and bringing up children, teaching at elementary schools, petit commerce, food preparation, hospital work, services in hotels and restaurants, etc.—are viewed as suitable for women, ‘the weaker sex.’ In contrast, tasks such as bus-driving and police work are considered to be men’s work. Men are also viewed as more suitable to work in ‘heavy’ industry, for example electrical engineering, electronics, architecture and construction. These views have been accepted in Vietnamese society for decades, and these criteria continue to be highly significant in determining men’s and women’s choices of professions. Not many people want to be a ‘gender exception’ in their selection of work. As a consequence, relatively few women are willing to train in ‘male professions’ in colleges and universities’ (196).

Comparing the roles of Vietnamese women and men across history and across social classes, it becomes apparent that prescriptive economic roles for women may be most flexible, and amenable to opportunities on par with men, in times and settings where there is an especially great demand for women’s labor. Although gender normative expectations persist, due to women’s disproportionate responsibility for social reproduction activities, and their historically low levels of education and valuable work experience, women’s movement into non-traditional, male-dominated fields has occurred in numerous instances. For example, it is common to observe women working on road construction crews, as porters hauling heavy loads of rock and dirt, and in other jobs demanding strength and extended periods of separation from the household. The challenge to find work that will assist a household facing economic hardship, in particular

when there is a shortage of work available in the local economy, is one of those instances in which gender work ideals appear to be slackened and individuals, women more so than men, can be seen performing work that is outside the sphere of 'gender appropriate' activity. In particular, where men have left their village homes and thereby produced a labor deficit in the household and rural economy, women may need to undertake a more diverse set of occupational tasks.

So-called "visiting marriages," in which spouses endure extensive periods of geographic separation, have existed for the duration of the 20th century, although their incidence likely declined during the collective period when household registration was strictly enforced (Pham Van Bich 1999). Although migration-induced spousal separation appears with relative frequency among contemporary households in the Red River Delta, rather than being an historical anomaly, this type of population movement occurred during previous periods of colonial occupation and military conflict as well:

"During the hostilities, women in most Vietnamese families became the breadwinners and *de facto* heads of households. At the same time, the share of women in leading positions and social management was considerable, particularly in rural areas. In general, women carried out all forms of labor during the war, including military participation (Tran, 1995, p. 204)."

Such separation from the household also occurred among men who served as industrial workers during the French colonial period, who often moved to the cities alone and left women and children to manage the household economy, supporting them by sending wages home, and occasionally returning home at harvest time or during prolonged labor strikes (Marr 1981:29). For many, spousal separation is viewed as an acceptable, if not normative, form of sacrifice, widely viewed as preferable to close marital relations if it delivers economic benefits to the family (Barry 1996).

Several Vietnamese scholars have emphasized that men and women tend to enjoy more equal status positions and division of labor within poor households than within upper-class households, given that all members of the family are jointly engaged in a struggle for economic survival (see for example, Pham Van Bich 1999). In a sense, only upper class families have the economic wherewithal to realize the behavioral proscriptions of Confucian ethics. It is important, then, to maintain a distinction between the ways of 'gentry,' and 'peasantry,' as Levy (1968:45) emphasizes in his work on Chinese kinship structures, and to recognize that the peasantry, as well as merchants, craftsmen, and other lower status classes did not and could not live in 'gentry style,' or in the style of salaried civil servants, even though many may have longed to live their lives according to upper class mores. Accordingly, we may expect that under conditions of family hardship, brought about by impoverished conditions or spousal absence that brings deficits in family labor, the confines of gender roles were less rigid, and behavior followed ability and availability more closely, rather than obliging conformity to gender stereotypes. This line of reasoning is consistent with theoretical statements on peasant economies and the importance of maximizing the labor contributions of both men and women to bring household income levels in line with subsistence demands.

3.6 Confucian and Traditional Ideological Systems—Their Implications for Gender Roles in northern Viet Nam

Although behavioral prescriptions embodied in Confucian codes of conduct were adhered to most strongly among the learned gentry classes, the infusion of Confucian ideals into Vietnamese beliefs about societal and familial relationships pervaded multiple layers of Vietnamese society. The embodiment of traditional sinic ideals in Vietnamese culture derives

from over ten centuries of Chinese imperial domination and the founding of institutions of learning and legal codes by the Vietnamese emperors and scholarly-officials who sought to establish a social system permeated by Confucian values. The Chinese Confucian family system brought to Viet Nam upon its first conquest in the 1st century A.D. imported many powerful ideals that were embodied in formal and informal codes of conduct. As Woodside (1985:10) notes:

“Like Chinese families, Vietnamese families became based upon male domination, and sanctioned *de facto* polygamy by means of concubinage. Vietnamese families also underwrote their survival by ancestor worship, by filial piety, by a ban on the intermarriage of patrilineal relatives, and by marriages in which women married out of their own families into their husbands', and owed their husbands' parents greater formal mourning obligations, when they died, than they owed their own.”

However, Woodside's analysis aptly recognizes the limits to sinicization in the Vietnamese family. A strong cultural recognition and acceptance of women's participation in armed rebellion and scholarly work in Vietnamese history were perhaps among the factors that prevented a realization of male domination to the degree it obtained in traditional China. One key feature of traditional Vietnamese legal code allowed daughters to inherit family property equally with sons. It also insisted that matrimonial property, instead of being incorporated into the husband's estate upon the couple's marriage, be managed equitably between husband and wife (Woodside 1985).

While the orthodoxy of Confucian ideology waxed and waned during the reign of different emperors, gaining unique strength in implementation during the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945), the mandarin consistently attained status and power to serve as government officials by passing extensive examinations that emphasized works of Chinese and Confucian literature and statecraft. The influence of Confucian ideological thought upon social organization and rules for social behavior also persisted through the incorporation of philosophical principles into the formal laws established by Vietnamese dynastic courts, such as the Le court's "Rules for

Teaching and Changing.” The ideology filtered down to the peasants as well, through their incorporation into local folk songs and proverbs (*tuc ngu* and *ca dao*), whose recitation was part of young children’s socialization (Chandler et al. 1987:70). The Confucian ethic was most pervasive and strongly adhered to among the urban, upper classes, whose status and worthiness was judged in large part according to their ethical behavior and knowledge of classical texts. This knowledge and concern with ethical practice in accordance with the classics was largely the domain of upper class males, whose wives and daughters were largely confined to the interior realm of the household, who were almost entirely denied access to education, and who were expected to abide by certain proscribed behaviors and customs emanating from the ethical system or face negative sanctions within their family and community.

There are at least three sets of ideological concepts concerning appropriate behavior and social positions, deriving from Confucianism, that are implicated in traditional gendered social relationships and obligations. The “three bonds,” adapted from the Confucian *Analects*, emphasized “the loyalty of ministers to their emperor, the obedience of children to their parents, the submission of wives to their husbands...the ‘three bonds’ were the social sacraments of late traditional Vietnam” (Chandler et al., 1987:71). While righteous and good men had to formulate and nurture two important social bonds—loyalty to the ruler or king, and filial piety to one’s father, women had an additional social bond to uphold, that of faithfulness to one’s husband.² These are among the ideological foundations for traditional, hierarchical family relationships, those calling for children’s obedience and wives’ submissiveness. Women were also well aware of the four virtues (*tu duc*) they were to uphold in order to be a proper wife, those being good management, proper appearance, proper speech, and virtuous conduct. The gender imbalance

² A summary of Confucian ‘family values’ is communicated in Professor Hue Tam Ho Tai’s lectures on ‘Individual, Community, and Nation in Vietnam.’

inherent in these philosophical concepts is especially apparent in light of the legitimization of polygamy among men and the harsh punishments visited upon women who conveyed even the slightest inkling of marital infidelity.

Popular and classical literature forms another channel for the conveyance of traditional Vietnamese values. Folk proverbs and folk songs (*tục ngữ* and *ca rao*), like those appearing at the beginning of this chapter, are often repeated at home and in school, instructing children of proper behavior and values and filtering into their consciousness. For adults, young and old, the widely read (and often memorized) *Tale of Kieu*, an epic poem written by Nguyen Du in the early 19th century, is believed to encapsulate Vietnamese notions of personal morality and political obligation. The popularity of this poem conveys a wisdom about Vietnamese culture that far exceeds 'expert' information in scholarly materials and journalistic accounts (Woodside 1983). The poem tells the tragic story of a young, beautiful and educated woman, Vuong Thuy Kieu, whose blissful love relationship with an equally attractive, intelligent and good-natured man turns to sadness when her father and brother are imprisoned. To maintain the principle of '*hieue*,' or filial piety, Kieu must turn to prostitution in an attempt to solve the family's ordeal. Tragic events befall Kieu and she is repeatedly taken advantage of and cheated as a result of being forced into the position of prostitute, concubine and servant. The overarching theme of the poem is that human goodness, talent, and a beautiful spirit are deserving of a good life; however, worldly cruelties and injustice may deny such a woman (or man, or society—as Nguyen's poem is an allegory for the Vietnamese under feudal rule) her deserved rewards. Suffering and hardship may thus be one's fate, to be endured; however, one's underlying goodness, loyalty and filial piety are values that should endure. Applied to women, a central message of the poem, consistent with the Confucian ideological period in which it was written, is that the ideal woman

is one who is silent, sacrificing, and maintains filial piety at great cost to her individual wellbeing. She possesses inner strength and is distinguished by her forbearance and patient sense of restraint.

Alongside Confucian notions of filial piety and the emphasis upon showing proper respect and deference in social relationships, mores in the northern Vietnamese countryside are also influenced by religious beliefs, namely Buddhist and Catholic doctrines, which are followed by a significant subset of the population. From Buddhist thought arises a similar emphasis on piety, as well as demonstrating efforts to accumulate merit and show benevolence. Pham Van Bich (1999) notes that this is reflected in parents' efforts to leave some form of property and/or reputation as a legacy to their children and lineage, and the avoidance of irresponsible acts that might shame the family or invite hardship upon others.

Socially and culturally prescribed gender roles in Viet Nam view women as being responsible for maintaining peace and harmony within the family, holding onto the family "purse" or savings, caring for children and performing chores within and around the home. Despite their performance of these important responsibilities, women are persistently deemed subordinate to men. Men, on the other hand are often thought to be more impulsive and hot-tempered, traits that are exacerbated with alcohol consumption—a widespread, though not uncontested, practice that is linked to the performance of men's social roles (Vu Manh Loi et al. 1999). The interviews that I conducted with men and women corroborated the gender stereotypical views of men and women presented here. Nearly all women responded that they held onto the family 'purse,' however their husband's were the primary decision-makers in 'large' or 'important' decisions. However, dialogues with several women suggest that certain women may actually be deferring to their husbands when it comes to making final decisions about major purchases and investments, whereas others may in fact suggest they are deferring to

their husbands to maintain appearances consistent with men's socially proscribed roles as heads of household and key decision-makers, thereby upholding their husband's ego and minimizing some of the dissonance between actual practices and idealized social roles. In a similar fashion, when speaking about the number of hours and tasks they perform in an average workday women usually performed the bulk of housework and worked hours much longer than their husbands. Men agreed with this assessment, also systematically reporting having more free time for leisure activities and rest compared to their wives. Still, despite these visible, even measurable differences, the same men and women often stated that work was shared quite fairly and gender roles were quite egalitarian within their own households, and had become increasingly egalitarian within the broader community.

As far as women's formal education is concerned, the miniscule segment of young women—among an already elite fraction of the population—who attended schooling prior to the 1950s—were schooled largely in traditional feminine norms, such as the 'three submissions' and 'four virtues' that derived from orthodox Confucian texts (Pham Van Bich 1999:11). The limitations of formal education in improving women's status and heightening their autonomy in the society thereby met major obstacles in the traditional and colonial educational systems. While an extensive study of curriculum in Viet Nam during the Socialist period has not been undertaken, anecdotal evidence³ suggests that Confucian ideals were recast as a 'feudal' ideology intended to maintain hierarchical, patriarchal relations in the family and society. This is not to purport that everyday practices and beliefs corresponded closely to either Confucian or Socialist ideological proscriptions. Textbook materials and cadre's lectures may or may not have influenced daily experience, and may or may not have conflicted with the content of socialization

³ I thank several Vietnamese colleagues for providing information on their own exposure to teachings of Confucian ethics and *The Tale of Kieu* during their formal education in primary and secondary school.

conveyed in the more informal and primary group settings of home and village. The present research will investigate the extent to which husband-wife and other kinship relations agree or contradict with certain ideological traditions (i.e., Confucian and Socialist doctrine), and the extent to which the demands for labor supply and income generation within households supercede conformity to gender and family roles that derive from ideological systems.

3.7 Socialism and Shifts in Gender Ideology—Limitations in Achieving Egalitarianism

As an antidote to “feudal” concepts of family that denoted women’s subjugation, official doctrine proffered by the Communist Party, rooted in Leninist writings that conceived of the patriarchal family as an extension of feudalism exploitation, emphasized gender egalitarianism and full employment, and the transformation of the family into a public-minded body devoted to socialist principles. The liberation of women was a stated goal on the route to building socialism. However, due to both shortcomings in socialist policies and resistance to change in traditional family and gender roles, gendered inequalities in access to occupations and remuneration for employment persisted through the era of collectivist production and central planning.

From the mid-1940s through the period of national reunification in 1975, the government of Viet Nam undertook several efforts to encourage women’s participation in social and economic activities. An example of the policies implemented by the Communist Party, and intended to alter family relationships and the relationship of the family to the wider society, is the *New Cultured Family Campaign*, introduced in 1975 and calling for more equal sharing of responsibilities between husband and wife in raising children and doing housework. The aim of this campaign was to increase women’s participation in social and economic life outside of the home (Eisen 1984). Several other incentive programs, such as the ‘two good points’ and ‘three well-done jobs’ campaigns, aimed to motivate women to perform government-assigned jobs

(Tran and Le 2000). Another effort by the state to curtail traditional, in particular 'superstitious' and excessive, family practices included official attempts to ban or simplify traditional rituals such as elaborate wedding and funeral festivals, and the payment of bride-wealth to women's future parents-in-law. The fact that only some families, in particular the lower classes who faced difficulties procuring an elaborate wedding banquet in the first place, accepted this policy change with enthusiasm, and the fact that even more elaborate, Western style wedding banquets have emerged alongside the market reform policies, suggests that this change in policy did not receive widespread acceptance among the population, nor did the doctrine become firmly entrenched in popular opinion. Anthropologist Luong Van Hy (1992) maintains that this is largely because the reforms focused on the material trappings of rituals and denied the deep cultural meanings associated with them. This sudden return to traditional practices, and their elaboration in the market economic context, has implications for traditional ideologies concerning family roles and relationships between men and women. We may expect that the imposition of socialist doctrine and social policies will have limited enduring impacts in achieving more gender equity in the division of labor and access to resources, especially if market reforms are accompanied by greater gender occupational stratification, more prominent emphasis on consumerism, and the decline of institutional supports (such as childcare facilities) that enabled women to venture beyond the household sphere in their economic and social activities.

Rather than entirely obliterate gender biases in the division of labor that had prevailed in household production, collective institutions (e.g., state enterprises and agricultural cooperatives) incorporated existing gender-based criteria for work allocation. Because women and men were systematically awarded different levels of work points, families often strategically allocated men and women to work in ways to maximize "income" in the form of work-points. Many male tasks were designated the maximum daily allowance of work points, such as plowing, lifting water and

spreading manure, whereas tasks performed predominantly by women, such as weeding, hoeing and basket-making, were awarded points below the maximum level. This meant that within families women would more often be guided toward subsistence-based, non-remunerative tasks, such as tending the kitchen garden, cooking or making handicrafts. Men, on the other hand, whose work was more highly remunerated in the point system, were more outwardly focused and oriented toward work in the collective economy (Wiegersma 1988). Traditional gender roles were resistant to change and even reinforced through this system of point allocation. Young women were significantly less likely than men to be trained and accepted for cadre positions in administrative roles of the collective. Even for the select few women who did obtain training as cadres, for example in the field of agricultural technology, there was a tendency to assign such women to work in traditional roles, such as that of teacher, while their young male counterparts were assigned positions in the police section or local government office (Wiegersma 1988). Vietnamese military mobilization for war with the United States was more powerful than collectivization in shifting traditional attitudes and opening the door to female leadership. In fact, affirmative action regulations were established in the late 1960s in order to encourage women's participation in management of work brigades and industrial units where women made up a certain portion of the workforce (Wiegersma 1988).

Gender equality is a central value enshrined in the 1946 constitution of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, which provided for female suffrage, and defined the rights of women within the family; as well as in subsequent laws and decrees drafted by the Communist Party of Viet Nam. However, retrospective, critical analyses demonstrate that Vietnamese socialism was not entirely successful in placing women on equal footing with men in the family and the workplace. The weight of traditional gender ideology often overrides progressive legislation and policies intended to support and protect women (Yarr 1996). Studies by Houtart and Lemercinier

(1984: 109-111) and Vu (1991) demonstrate that women continued to do a larger share of work than men under the cooperative system of production. However, policies implemented by the socialist government did meet some success in elevating women's rights and status in society. For example, the Marriage and Family Law of 1960 officially banned polygamy, arranged marriages and child-marriages (practices, though extremely rare, that contemporary observers such as Pham Van Bich (1999) and Le Thi (1995) suggest persist in the current period). And, by establishing a system of crèches and kindergartens for childcare, a significant share of social reproduction activities were absorbed by the state so that women could move into more diverse economic roles. Consequently, significant numbers of women moved from agricultural to nonagricultural work; a sizable minority of women undertook leadership positions on production teams, cooperative management boards, and local government (Le Thi Nham Tuyet 1991).

Despite its inherent, institutional gender discrimination, the workpoint system did provide some form of outside remuneration for women's work. As a result, women had opened to them a valuable resource, and a source of economic power, that did not come directly from their husbands or parents-in-law (Wiegersma 1988). Furthermore, the nationwide implementation of crèches and kindergartens to manage the childcare needs of working women created a situation in which the state shouldered a portion of social reproduction activities and women were able to continue their work activities. In the course of in-depth interviews many women detailed the very short period of time they took employment leave after giving birth; for women working in state enterprises and residing in state-provided housing finding childcare was relatively simple. Socialized childcare was particularly important among women whose husbands were absent, either due to labor migration or army participation, allowing them to continue working despite their husbands' absence.

Scholars such as White (1989) suggest that the Communist party's emphasis on creating new, "equal" social roles in economic production, as if women were not active participants in the pre-socialist era, minimizes the importance of women's full participation in production that had prevailed in the so-called 'feudal' and colonial eras. Many sociological and historical analyses had documented women's central role in producing the means of family subsistence, through market trading, rice cultivation and other production tasks performed 'outside of the house' (Gourou 1936; Mies 1986). The consequences of such policies, while they may have increased women's role in generating cash income, include a substantial increase in women's workload, because efforts to bring women into the workforce were not successfully matched with successful efforts to enhance men's efforts in domestic social reproduction tasks such as meal preparation and childcare. Croll (1981:367) notes that in China and the Soviet Union, too, the socialist mode of production placed a 'double burden' upon women because the rural economy still ultimately relied upon the rural household to "provide for itself a large share of necessary goods and services." White writes (1989:175):

"In this context [wherein women do most of the work in domestic production], the Leninist route to women's emancipation by drawing women into productive labor seems a cruel joke, a formula for total exhaustion rather than for liberation."

This pointed critique raises important questions concerning women's participation in the labor force as an indicator of gender equality. Specifically, not all forms of economic activity generate autonomy, economic power, or a sense of personal wellbeing. Furthermore, the relative confinement of women in traditional domains (such as agriculture) and their persistent work in straining, even hazardous, occupational settings, may in fact contribute to greater hardship for women than would confinement in the domestic sphere. Women have been vastly under-represented in positions of political leadership, both during and following the French and American wars. The establishment of the Vietnam Women's Union in 1930 provided the

foundation for a broad-based women's movement. Nonetheless, the Women's Union representative is often the only woman serving on village- and district-level people's committees, and her function is often restricted to handling 'women's issues' such as propagation of family planning measures and children's health. Thus, while the Women's Union guarantees a voice for women in local administrative bodies, their strong identification with the Women's Union may have a marginalizing influence upon women's overall representation and voice in the local political system. In other words, women are perceived as active participants in the political system but their organizational affiliation, their identification as representatives of women's interests, may circumscribe their potential to impact decision-making on broader community or societal levels.

Both during the socialist period and the *doi moi* era, women have been underrepresented on political bodies at all jurisdictional levels, except for the Women's Union. The relative absence of women from political decision-making, participation in organizations such as the Communist Party and labor organizations has been observed in the Chinese and Soviet Union, with scholars pointing to similar explanations across all contexts—the conflict between political participation and women's responsibility for domestic labor. In the year 1999 more than 110,000 people became new members of Viet Nam's Communist Party, however only 32% of these were women. Furthermore, within the Party's total rank-and-file only about one-fourth are women at the end of the 1990s, suggesting that important disparities remain between men and women in gaining access to this form of valuable political capital.

A common theme underlying idealized feminine roles in Viet Nam is that of sacrifice, for both family and country. Frequently, references are made to the significant numbers of women who engaged in armed struggle and other wartime efforts, for example the greater than 1 million female guerrilla forces who engaged in either combat or commando operations during the war

against French colonial occupation, to illustrate the liberated status of women in the society (Mai and Le 1984). Others refer to women's widespread involvement in labor battalions that did the work of transporting war materials or constructing the Ho Chi Minh trail to depict the strength of Vietnamese women and their important social roles (see for example, Turner 1998). Women who became directly involved in the war effort, especially the 'long-haired army' of women participating in the National Liberation Front are depicted by some as, "the antithesis of the nurturing mother who stayed in the background in a supporting role" (Tetreault 1996:47). Others, however, emphasize the limitations placed upon women's participation and liberation—limitations that are framed in the rubric of sacrifice for country and family. Under difficult circumstances, sacrifice for family may require moving away from home to join migrants who work as scrap collectors, domestic servants, and in other menial jobs in Ha Noi; sacrifice for country may have required leaving home to work on a road construction or ordinance removal crew during the war. Such conditions have had a temporary character, though, as women are not to leave behind their traditional roles in the domestic realm. Rather than leaving the domestic realm and its traditional role obligations behind, the ideal, 'emancipated' woman should be both mother and soldier, daughter-in-law and worker. The words of one of Viet Nam's great 20th century poets, in an ode to a prominent female commander of the North Vietnam Army, convey this duality: "In the assault you command a hundred squads. Night returns, you sit mending fighters' clothes." The strength and ability that women show, in combat or on the construction crew, should not overwhelm her obligations, first and foremost, to home and family; she should be ready to return to these roles when 'duty calls.'

A similar duality to that of mother and soldier is likely to take hold among women who achieve high status occupational roles in the current period. Such women spend their days working for the state in professional roles and spend their evenings (and lunchtime 'breaks')

taking care of their husbands and children. The patriarchal context may favor men who have lost their jobs as soldiers or civil servants in the market transition, such that a parallel movement into household-based labor, to match women's increasing involvement in market-oriented work, is unlikely to occur. On the other hand, where the market economy poses new challenges and encourages new forms of household organization, men's performance and adherence to gender roles in economic activities may become less rigidly defined and the "rules" of gender-appropriate behavior easier to break. However, even where women emerge to take on the role of primary "breadwinner" in the household, many men and women continue to believe that the man remains the dominant figure in the household.

Certain scholars have emphasized not the political and institutional changes of the Socialist era, but rather the role of enduring military conflict and heightened demand for women's labor as pivotal to the increasingly diverse and visible participation that women have undertaken in the public sphere. The movement of men as soldiers to the front and their absence from typical production activities during a time of heightened demand, combined to elevate women's status in economic production outside of the domestic sphere. Research by Nguyen Thi Nham Tuyet and her colleagues (1996:2) points to the widespread involvement of women as irrigation pump operators in the present-day Red River Delta—an occupational role that, globally, is almost always performed by men—as one vestige of war conditions that played a role in "emancipating women, as they either participated on equal footing with men in the liberation struggle, or replaced men at all levels in the economy and society."

The war effort involved an active movement to engage women in production outside of the home. By the mid 1960s, women became the majority of workers in many northern villages, and government regulations issued in 1967 encouraged, and even mandated, women's participation in decision-making positions in state enterprises and services (Wiegersma 1988;

Yarr 1996). A similar gender realignment of activities is said to have occurred among village women in Laos during the Second Indochina war, during which time “family members were often separated as they worked in their own ways for revolutionary goals (Ireson 1996:40). Clearly there are analogies to experiences in industrialized countries, too, such as the steep rise in women’s participation, especially in heavy industry occupations, during the United States’ World War II mobilization. Many women in the Red River Delta recalled the period of struggle, family separation, and vigorous labor and mobilization that they took part in during the American War, as well as during subsequent periods of military conflict in Cambodia and the China border. Many women also spoke in ways that suggested their separation from family—either going away to work themselves, or making due when their husband-soldier was away working or fighting—was a normative, legitimate form of sacrifice. While many women faced great difficulties in independently raising children and managing the family farm, they described these circumstances as commonplace and their dutiful obligation. In other words, they demonstrated their effectiveness and abilities to work in ‘men’s jobs,’ and they established a precedent that may legitimate more diverse forms of economic participation in the future.

3.8 The transition from Socialism to Capitalism in Viet Nam: Implications for Women’s Status in Economic and Household Production

Beginning in the early 1980s the Vietnamese government initiated policies, similar to those applied in the Chinese reform model nearly a decade earlier, which recognized and legitimated household production activities outside of the cooperative system. The 1981 household contract system allocated collective land to households (based upon the number of working-age adults in the household), thereby taking a step away from purely collective control over land-use by allowing households to hold onto, utilize and sell their surplus production. This was the first in many official steps toward making the family household a centerpiece production

unit that would eventually replace the collective, redistributive functions of the worker brigades, agricultural cooperatives and workpoint systems. The household sector was further affirmed in 1988, as Decree Number 10 granted long-term land leases to households; under Decree 10 contract yields had to be turned over to the agricultural cooperative but households were able to keep all surplus production for themselves. Cooperative labor moved into supporting roles only, performing certain tasks such as irrigation, plowing and pesticide spraying, for example. The roles of cooperatives were further curtailed by the 1993 land law, which granted long-term 'user rights' to families, rights which do not entail ownership, *per se*, but which do allow household land to be inherited, leased, and 'transferred against payment of compensation' (Tran Thi Van Anh 1999, Pham Van Bich 1999).

In the wake of these agricultural and industrial *doi moi* reforms, policy-makers, academicians and advocates for women's rights have attempted to gain an understanding of how economic growth and the transition to a market economy have influenced women's status in society. Just as the prognosis for women in reform-era China spelled out numerous losses for women with respect to institutionalized social welfare programs and access to employment in the declining state sector and rising market economic sector, early estimations in the Vietnamese context suggest that Vietnamese women also have lost some of the gains made during the collective era. Rather than attribute rising gender inequalities to the vagaries of the market economy or the inevitable 'underdevelopment' of women in the course of economic development, many scholars suggest that women's losses represent a return to pre-existing patriarchal structures and biases that were temporarily, or at least partially, arrested during the war effort and watershed years of socialist organization. A frequently-voiced skepticism about women's gains during the socialist period is expressed by Thanh-Dam Truong (1996:8):

“Once the national objective of reunification was achieved, patriarchal culture re-emerged through the trade-off between gender equality and economic efficiency. Thus, in spite of the rights and political space women gained through decades of struggle, as the reform depends this trade-off is narrowing women’s alternatives and options, and will likely further erode their socioeconomic position.”

Despite the massive economic turn-around that occurred in the wake of economic reforms in the mid 1980s, macro-level economic data confirm that the country’s living standard remains very low by international comparison. Viet Nam has had one of the world’s lowest per capita income levels through most of the 1990s, with nearly 50% of the population earning an annual per capita income of US\$ 75 or less (Nguyen and Bandara 1996). A scenario of momentum toward population growth continues, such that an estimated 2 million people reach age 18 each year, and greater than 50% of the national population is under age 25, thus rapidly fueling growth of the nation’s labor supply. High population density and rapid growth in the labor force, coupled with slow growth in employment opportunities, has created vast numbers of unemployed and underemployed persons throughout the countryside. Admitting difficulties in estimating unemployment, and the even greater difficulties associated with enumerating underemployment, in 1992 Vietnam’s Ministry of Labor, War Invalids, and Social Affairs (MOLISA) estimated that 17.3% of the nation’s working age population could be categorized into some form of unemployment. The nontrivial proportion of the workforce that is unemployed can be attributed to a labor force-employment mismatch, as well as to state sector retrenchment, military demobilization, and the repatriation of migrants and refugees (Nguyen and Bandara 1996). With rapid population growth and slow economic growth few employment opportunities were available for either men or women. Exploring the organization and reorganization of economic behavior in this context of high population density and economic transformation is important for understanding how demographic and economic changes feed back upon rural institutions such as the family (McNicholl and Cain, 1990). There is evidence that in Viet Nam,

while the number of eligible workers was increasing and the number of employment opportunities was contracting, men were more successful than women in holding on to their favored positions in state-owned enterprises (see, for example, Goodkind 1995b).

In the most recent period of transition to a mixed, state-initiated market economy, households have been given extensive land use and transfer rights, essentially commodifying land use (Dollar and Litvack 1998, Liljestrom 1998). In the wake of state enterprise closures and massive retrenchment of workers, many male and female former state workers have faced a new fate in the emerging market economy. Similar to Eastern Europeans of the former Soviet bloc who have faced high levels of unemployment and the loss of benefits and forms of social protection such as subsidized maternity leave and childcare facilities, many women and men in the Red River Delta who once worked in state-run enterprises have turned to work on their own account, at the risk of marginalization from the production process (Moghadam 1995:23). Government sector employment continues to be coveted due to its high prestige, and the employment benefits that it offers which are unknown among informal sector workers. Far fewer workers are laboring in state-owned enterprises, and large proportions of the workforce have moved into self-employment, family business or other forms of informal, private sector employment. Goodkind (1995b) and Yarr (1996) have documented that the downsizing of government employment in state offices and enterprises has been felt more acutely by women than men. Specifically, Goodkind (1995b) notes that between 1989 and 1992, the number of female and male civil servants declined by 28% and 22%, respectively. During the market reform period women have also lost substantial support from the State with respect to subsidized childcare. In 1994 the allotment of six months maternity leave for state employees was curtailed to four months. More dramatic has been the decline in the number of crèches for the care of infants and small children, which declined from nearly 42,000 in 1985 (the year before the

official announcement of *doi moi*) to just over 13,000 in 1989 according to Vietnam Ministry of Education data. There are likely myriad consequences of these policy shifts for women workers. For example, women who must take leave of their government jobs upon giving birth may face difficulties in returning to work if they are unable to find substitute care, thus enhancing female retrenchment in government employment on an even greater scale relative to males. Even where protective legislation for women has been enacted, observers of the Vietnamese case such as Yarr (1996:133) assert there is a persistent risk in policies that bar women's participation in certain occupations and which offer support to mothers, such as maternity leave, because they potentially lead to a ghettoization of women in lower-paying jobs because formal sector employers will be reluctant to hire women.

The withdrawal of subsidized, state-provided childcare may generate an unmet demand for childcare that is taken up by female kin, both the elder daughters and mothers/mothers-in-law of working age women, such that these women are less capable of concentrating on schooling and leisure activities. That the family is returning to shoulder more social welfare and social reproduction functions, as it did previous to the socialist period, is a transformation that may weigh most heavily upon the backs of women. Economic power and economic participation notwithstanding, so long as women continue to carry out domestic-centered roles with little assistance from men, their working lives will continue to impose certain burdens upon their time-use and well-being. As such, there is cause for careful interpretation of women's labor force participation, even that work performed outside the household realm, as a form of autonomy or liberation.

Since *doi moi* reforms have, to a limited extent, enlarged the opportunities available for finding non-agricultural and wage employment, there has been a tendency for young men and

women to leave traditional, agricultural work in order to seek work opportunities in wage-based occupations situated in more modern economic sectors. Opportunities to seek these non-agricultural positions, removed from the family farm, are often more viable for young men than young women, due to various gender-based economic and familial expectations. Son preference extends to migration opportunities, as unmarried young men are more often afforded this opportunity than unmarried women (Pham Van Bich 1999). Tran's comments (1995: 196) reflect both structural features and gender beliefs that affect men's and women's propensity to expand into work outside of the agricultural sector:

“In rural areas there is a tendency among the youth, both male and female, to leave agricultural work for non-agricultural activities with higher income and better working and living conditions. However, the opportunity for leaving agriculture is greater for men than for women because they are more independent in the family than women. Second, market demand for male labor is greater than for female labor. Third, men adapt more easily to changes of environment than women.”

These variable opportunities, rooted in gender normative behavior, have the potential to both perpetuate and alter gendered economic activity patterns and household labor-division strategies. Their influence would seem to explain existing patterns of occupational stratification, which demonstrate a continued predominance of women in agricultural jobs (see Chapter 6). It would also provide a partial explanation for sex ratio imbalances observed among young adults in rural areas.

Women whose husbands and male children exit the local economy and become labor migrants may be faced with a greater, more diverse set of economic management and occupational responsibilities and opportunities. However, because jobs in formal, skilled, and professional occupations are severely restricted in rural areas, the increased incidence of labor migration by males may only lead to greater feminization of agriculture and other traditional

sector jobs. The near complete dismantling of agricultural cooperatives means that oftentimes women left “down on the farm” by husbands who have died or become disabled, or who have become long-term migrants, end up performing tasks that demand excessive strength or that threaten their physical health. Another consequence of this feminization process is that women, on average, tend to perform extremely long working days and have working hours significantly longer than men’s (Dang Nguyen Anh 1991).

Even though large numbers of women continue to be fully incorporated in the workforce, and some have undertaken work as labor migrants and thereby distanced themselves, physically, from their traditional family roles, current research demonstrates that women are greatly underrepresented in leadership positions at all levels of government. Up to the year 1997 only one woman had ever been a member of the Communist Party Politburo (Werner 1997); in managerial work, Gameltoft (1997:205) suggests that, “the highest management to which a woman can aspire is to assist a male boss.” While a sizable proportion of professional workers are women, most often female professionals labor in the education and health services sectors of the economy—in jobs that compliment traditional female roles—supervising and teaching children and nursing the sick and wounded. In fact many parents, when asked about the ideal occupations that they imagine for their daughters, many mentioned teaching, not necessarily for the status or prestige that this position offers, but because the nature of the work keeps women in close proximity to children and allows them plenty of time to handle their own domestic affairs. The under-representation of women in leadership and professional roles, which contradicts constitutional and public policy statements that favor equality of opportunity for men and women, has deep social structural and cultural roots.

First, the levels of educational attainment deemed necessary for professional and governmental positions is slightly higher among males, especially in older cohorts who received their education prior to collective era reforms. Furthermore, adherence to traditional family roles leads to a designation of women as the primary performers of nearly all domestic tasks and childcare activities, thus their movement into high-level positions may be viewed as jeopardizing family stability. In in-depth interviews several women described their own lack of participation in local government leadership and social activities as emanating from their heavy burden of labor in the household economy. Ms. Van, the year-old mother of two sons, who is the primary laborer on her family's farm and also operates a small business selling breakfast foods, comments that she does not participate in activities of the Women's Union because of her household responsibilities:

"[I do not participate] because I do not have enough time, nor do I have the conditions....My husband cannot look after the children without me."

That women gain status and power within the household as a consequence of their social involvement and employment is revealed in their consequent experiences and treatment by family members. Recent research conducted on the occurrence of domestic violence confirms that women are less often the victims of domestic violence in households where both husband and wife earn an income and participate in expenditure decisions (Vu et al. 1999). Several women I interviewed in the VLS villages articulated their perceptions about the relationship between economic participation and gendered power relationships in families. Ms. Hoa, age 39, married to a retired local official and mother to a son in his teens, is an educated professional living in Xuan Thanh village and working as a medical assistant in the commune health station. Working in this position, where she specializes in obstetrics and reproductive health, she earns a healthy wage and a relatively prestigious position in the community. Her occupation also puts her into contact with

many women in the community, whom she perceives to be in a relatively more powerful within the family, relative to men, as a result of their labor force participation—particularly their ability to engage in relatively lucrative migrant work such as scrap metal collection and domestic work in Ha Noi. It is her perception that domestic violence is less problematic in families where women work outside of the household economy. Asked whether men appear upset by the emerging economic roles of women, she responds that the heightened economic contributions of women appear to elevate their status within the family and improve their treatment:

“They [the husbands of labor migrants] pamper their wives much more. There are many people who used to beat their wives before, when they could not make any money, but now the husbands show that they respect their wives when they are able to earn a living.”

Other women articulated the limitations of esteem and respect accorded to women who managed to work outside of the family sector relative to men in similar positions. Working women in the Red River Delta almost universally continue to perform the bulk of domestic chores, such as feeding the family and caring for small children. At the time of our interview Ms. Hoa was working full-time at the commune health center, and was also ‘moonlighting,’ by performing house-calls to administer vaccines to children in the village. Her husband, who earns a retirement pension that is significantly smaller than her own salary, stays at home and sells small items, takes care of their child and raises pigs. Despite the clear gender imbalance in their household income, in which her salary far exceeds her husband’s contributions, and her relatively high educational attainment and occupational prestige, Ms. Hoa maintains a traditional view of gender relations in the family. Asked about the role of women in the current period, she replies:

“In my opinion, the husband is still the bread winner in the family and the women should care for all the housework and the children. But it depends on each family, if the husband does not have the work he must depend on his wife, he must stay at home instead of his wife, but the principal person in the family is still the man.”

3.9 Concluding Statements

Developing a comprehensive analysis of gender and work roles in Viet Nam is a challenging task, given the remarkable changes that have taken place in social and economic organization across the 20th century. Each historical period has added a layer of divergent economic demands, ideological systems, and institutional frameworks to encompass women's and men's work activities. This brief review of the literature has attempted to illuminate predominant gender roles in the family and economy, and women's socioeconomic status positions in the Red River Delta. Rather than providing a clear, succinct portrait of men's roles and women's roles, the diversity of voices on this subject matter demonstrates a great deal of complexity and contentiousness. Most researchers would agree that women's socioeconomic status positions are generally lower than those of men, both at the societal and family level, as evidenced by women's under-representation in professional occupations and political and administrative roles, as well as their performing disproportionate shares of unpaid housework. Furthermore, the structural changes induced by market economic policies are tending to perpetuate a feminization of agriculture and heavy workloads for rural women. Such trends create difficulties in reaching agreement on whether policies of the socialist government, intended to generate greater gender egalitarianism in economic participation, were actually effective and filtered down to all levels of the Vietnamese population. Furthermore, only the accumulation of careful, empirically-sound analyses of gender and economic participation will allow us to ascertain whether women actually have made gains in status and economic power, and if so, whether said gains demonstrate a long-term, positive change or simply a temporary, anomalous, and historically-situated shift that will potentially give way to traditional, patriarchal attitudes and behaviors that favor women's subordinate status and limit their opportunities for social and economic participation.

The in-depth analyses offered in the remaining chapters of this dissertation will attempt to delineate men's and women's relative status positions as embodied in their labor force participation, economic roles over different historical periods, and occupational status outcomes. By drawing upon both quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches it is my objective to extend the analyses beyond simple, commonly used and easily interpreted empirical measures taken to indicate socioeconomic status, such as rates of labor force participation, scores for occupational prestige, and levels of household income. Rather than discard these commonplace measures, I supplement them with the results of in-depth interviewing and other elements of qualitative methodology, in order to show how cultural meanings surrounding work, family and gender; individual and family decision-making processes, perceptions of household well-being and economic opportunities; and other complex interpretations of the social and economic context operate to shape outcomes that are commonly interpreted, in a rather straight-forward, matter of fact manner, as indicators of status, progress, and well-being.

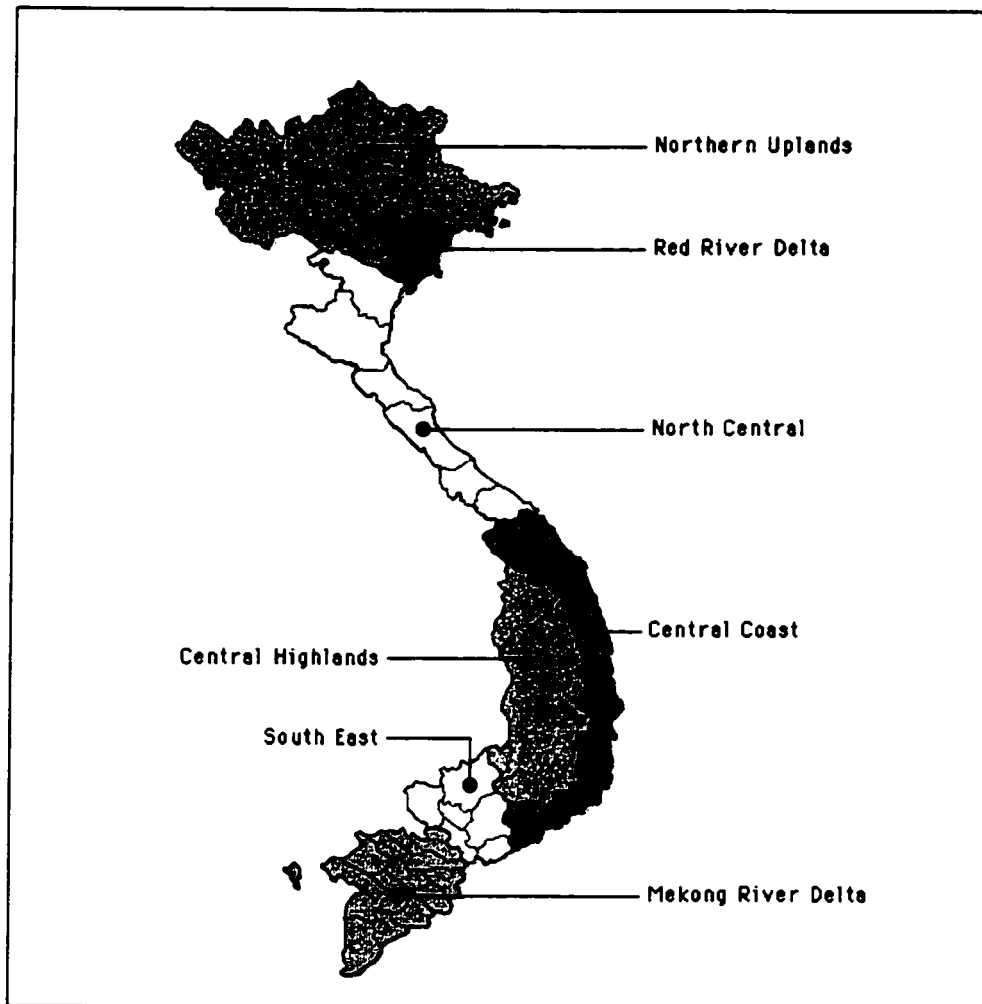


Figure 3.1 Seven Regions of Viet Nam.
Data Source: 2000 WHO.

Table 3.1 Characteristics of Vietnamese Households, by Region, 1992-1993

	All Vietnam	Northern Uplands	Red River Delta	North- Central Coast	Central Coast	Central Highlands	South- east	Mekong Delta
Total Population^a	100	15.6	21.6	12.8	11.9	3.2	12.6	22.4
Urban	19.9	14.8	15.2	8.7	30.6	0	44.3	17.9
Rural	80.1	85.2	84.8	91.3	69.4	100	55.7	82.1
Employer of HH Head								
Government	5.5	3.8	7.1	4.9	7.8	1.3	7.1	4
Private	8.6	2.7	6.1	4.4	9.2	10.5	12.9	14.3
Self-employed	75.2	87.4	77.3	85.7	70.2	78.5	56.2	71.3
Retired	6.5	3.5	6.3	3.7	6.1	7.3	12.6	6.9
Other not working	4.2	2.4	3.1	1.3	6.5	7.3	11.1	3.5
Occupation of HH Head								
White Collar	4.6	2.7	4.5	7.1	7.7	0.5	4.6	3.7
Sales/Servie	8.1	4.8	7.3	3.3	13.3	2.4	15	8.2
Farming	64.7	77.5	64.6	77	54	78.9	37.7	67.2
Production	10.9	8.9	13.3	6.4	10	7.5	17.8	9.6
Other	1	0.2	0.9	1.3	1.5	1.1	1.2	0.9
Retired	6.5	3.5	6.3	3.7	6.1	7.3	12.6	6.9
Other not working	4.2	2.4	3.1	1.3	6.5	7.3	11.1	3.5
Schooling of HH Head								
None	11.9	8.7	6	5.6	20.3	35.6	12.9	15.3
Primary	37.5	34.5	21.5	31.4	38.4	33.7	43.3	55.4
Lower Secondary	33.5	38.6	47.8	42.2	23.8	23.5	28.6	20.5
Upper Secondary	12.3	14.1	17.9	14.6	11.3	6.2	11.2	6.4
Technical	2.5	2.6	4.1	4.7	2.1	0.5	0.9	1.2
University	2.2	1.6	2.8	1.5	4.2	0.5	3.2	1.2
Indicators of Poverty and Wellbeing								
Living Below Poverty Level ^b	55	66	53	77	56	67	34	46
Stunting Among children Age 0-5	50	58.5	53.7	58.4	46.1	52.4	29.8	44.5
Adult literacy	88.1	87.6	91.6	90.9	85.2	68.3	92.5	84.8

a. Percentages refer to people, not households—for example, 80.1 percent of the people (not 80.1% of households) live in rural areas.

b. Based upon calculations of urban and rural poverty thresholds; the headcount index includes individuals in families wherein expenditures are not sufficient to obtain 2,100 calories per person per day.

Source: Dollar et al. 1998. Calculations based upon 1992-93 Vietnam Living Standards Survey.



Figure 3.2 Mother, Father and Daughter Operating “bun cha” restaurant



Figure 3.3 Family Using Rented Rice-husking Machine in Village Meeting Place

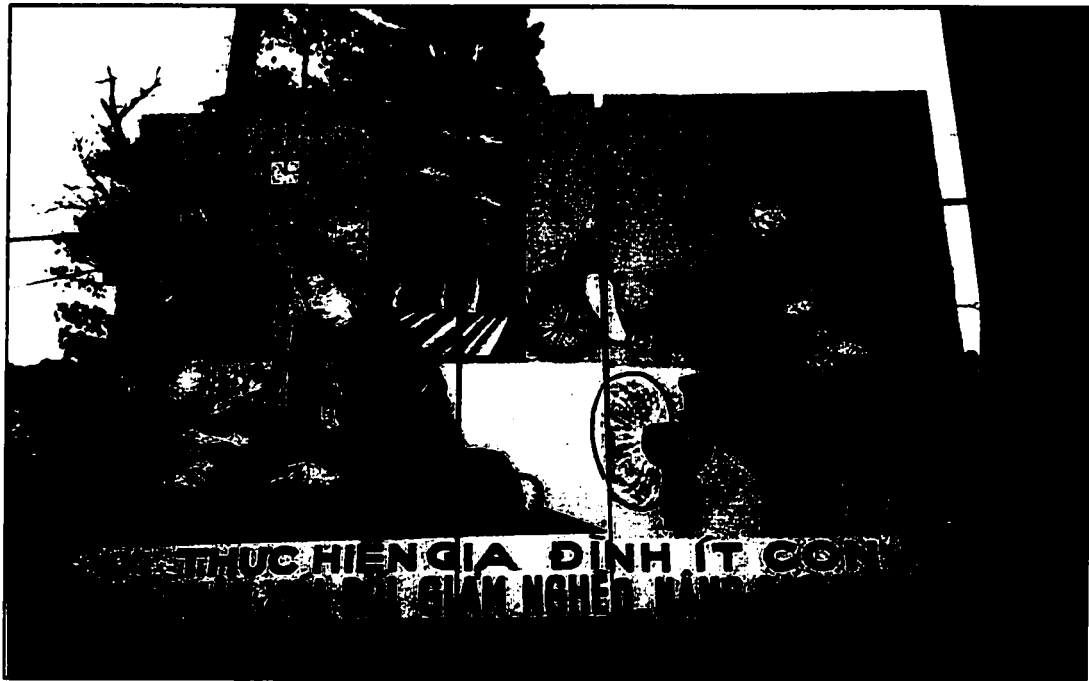


Figure 3.4 “Happy Family” billboard. Propagates the message that by “realizing a family with few children” the people will “contribute to eliminating poverty and elevating the society.”

Table 3.2 Women's Rates of Economic Participation Across Selected Countries, 1970 and 1994

Country	Estimated % Economic Activity Rate, Women Age 15+		Women as % of Labor Force
	1970	1994	1994
Viet Nam	71	69	47
Laos	80	68	45
Thailand	75	65	44
Bangladesh	5	62	41
Japan	51	50	40
Cambodia	59	50	42
United States	42	50	41
Burma (Myanmar)	54	47	36
Nepal	47	42	32
Bhutan	48	42	32

Source: 1991, 1995 United Nations.

Chapter 4. Research Methods and Data

4.1 Chapter Introduction

Similar to other sociologists whose research has focused upon social settings and social actors in less developed countries,⁴ I believe that becoming involved, first-hand, in carrying out a research study provided valuable research experiences that have informed the writing of this dissertation and assisted me in forming a store of knowledge to speak with some confidence about the challenges and opportunities faced by contemporary Vietnamese living in the Red River Delta. I open this chapter with a discussion of the mixed-methods approach that I use in subsequent analytical chapters and the advantages such an approach provides for addressing social demographic issues such as economic participation. In the next sections I elaborate upon the data collection processes involved with the quantitative and qualitative components of the study. I discuss the nature of the Vietnam Longitudinal Survey and its suitability for examining questions of economic participation in Viet Nam, including a discussion of the VLS survey content and the sampling methodology designed to incorporate households located in ecologically diverse locations of the Red River Delta. I delineate the approach I undertook to complete in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions in three village/districts of the original VLS study. Finally, I elaborate upon key measures that underlie the study of economic activity and gender in the Vietnamese context of economic development and transition.

⁴ Tiryakian's (1990) discussion of his own dissertation research conducted in the Philippines in the 1950s, I believe, closely mirrors my own experience and philosophy on engaging in the process of qualitative research in a society fundamentally different from my own. I share his opinion that while this research

4.2 Comments on Quantitative and Qualitative (Mixed-Methods) Approaches

The tendency to organize research along a sharp methodological dichotomy which places quantitative and qualitative methodologies in opposition to one another, viewing the two approaches as incompatible because they arise out of different epistemologies and address different kinds of questions about social processes, has waned in the fields of sociology and demography. A 'methodological pluralism' and efforts to embrace multiple methodologies within the same research agenda has arisen in its place among many social scientists (Greene and Caracelli 1997:5). In the early 1980s methodologists such as Burgess (1982) advocated multiple research strategies, viewing flexibility in method choice and utilization of more than one investigative method as an appropriate route to addressing research questions. Besides providing a cross-check on either one of the two individual methods, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, it has been suggested, can enhance the potential for inductive logic and theorizing (Connidis 1983). Furthermore, the complementarity of the two approaches reinforces the particular strengths of each approach, relative to each approach standing on its own--quantitative research's suitability for demonstrating structural features of social life and qualitative research's parallel strength--the potential to delineate processual features of social life (Bryman 1988).

Researchers in the field of social demography have increasingly adopted the mixed-methods approach, offering examples of research that have fruitfully combined quantitative and qualitative approaches so as to delineate more nuanced social processes and meanings that underlie patterns of association demonstrated in survey data. "Qualitative demography" demonstrates a flexible back-and-forth interplay between quantitative and qualitative methods (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Large-scale survey analyses concerning social relationships have

does not qualify me as a specialist in Vietnamese society, involvement in data collection has allowed me to speak with greater assuredness on theoretical matters, as well as Vietnamese culture and social patterns.

frequently been supplemented by in-depth interviews in sociological research. For example, in their classic study of American couples' social and sexual relationships, Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) followed up upon questionnaire data for 12,000 individuals by carrying out in-depth interviews with 300 couples in order to focus upon relationship issues in specific couple types (e.g., cohabiters and gay/lesbian couples). Short et al. (2001) effectively combine quantitative data from the China Health and Nutrition Survey and semi-structured in-depth interviews in order to elucidate how approaches to childcare are shaped by China's one-child policy. Furthermore, Knodel and colleagues (Knodel and Pramualratana 1996; Havanon et al. 1992) have effectively combined the results of focus group discussions with sample survey results, in order to explore diverse issues ranging from reproductive health and condom utilization to wealth accumulation in rural households.

Social scientists continue to diverge on whether they view the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods as generating consistency and heightened internal validity in addressing a research question, or whether the two approaches yield complementarity, rather than adding to 'some rounded unity' (Brannen 1992:14). In undertaking a mixed-methods approach, I view the different types of results as complementary, and as revealing the mechanisms and real-life experiences that are borne out in statistical relationships. As is quite common in mixed-methods research where quantitative data take pre-eminence over qualitative, within my dissertation I envision qualitative findings to be used to provide in-depth and contextual relevance and to serve as 'exemplars of quantitative findings, especially in fleshing out of variable categories' (Brannen 1992:25). Specifically, qualitative results that convey the level of lived experience, in detail and in the interviewees' own words, are helpful in depicting how social processes such as status inheritance, the combination of maternal and laborer roles, and life course transitions operate in

Vietnamese society. I am in agreement with Greene and Caracelli's statement on the benefits of mixed methods approaches (1997:13):

"A mixed-method study that combines these two traditions [of interpretivism and positivism] would strive for knowledge claims that are grounded in the lives of the participants studied and that also have some generality to other participants and other contexts, that enhance understanding of both the unusual and the typical case, that isolate factors of particular significance while also integrating the whole, that are full of emic meaning at the same time as they offer causal connections of broad significance."

I view this function as especially salient given that the research context of northern Viet Nam is foreign and socially distant from my own social context. This rationale for combining quantitative and qualitative approaches corresponds with Fielding's suggestion (1988), that descriptively adequate accounts of large-scale social phenomena should be grounded in statements about actual social behavior in concrete situations.

Through the addition of qualitative results, which incorporate the experiences of interviewees in more elaborate, and at times more complex, ways, we are better equipped to come to terms with seeming contradictions and errors in our quantitative results. Numerous social researchers have encountered instances in which two persons reporting on one event or phenomena describe the said event or phenomena in very different, if not opposite ways. Given the subjectivity of perception these divergent descriptions are understandable, especially when dealing with phenomena that are not amenable to straightforward measurement or observation. So for example, in their survey research investigating migration decision-making in Southern Viet Nam, Doan and Trinh (1996:31) found that many husbands and wives attributed making the decision to move to their spouse, when in fact the decisions were likely made jointly. Similarly, in my own work husbands and wives provided disparate accounts concerning the division of household labor, with men frequently overstating their contributions to housework, or speaking in terms so vague as to preclude a conclusive depiction their contributions. Comparing the accounts

of husbands and wives demonstrated the limitations one may encounter in attempts to quantify certain social variables and the ways that perceptions may shade responses when using both quantitative and qualitative modes of data collection.

4.3 Issues of Data Quality and Availability in the Viet Nam Context

During the decades of war and collectivization in Viet Nam there were limited attempts made at undertaking large-scale data collection projects. The country's first census was conducted in 1979, and second and third censuses have been carried out on a decennial basis in 1989 and 1999. The data content of the Viet Nam census, while growing increasingly detailed over time, precludes detailed analyses on economic roles, occupational status and detailed labor force participation statistics. It is only in the early 1990s, in particular with the initiation of the World Bank's living standards measurement survey, the Viet Nam Living Standards Survey (VLSS), during 1992 and 1993, that a representative, nation-wide social and demographic survey has been conducted for the country. The VLSS follows a longitudinal design, the second wave of data collection was conducted in 1997-98. Despite its longitudinal nature, with this survey, as with the VLS longitudinal design, it is difficult to assess long-term trends in social mobility and occupational attainment processes, and to compare these processes as they currently operate to how they operated in the colonial, socialist, and market reform eras. At best we might compare similarly situated individuals across generations (an approach that I undertake in Chapter 9); however, such approaches face weaknesses as well, such as those arising through biases in respondent recall of activities several decades past.

There is both challenge and promise in conducting research in a societal context facing a dearth of historical data on social and demographic processes. Central among the challenges is arriving at conclusions about directions of change in social processes, and asking questions such as, 'are women increasingly disadvantaged in the work force?' or 'are agricultural occupations

becoming increasingly feminized in the market reform period?’ Often there is a considerable body of descriptive or anecdotal information on labor force participation and men’s and women’s occupational roles. However, because systematic data collection has not taken place it is difficult to assess the extent to which early information of this nature is anecdotal, or is influenced by political and other biases of the time. Social scientists such as Whyte (2000) have commented on the difficulties of making conclusions about increasing discrimination against women where comparable data for earlier periods is lacking and where there is reason to doubt the objectivity of earlier sources. These two conditions both characterize the Vietnamese research context, and thus I take heed of the cautions in interpreting patterns observed in the data as representing any significant shift from conditions prevailing in earlier periods. Where it is possible I attempt to incorporate methods that are attuned to changes over time, such as cohort-analyses. I also draw upon retrospective reports of work experiences and life history accounts, reported as ‘lived memory’ in in-depth interviews, to grasp the nature of changes that have occurred in the past several decades. Nonetheless, interpretation of these sources must also be cautious and filled with an awareness of the unique nature of experience and perception that is of questionable generalizability to the region and its residents as a whole.

4.4 The Vietnam Longitudinal Survey: Survey Design and Data Collection

Given decades of political turmoil, war and precarious economic conditions, few sources of reliable, systematic data exist for analyzing the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the Vietnamese population. The 1989 census, along with a few recent social surveys, have marked the beginning of systematic demographic data collection in Viet Nam. The VLS is one of the first social surveys designed for documenting and analyzing changes that have occurred since the implementation of *doi moi* economic reforms in the mid 1980s. The location of the VLS study, as well as the methodology of sample selection, were chosen in order to provide a means

for examining how the progression of economic development is influencing demographic and economic behavior among individuals and within households in Viet Nam.

The VLS survey was conducted in Ha Nam Ninh province, which is located in the Red River Delta. At the time of the 1989 census Ha Nam Ninh was the province with the most numerous population in northern Viet Nam (population 3.1 million persons); though the population is predominantly rural, it is also characterized by very high levels of population density. Subsequent to the VLS baseline survey of 1995, Ha Nam Ninh was subdivided into the 3 provinces of Ha Nam, Nam Dinh and Ninh Binh. The area made up by these provinces lies between 60 and 100 kilometers from Viet Nam's capital city of Ha Noi. Its relative proximity to the economic center of northern Viet Nam, and the fact that several of Viet Nam's principal transportation arteries intersect the provinces, including the major North-South arterial—Highway One, make it a likely site of economic development and diffusion of modern, market-based ideas and practices emerging in the reform era.

Sample selection for the VLS was designed so that researchers might be able to assess the impact of unfolding economic changes upon demographic and economic behaviors in the region. Previous research in developing countries of Southeast Asia, for example Hugo et al.'s (1987) exploration of demographic change and development in Indonesia, has shown that growing access to transportation infrastructure may enhance movement strategies and thereby enhance access to more geographically-dispersed employment opportunities. Theorizing that proximity to regional highways, which represent modernizing infrastructure and access to market economic activity, would serve as a valid indicator of individuals' and households' exposure to economic development, VLS sampling was conducted to incorporate variability in distance from these roadways. Therefore, the VLS utilizes a stratified random sampling methodology in which strata are defined by distance from regional highways. The 471 rural and urban communes within the

study area provinces were enumerated and categorized according to their urban/rural status and distance from the region's major highways. Four strata were defined: 1) the three major cities of Nam Dinh, Ninh Binh and Phu Ly (the provincial town of Ha Nam province), 2) rural communes within 3 kilometers of Highway One or inter-provincial highways 10 and 21, 3) rural communes 3-10 kilometers from these major highways, and 4) rural communes greater than 10 kilometers from the major highways. The communes were selected with probabilities proportional to the number of households within the commune (relative to the total number of households in the province). Sample size (i.e., the number of households) in each commune was to provide a self-weighting sample; however, the number of selected households in the three urban communes was increased to achieve a minimum satisfactory number of observations in each area for subsequent analyses. Respondents in the final sample were residents of households that were randomly selected from one of ten communes designated for inclusion in the study. Three of the sampled sites were in the first, urban strata, two were in the second, peri-urban strata, two were in the third, intermediate rural strata, and three were in the fourth, remote rural strata.

After conducting a four-day, 60-interview pre-test of the questionnaire and a week-long interviewer training session during July, 1995, the baseline survey was conducted in the ten VLS communes between the months of September and November, 1995. Of the 4,669 individuals between ages 15 and 65 who were designated as eligible household members within the sampling frame, VLS researchers successfully contacted and administered questionnaires to 4,464 persons. A household questionnaire was administered to the 1,855 households randomly selected in the ten communes. The household questionnaire, administered to heads of household, features a household roster, as well as questions concerning household income sources, ownership of land and property, agricultural production, and other matters concerning physical and economic conditions of the household. The individual questionnaire contains a rich and diverse set of

questions concerning such topics as family relationships, marital and childbearing histories, and work participation. The questions addressed in my dissertation research are those concerning work participation, occupational status, educational attainment and enrollment, reproductive health and childbearing, and related socioeconomic status characteristics. In addition, the portrait of Red River Delta communities that I have outlined in chapter four provides an example of how socioeconomic data collected in the VLS was used to depict variations in household well-being and aspects of employment and occupational structure across communes.

The complete VLS questionnaire text and data coding information can be viewed at the following website: <http://www.csde.washington.edu/research/vietnam/documents.html>.. The survey design and data collection procedures were conceptualized and organized by Professor Charles Hirschman (University of Washington) and his colleagues at the Institute of Sociology (a branch of Vietnam's National Center for the Study of Humanities and the Social Sciences).

4.5 Qualitative Methods

Following the recent and gradual adoption of mixed methods in research practice within the discipline of sociology, I have also undertaken in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with more than 100 men and women who represent different social groups in the Red River Delta. The objective of these qualitative inquiries, in light of the overall scope of the dissertation project, is multifaceted. I share the perspective of Knodel (1997: 849-851) who comments that in-depth interviewing and focus group discussions enable the persons with whom we conduct research to “express their own definitions of the situation,” and to elaborate and explain at greater length than is possible through the methods and instruments of survey research. Through the combination of methods, we, the researchers, are equipped to assess the validity of our quantitative survey data; to gain a fuller understanding of the meaning of survey findings; and

to generate explanations for the relationships that we observe. Like Rudd (2000:523) I use in-depth interviewing as a means to identify connections between subjective experience of individuals in a broader context of social change, specifically that of post-socialist transformation.

I conducted in-person, in-depth interviews during February and March of 2001 and during October, 2001, with assistance from trained social science researchers working at Vietnam's Institute of Sociology. Women and men were selected from one urban district, one remote rural village, and one proximate rural village very near to the expanding provincial town of Nam Dinh. In these three of the ten original VLS commune-villages, men and women were 'invited' by a local representative of the Vietnam's Women Union (i.e., a member of the community and civil servant familiar to residents) to participate in interviews about their work histories, transitions in their employment activities, daily work schedules, career aspirations, performance of housework, childcare, and elder care duties, and decision-making about time allocation and employment choices. With the assistance of an interpreter or research assistant, we conducted interviews in the private homes of interviewees, with each interview lasting approximately one hour (though ranging in length from approximately 30 minutes to 2 hours). In addition to original VLS survey respondents the interview team also interviewed two local officials—the chairperson of the commune and the local Women's Association representative—in each of the three communes. These interviews focused less upon perceptions and attitudes relating to the interviewee's personal experience and more upon the community-level state of affairs concerning gender relations, family well-being, occupational and educational outcomes, and the general socioeconomic and demographic characteristics among the local population. In every case a confidentiality statement was read to the potential interviewees, and their agreement obtained. The interviewing team also requested to use an audio tape-recorder in the interview. After providing an explanation for creating the tape-recording, interviewees agreed with the

procedure in all instances. Upon completion of the fieldwork in each site the interviews were transcribed verbatim by native Vietnamese speakers and then translated into Vietnamese by the author and several research assistants. A sample copy of the interview schedule is show in Appendix A. Interviewers used this interview schedule as a rough guide to the content and ordering of questions; however, individual interviews focused on the unique circumstances of individuals and focused on the particularities of the interviewees' socioeconomic circumstances and work histories and those of their families.

The selection of respondents for in-depth interviews approximated random selection from the original roster of VLS respondents in the three communes included in the surveys conducted from 1995 to 1998. However, due to difficulties securing participation from particular respondents who had moved, who were occupied in work that precluded their participation, or who were reluctant to participate for other reasons, local officials at the commune level, whom had assisted with establishing the sampling frame in the earlier surveys, assisted in locating original VLS respondents who were eligible and available for in-depth interviewing in 2001. The selection of interviewees also diverged from random sampling in that an effort was made, among married respondents, to interview both husband and wife. Thus, while sample selection diverged from simple random sampling, the interview respondents are approximately representative of the original, complete VLS sample in these three geographic areas.

Taking an approach similar to that used by other social demographers (see for example Short et al. 2001), I designed a semi-structured, in-depth interview to complement previously collected quantitative data. The in-depth interviews were conversational and informal, and included the use of guideline questions formulated prior to the interview. However, the interview format encouraged interviewees to elaborate upon issues they deemed important and allowed conversations to develop in unique directions. This approach, especially integrating both non-

directive and focused questions within the same interview, is thought to be useful in eliciting respondent's own ideas and opinions and more thorough elaboration of answers (Connidis 1983). The instruments used for qualitative data collection, specifically an in-depth, semi-structured, in-person interview schedule, (shown in Appendix A.5) focused upon several themes: changes in work and employment as influenced by life course transitions and historical change, daily work schedules, gender roles pertaining to work activity, approaches to childcare and domestic work, and the impact of migration upon the household economy. Information revealed in the qualitative research setting provided an interpretive context for understanding relationships that emerged in the quantitative data, thereby allowing for more sensitized theoretical interpretations.

In several sections of the dissertation I incorporate excerpts from individual interviews that represent themes echoed throughout the interviews. Certain segments of interviews have been selected for inclusion in the text of the dissertation because they are representative of the social experience of wider groups of Vietnamese in the Red River Delta. Certain excerpts were also chosen because, due to their clear articulation and concern with overarching social issues, they are especially insightful for understanding approaches to economic activity and the meaning of economic activity among Red River Delta residents.

4.6 Measurement and the Multidimensionality of Economic Participation

Because the various measures of economic participation taken as indicators of social status, and specifically women's socioeconomic positions relative to men, constitute the focal dependent variables within this dissertation, it is important to discuss the various methodological difficulties that have arisen to challenge sociologists' attempts at operationalizing and measuring the concept. Numerous sociologists have pointed out the importance of being precise in efforts to operationalize and measure the interrelated concepts of women's and men's economic participation, gender inequality or stratification, and women's and men's socioeconomic status.

Brinton (1993:10), in her exploration of Japanese women's *economic roles* states explicitly that increases in women's labor force participation do not necessarily imply decreases in the degree of gender stratification in a society. This is true, in part, because women entering the labor force may be integrated into jobs with poor working conditions, low social status, and poor benefits and compensation. Mason, highlighting the significance of Whyte's (1978) findings on the distinctive clustering of indicators used to measure women's status in preindustrial societies, points out:

“Societies in which women were powerless or of low status in one area did not necessarily show women to be powerless or of low status in other areas...there is no such thing as ‘the’ status of women. Gender inequality is empirically as well as conceptually a multidimensional phenomenon”

The analyses within this dissertation are organized so as to highlight, rather than overlook, the multidimensional nature of women's status relative to men. Each analytical chapter, in turn, examines one dimension of women's economic participation that may be interpreted as constituting an ingredient of women's status. The same dimensions of economic participation are explored among men, as well, so as to conduct a balanced, ‘gendered’ analysis, recognizing that among men, too, there are significant status differentials that are illustrative for understanding emerging social inequalities.

Having recognized the multidimensionality of women's status, within a less developed country such as Viet Nam we are still faced with unique difficulties in operationalizing some of the standard indicators of the concept. Because measurements of labor force participation often demarcate definitions of economic activity as those activities that produce commodity goods and services, it is challenging to describe accurately and quantify labor in contexts characterized by incomplete and immature market development, and where a great deal of work is performed in the subsistence sector. Additionally, the preponderance of agricultural activities in less developed countries, and the conditions prevailing in agricultural employment, are thought to yield

extremely variable enumerations of the female labor force across places, depending upon the type of questioning and instructions for data collection, cultural understandings of work, the roles of women in society and the cultural value placed upon women's contributions to productive labor (Durand 1975). These difficulties of definition and enumeration have led, according to scholars such as Beneria (1982), to misconceptions about the relationship between economic development and women's participation such that biased enumeration of women's economic activities lends itself to the tautological conclusion that women's economic activity rates are positively correlated with economic development.

One way to adequately adapt common indicators of labor force participation within a developing country is to use techniques of data collection and analysis that allow us to recognize 'occupational multiplicity,' or the simultaneous engagement in several occupational activities. This approach to the labor force is commonplace, and our measures ought to incorporate this nuance. Furthermore, holistic measures of economic participation take into account the fact that goods and services produced in the home often enter the market for exchange outside the household, and that a great percentage of labor is performed by unpaid family workers in the agricultural and/or informal sector. In enumerating activities and the allocation of time, it is also important to recognize reluctance or inability to label relative inactivity as unemployment, or even underemployment. Reluctance to use this concept, or its absence from vocabulary or perspectives of self-reference, may exist broadly on a societal or cultural level. In Viet Nam, in particular, referring to oneself as unemployed was very rare until the most recent period of economic reform, when the issue became recognized as a phenomenon and social problem and thereby gradually entered social discourse (Institute of Economic Research, HCMC, 1996).

I use multi-faceted measures of economic activity and occupational status, which extend beyond dichotomous measures of participation, in order to incorporate measures of intensity,

occupation, and multiple jobholding among respondents in the VLS. I use this approach because such a dichotomy is not very meaningful in a developing country where, especially in rural areas, some contribution of labor is expected on behalf of nearly every household member in order to maintain household subsistence and survival. Cain (1991:194) comments on the shortcomings associated with the application of Western understandings of work: "In the West, there is a tendency to think of work, particularly physical labour, as something to be avoided, and, in comparison to hobbies or other recreational pursuits, undesirable. [Conversely, in the case of rural Bangladesh,] aside from the status criteria, work *per se* is best seen as neither desirable nor undesirable. It is simply what one does." More culturally-specific understandings of the meaning of work, therefore, arise from looking at the type, intensity, organizational context, and remuneration that is associated with particular economic activities, as well as considering how a particular women's economic activities fit into the larger, collective organization of activities that constitute the household's strategy for income-generation and risk-minimization.

A common concern in social demography has been the inadequacies of statistical data collection for measuring economic activity. Boserup (1981:122) notes that much of the shift from part-time to full-time work and from own-use production to monetized production among peasants in late 19th and early 20th century Europe went unrecorded because census records and records of industrial employment were not "reliable guides to changes in employment;" as a result, "not only off-season work in peasant families but also the shifts to agricultural wage labor, when rural crafts were replaced by industrial production and intensification of agriculture, are bound to be overlooked." Numerous feminist theorists have demonstrated that traditional empirical approaches to enumerating labor force participation have especially rendered much of *women's* work in the developing countries invisible, specifically labor contributions performed within home-based production and/or contributing to household-based agricultural production for

subsistence and the market. Thus, there has been a significant underenumeration of economic activities that tend to be performed by women in the less developed countries (Tinker 1990; Beneria, 1982). Positivist approaches embodied in survey research, in particular, have been critiqued in feminist social science research circles as rendering women and their perspectives ‘invisible’ (Graham 1983). Women’s work, especially the ‘gray area of self-employment, seasonal work and unpaid family labor,’ has not only commonly been overlooked in censuses and surveys, but is often cast as falling outside the realm of economic and productive activity by both men and women (Blacker 1978). As such, women who are regularly engaged in income-generating labor such as cultivating rice and raising livestock are prone to reporting economic activity as part of their domestic duties and labeling themselves as “housewives” (Donohoe 1999; Dixon 1982).

The qualitative approach proves beneficial in clarifying how the very definition of work changes over time, as gender roles and forms of economic organization undergo important changes. Henderson et al.(2000) conducted focus group research with rural men and women in post-reform era China, demonstrating that ambiguity about what constitutes “work” (or *gongzuo* in the Chinese terminology) is particularly salient in contexts of economic transition and development in which the boundaries of employment, gender, and household are undergoing significant redefinition. Similar ambiguity in definition is likely to influence the perspectives of men and women living in the countryside of northern Viet Nam, where the rural collectives and state-owned enterprises that dominated economic organization until the mid 1980s have given way to family-based production and self-employment.

Taking stock of the numerous critiques of quantitative, survey research methodologies in measuring women’s, as well as men’s economic activities, I utilize several questions in the VLS to derive a sensitive measure of work that encompasses a wide range of labor activities—both

paid and unpaid. Specifically, I examine a series of questions which inquire about involvement in both primary and secondary economic activities, the weekly duration or number of hours worked in primary and secondary economic activities, the type of ownership and number of co-workers, and the industry and occupation of activities. By incorporating these questions we are able to differentiate the productive lives of men and women and detect meaningful variation in the allocation of time to different economic activities. The VLS questionnaire introduces the subject of employment and income generation by acknowledging individuals' involvement in diverse and numerous types of work activity. The primary question in this portion of the survey asks respondents: *What was your major activity during most of last week: working, keeping house, or something else?* After obtaining a response to this question, respondents were asked again about their work, this time being prompted about whether they performed unpaid work for a family farm or business: *Last week, did you do any work at all for pay or did you do any unpaid work in a family farm or business?* Persons who responded in either of these two questions that their primary activity last week was either working, looking for work, or 'had a job, but not working last week' are counted as being economically active, making the assumption that their labor was directed toward producing goods or services for household consumption (i.e., primarily the case for agricultural workers) or for market exchange. Individuals responding that their primary activity was going to school, keeping house, being retired, being unable to work, or not working for some other reason, are considered to be outside the economically active population. Employment details were ascertained by asking respondents about their occupation and industry of employment, the number of hours worked, type of ownership/employer in their work organization, and number of persons with whom they worked. Respondents were also asked about secondary work that they might have performed in the previous week, and information from this question is incorporated in analyses of labor supply. Specifically, respondents were

asked, *Did you work at more than one job last week?* Additional questions on employment details for the secondary position were addressed to those respondents who answered affirmatively.

The great breadth and detail of quantitative data provided in the VLS enables researchers to derive various definitions of employed, economically-active, and economic participant populations. Juxtaposing several alternative definitions of economic participation from the VLS reveals that limited variability in defining economic participation, which emerges through different lines of questioning and wording, can influence conclusions concerning gender and economic participation. Table 4.1 enumerates economically active men and women in the VLS sample according to definitions of ‘economically active’ that vary in their inclusion of unpaid family work, temporary unemployment and job-seeking, as well as full-time versus part-time work. Prompting men and women about their performance of unpaid labor in family farms and businesses, we observe that the number of economically active persons increases only slightly, and nearly the same number of men and women are unpaid family workers. However, by incorporating this small additional subset of workers we obtain an economic participation rate for women slightly greater than that for men. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the male-female differential in economic participation appears to be most substantial when currently unemployed and job-seeking workers (more common among men) are defined as economic participants. Overall, these data demonstrate that approximately equal proportions of men and women are economically active among VLS respondents, and that slightly different conclusions might be drawn about men’s and women’s relative participation in the labor force depending on the chosen measure of economic activity.

The results of logistic regression analyses shown in Table 4.2 (the significant of the results is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six) further reveal that significant gender

differences in economic participation become statistically *insignificant* as a result of using the measure that explicitly incorporates unpaid economic activity. This finding, coupled with detailed data on hours worked and multiple jobholding, suggests that the VLS survey methods are effective in capturing important nuances in economic participation, and in particular, capturing unpaid work performed within the household economy. It is this definition of economic participation, which incorporates unpaid labor performed within the household economy, that will be used in subsequent chapters of the dissertation. This definition is consistent with recent, innovative economic participation measures geared toward recognizing a wide range of work activities that contribute to the family economy, either through income-generation or through ‘cash conserving’ production of goods consumed by the household (Donahoe 1999).

Surveys and census studies have been critiqued for imposing relatively restrictive definitions of labor force participation, or relying upon terminology that leads to an underestimation of economically-oriented work (Donahoe 1999). The VLS, by requesting that each respondent self-identify their primary activity and designate their hours worked in that activity, allows for a measurement of economic participation that is both widely-encompassing and sensitive to variation across individuals. Employed persons, according to the definition that is used throughout the dissertation consist of those persons, working for pay (in cash or in kind) or unpaid family workers, who report working as their primary activity in the week preceding the survey.

Chapter six features two additional measures of labor supply that are incorporated into the analyses so as to capture the multi-dimensional nature of labor force participation. Including both average hours worked per week and multiple jobholding adds a layer of necessary complexity to the analyses. However, this approach also incorporates new complexities in definition and measurement. Estimating average hours of work per week is complicated,

particularly in the informal sector where labor, “leisure,” and “domestic” tasks are not clearly demarcated. Given seasonal variations in agricultural work, it may be the case that aggregating seasonal averages and hours worked in a secondary activity may inflate estimations of total hours worked per week. Defining a particular hour as being allocated to work may also suggest a false dichotomy between working hours and nonworking hours, when in actuality work and leisure may be intermingled in both time and space. The significant variance in reported hours worked per week across respondents suggests that they are able to arrive at a meaningful distinction between work and other activities, and that there is real, meaningful variation in the amount of time devoted to economic activity. In addition, one component of the in-depth interview involved interviewees delineating their daily activity schedules. The ease and clarity with which most respondents accounted for their hours working suggests that most individuals have quite routine work schedules (that admittedly vary across agricultural seasons in the rural areas) and they have delineated a relatively clear framework for designating time to productive work, domestic tasks, and leisure. Despite the flexibility and informality of many work settings, there are regularities in work patterns that make quantification feasible. The following interview text, taken from an interview with a woman who sells tea from a stand near the town market, demonstrates this task of delineating activities and time allocation:

--In the morning at around 7 I set up the goods, and sell from then until 9 or 10 at night, then rest.

--When selling tea do you need someone to assist you?

--There is an afternoon person who replaces for me when I go home for lunch, or in the evening I rest a little while or light the cooking fire.

--Who is it that usually replaces you?

--Usually it is my husband or my daughter who returns from to school.

During interviews nearly all employed persons were similarly able to succinctly describe a working schedule that they adhered to on a somewhat regular basis.

While men and women in the Red River Delta generally appeared to be cognizant of the hours spent at work, versus other activities, the variation in work-time related to changing seasons and labor demand is significant. Thus, it is important to recognize that the VLS provides a snapshot of work intensity, and this snapshot may vary noticeably over a year's time. The words of a 21 year-old woman who works as a tailor in a clothing company suggests how, depending on the timing of the survey, we might reach markedly different conclusions concerning work intensity:

*--It's up to the work. I work more if there's more work and work less if there's less work.
 --Do you have free time in the evening?
 --No. We don't have time to do any thing, including watching TV.
 --When do you finish working in the evening?
 --Sometimes we have to work until midnight if the customers want to get products quickly. We work so hard but the income is not worth mentioning. Any way, we have to be pleased with it because we are the girls who have nothing else to do.
 --Do you feel that's beyond your energies?
 --Yes, it's beyond my energies. To tell the truth, I feel more suitable with 9 or 10 hours working a day...
 --Which month is the hardest time during the year?
 --November and December.
 --How many hours a day do you have to work?
 --It can be up to 14 or 15 hours a day. Since I specialize in making suits [that are popular around the Tet New Year holiday].*

Despite contextual factors that complicate quantification of work participation, particularly working hours, in general I believe that it is advisable to heed the call of social researchers and demographers by deriving alternative, more comprehensive measures to conceptualize work in developing countries (Donahoe 1999; Kain 1991). I attempt to conceptualize work activity, and understand how work is responsive to broader labor market contexts and family obligations, and my inclusion of multiple jobholding and weekly working hours as dimensions of economic participation represent such an attempt.

In describing work activities in their own words, men and women spoke in terms that suggest drawing the boundaries around work for production and social reproduction, and enumerating this work, can be difficult and variable, depending upon one's social location and the nature of one's work activities. One of the reasons that quantifying economic activity is complicated in the Red River Delta is that work schedules vary dramatically across seasons. This is true not only in agriculture, but also in industries (such as retail sales, sewing) where demand for goods fluctuates over the course of a year. Delineating a period of leisure time or "free time" as separate from economic productivity also appeared to be difficult for many interviewees, perhaps because the concept is ill-defined, and in many situations work schedules permit little time for leisure. The comments of a 26 year-old woman, whose time is occupied largely with agricultural work and caring for her three children, demonstrates that use of "free time" often involves tasks of social reproduction, and perhaps activities that ultimately contribute income to the household:

-- "When you have free time what do you usually do?"

-- "Yes, I do washing [clothes] and go to give the pigs food, and tend vegetables, there are several hours that the children are at kindergarten, but I am still not able to take a rest, I still have to work."

Reflecting upon his contributions to household farming activities as a youth, a 45 year-old man from Xuan Thanh commune comments that delineating the allocation of time is difficult, given the intermingling of diverse activities. This practice is likely widespread among agricultural workers, especially during off-peak agricultural seasons:

"I cannot determine [the amount of time the work it entailed], because when I was small, I tended the buffalo at the same time while cutting grass and playing with my friends."

Analyzing comments made by interviewees concerning work activities and delineation of activities that represent income generation work, social reproduction work and leisure time demonstrates that efforts in quantifying work activities are complicated by the overlap of diverse activities in time and space that is common in informal and agricultural sector work. Estimating time allocation to work for a designated time period is further complicated given that for certain laborers, especially self-employed agriculturalists and hired manual workers, working hours might fluctuate significantly between days, depending upon the daily demand for their labor. However, interviewees' demonstrated capability of disaggregating their daily time schedule into work and non-work activities is perhaps comparable to what we might observe among formal sector workers in a more advanced, industrialized economy. Although more frequent brief, intermittent movements in and out of work activity may occur for Red River Delta workers, especially persons working in rural areas (e.g., taking time away from minding a store or vending cart to perform childcare activities, or leaving the fields or worksite at mid-day to prepare food and perform other domestic chores), the in-depth interviews demonstrate that men and women are quite adept at estimating work hours and taking into account these breaks in work activity. In the absence of detailed time allocation schedules, frequently utilized in household division of labor studies, I rely on men's and women's own estimates of time spent in work activities.

Exploring Men's and Women's Economic Roles in Recent Vietnamese History Using Cross-Sectional Data

In chapter seven I focus upon the economic roles performed by women and men as they enter the labor force for the first time. Although the VLS survey has a longitudinal component, the span of time it covers is relatively short (i.e., 1995 to 1998). Therefore, in order to study historical change using the VLS it is necessary to rely upon retrospective data and to construct 'period' data through the reflections of different age-cohorts upon an earlier, fixed period in their

lifetime. Through cross-sectional data with a retrospective component, women and men provide information on their ‘standardizing’ occupation at marriage. This measure serves as a proxy for respondents’ economic role upon entering the labor force. Although a significant number of workers may experience shifts in their economic roles prior to marriage, the stable, and relatively youthful, age at first marriage allows us to approximate the primary occupation of workers when they reached adulthood—whether this occurred in the 1950s, when northern Viet Nam was just obtaining independence from the French; or, during the 1970s, at the height of American bombing of the Red River Delta; or, during the late 1980s, when the region was experiencing economic collapse and new market reforms were just beginning to unfold. Categorizing each respondent, irrespective of his or her age, according to what s/he was occupied in doing at approximately age 22, makes for a powerful tool for exploring the roles that men and women played at critical historical junctures. Furthermore, this historically sensitive analysis will provide meaningful background for interpreting the analyses of occupational status attainment processes that appear in chapter eight. In essence, the distribution of men and women across different economic roles provides a snapshot of the Vietnamese socio-historical framework during years of war, collectivization, and market reform.

Within chapter seven, I conceptualize economic roles to include activities other than employment. The original question in the VLS survey asks respondents, “what kind of work were you doing when your current/first marriage began?” In addition to twelve major industrial groupings, respondents could also specify military service, school attendance, or working inside the home as their major form of work. Within the outcome categories of this variable, military service is an ‘economic’ role that has occupied substantial numbers of men, and women too, at crucial points in time—both historically and within the individual life course. Through this

‘historical’ analysis we are able to estimate how military service on the part of young men and women has fluctuated over the late 20th century.

Applying Occupational Status Measures to Model Status Attainment in the Red River Delta

The focal dependent variable, occupational status, featured in chapter eight represents another complex concept in the field of sociology whose measurement has challenged many an analyst. I utilize two measures of occupational status, including a categorical variable that delineates workers according to the major industry of their primary employment, as well as an interval variable that approximates an hierarchical occupational prestige score, modeled on the rankings developed by Treiman and colleagues (Ganzeboom et al. 1989; Treiman 1977; Treiman 1970) and used in international, comparative analyses of occupational status attainment and stratification. Using these two measures jointly takes into account the Red River Delta’s occupational structure and the predominance of agricultural work in rural areas, relative to more unique and positively evaluated forms of employment.

The measurement of occupational status attainment begins in the VLS individual survey, when working respondents were asked to provide a verbal description of their primary economic activity in the preceding week. These verbal descriptions of occupations were then coded using the 3-digit 1968 International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO). This coding was completed by Vietnamese doctoral students with fluency in English and with familiarity in using the ISCO. The ISCO codes were then translated into international occupational prestige scores by the author (following Treiman 1977). The distribution of workers in the VLS according to their ISCO and occupational prestige scores is shown in Appendix Table A8.1.

An assessment of socioeconomic conditions and occupational structure in the Red River Delta, which demonstrates the relative poverty of agricultural workers (see Table One in Chapter

Eight, also Dollar et al. 1998), as well as consistently stated preferences to locate employment outside the field of agriculture among interviewees, suggested a need to alter the occupational prestige scoring used by Treiman. In chapter eight I discuss precisely how I have modified Treiman and colleagues' standard, international classification of occupations in order to create a tighter correlation between socioeconomic status (as measured by income and education) and occupational prestige.

The accounts of men and women in in-depth interviews provided valuable insights into Red River Delta residents' attitudes toward certain forms of work, specifically their high regard for state employment in professional occupations. The occupational structure of the Red River Delta is concentrated in low status occupations. Mostly agricultural labor, but also petty trading and unskilled manual labor, make up the vast majority of occupational opportunities present in local village and town economies. Thus, for many youth, a strong, though largely unrealizable, aspiration is to achieve a job that offers more security, wealth, and prestige than that offered in the informal sector. In lieu of economic development and investment in the region, the most promising and rewarding jobs are those located in the state sector—employment in 'co quan,' or government offices that offer benefits, prestige, and a stability and predictability in income and work conditions that is not available for workers who must face the whims of the emerging market, and natural disasters. Thusly, my main concern in chapter eight is to juxtapose professional employment in the state sector with work in farming, manual labor and other relatively low status positions, and to utilize multivariate methods to determine which segment of the population has attained high status positions in the current period. Again, as a result of operationalizing the focal dependent variable, occupational status, through the use of two methods, I derive a more complete picture of occupational status. The dichotomization of occupations, and the application of hierarchical ranking, are methods that have been tried and

tested in diverse international settings for decades. Their application in Viet Nam, a novel attempt, allows for the application and empirical testing of widely used, debated, and scrutinized theoretical perspectives

Table 4.1 Comparison of Economic Participation Measures Calculated from VLS Data, Vietnam's Red River Delta, Men & Women Age 15-65

	<i>Valid N</i>				
Description	MEN	WOMEN	% of Total Men age 15- 65	% of Total Women age 15-65	Ratio—Men: Women
Economically active, including Job-seekers, Temp. Unemployed, and Unpaid Family Workers	1829	2048	87.6%	86.2%	0.89
Economically active, including Jobseekers and Temp. Unemployed only	1813	2008	86.8%	84.5%	0.90
Employed Persons, including Unpaid Family Workers	1732	1975	82.9%	83.2%	0.88
Employed Persons, Does not Include Unpaid Family Workers	1700	1929	81.4%	81.2%	0.88
Full-time Employed Persons working 35+ hours in the previous week (incl. Unpaid)	1430	1574	68.5%	66.3%	0.91

*Source: 1995 Vietnam
Longitudinal Survey*

Table 4.2 Logistic Regression Comparing Measures of Economic Participation among Persons Age 15-65, in Vietnam's Red River Delta, 1995

	Economically Active, includes Unpaid Family Workers		Economically Active, Restricted Definition without prompt for unpaid labor	
	Exp (B)	Std Err	Exp (B)	Std Err
CONSTANT	14.45***	0.24	13.04***	.23
Gender (Female=1, Male=0)	0.87	0.1	.81*	.09
Age 15-24	.35***	0.17	.33***	.16
Age 25-44 (Omitted)	1.00	--	1.00	--
Age 45-65	.33***	0.16	.34***	.15
0-5 years of schooling	1.29	0.17	1.22	.16
6-9 years of schooling	1.39**	0.12	1.44***	.11
Omitted (10+ years of schooling)	1.00	--	1.00	--
Single	.54***	0.18	.59***	.18
Married (omitted)	1.00	--	1.00	--
Widowed/Divorced/Separated	0.66	0.24	.76	.24
Urban	.45***	0.13	.53***	.12
Proximate Rural: 0-3 km from hwy	0.91	0.14	1.09	.14
Intermediate Rural: 3-10 km from hwy	1.26	0.15	1.53**	.14
Most Rural: 10+ km from highway (omit)	1.00	--	1.00	--
Kids Age 0 to 5	1.32*	0.12	1.19	.11
Kids Enrolled in School	1.23***	0.07	1.21**	.06
* Prob t <=.05, ** Prob t <=.01, ***Prob t <=.001				
Model N	4,464		4,464	
-2 Log Likelihood	3036.03		3246.25	
Model Chi Square/df	438.94		434.16	
R-square (Cox and Snell, Nagelkerke)	.09, .17		.09, .17	

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

Chapter 5. SOCIETY AND ECONOMY IN THE RED RIVER DELTA: A PORTRAIT

5.1 Chapter Introduction

In this chapter I render a portrait of the social, cultural and economic landscape in the Red River Delta at the end of the 20th century. This task involves piecing together myriad forms of data, ranging from census data, to historical and ethnographic studies, to in-depth interviews conducted with village officials and local residents. By combining quantitative and qualitative analyses of data from the VLS and interviews I conducted during 2001 (the methodologies which are defined in detail in Chapter four), as well as recent secondary sources of economic and demographic data for Viet Nam, and the Red River Delta region in particular, I depict common experiences in local labor markets and occupational structures, living conditions and economic aspirations that characterize individuals living in several communities of northern Viet Nam. The aim of this chapter is to elaborate upon the institutional and cultural fabric in which individual economic behavior is embedded. A complementary objective is to demonstrate the differences that exist, in economic structure and social organization, across villages and towns in the Red River Delta and to illustrate the way these local differences yield profound influences upon the well-being and lived experience of Delta residents. Previous works have elaborated upon the patterns of life among the ‘peasants of the Tonkin Delta’ (Gourou 1955) sketched broadly, and others have spoken on the social organization and institutions of specific villages like ‘Hai Van’ (Hourtart and Lermercinier 1984). My approach aims to update and synthesize studies of the region and the villages and urban districts of which it is composed. The continuity and diversity among specific Red River Delta communities are emphasized in this chapter, and thereby the complexity and interconnectedness of the region’s local economies are revealed.

Drawing from men's and women's accounts of their work histories and their daily experiences in work and family life, I elaborate upon Red River Delta residents' attempts to provide for the well-being of their family and maintain their household economy. I relate observations from my own fieldwork to depict social life, economic activities, and general economic conditions that prevail in three communities of the Red River Delta. Specifically, I will describe one district within a small town (Van Giang district, Ninh Binh city), a semi-urban village (Loc Hoa commune, Nam Dinh province), and a remote rural village (Xuan Thanh commune, Nam Dinh province), and I will relay personal accounts given by several men and women in each of these places, as they speak about the intersections of their working roles and family roles, as well as the aspirations, challenges, contradictions, eventful experiences and transitions that have occurred in their working lives.

In terms of methodological approach, I combine descriptive quantitative data along with in-depth interviews in which men and women discuss their experiences and convey cultural meanings in their own words. The methods of data collection are described at length in the next chapter. By way of brief introduction I note here that quantitative results derive from the 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey (unless specified otherwise), and that qualitative results emerged in in-depth, in-person interviews conducted by myself and several Vietnamese research assistants. By combining these two approaches I hope to depict both community level patterns and individual experiences as they are circumscribed by structural and institutional forces. I do not believe that the individual accounts represented here are unique, isolated experiences that pertain solely to one man's or woman's experience; nor do I intend to suggest that these individual accounts generalize to an entire social group or a majority of similarly situated men or women. That is to say, while the research methods undertaken prevent my commenting with any certainty on the extent to which these experiences and sentiments generalize to other men and women, I

have chosen these stories because I believe they capture themes about gender, experiences with market transition, family roles and obligations that were frequently expressed during the duration of my fieldwork in the three commune/districts.

5.2 Geography and Population Density of the Red River Delta

The research design of the VLS study incorporates the economic and social ecological diversity of the Red River Delta region. The entire Red River Delta region consists of nine provinces, and includes the nation's capital of Ha Noi, as well as Hai Phong, a rapidly growing coastal center and the country's 3rd most populous city. With a population of 14,800,000 persons and population density approaching 1,200 persons/km² in 1999, the region features very high levels of population density (General Statistical Office of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, 1999). Both historically and in the Southeast Asian region, the "intensive cultivation of rice in the Tonkin Delta permitted a concentration of population there that has yet to be equaled in the region" (Keyes 1995:185).

The high density of population, experienced both in rural and urban areas of the Delta, has exerted a strong influence upon the economic strategies and livelihoods of agriculturalists, as they toil to extract high yields from limited land and allocate labor in a productive manner. Historical accounts suggest that rice cultivation has often been viewed as a necessary, though not sufficient, activity for Delta villagers. Although sideline occupations have been a common feature, they rarely have taken precedence over the sustaining activities of rice cultivation. Even in the present time, when many describe their income from rice as 'not much,' rice remains the dietary staple and basis of subsistence. Lucrative as additional work, such as migrant labor or handicraft production might be, it is still organized around the cultivation of family's ricefields (See Figures 5.1 and 5.2). Jamieson notes (1993:34):

“Virtually every family was engaged in the exploitation of the ricefields that surrounded most villages. Most occupations, even the growing of most other crops, were things to be done when one could not be profitably engaged in growing rice. Everyone—carpenters, blacksmiths, barbers—tried to farm if it were at all possible. The specter of hunger was familiar and lurked close at hand. There could never be too much rice, and growing rice was never too much work. But many families could not make a living farming, and most villagers were perpetually short of cash. Village industries provided a means of using extra time to earn additional money. There were almost exclusively family enterprises. Labor was not considered to be a cost. An entire family would work hard all day for a very small profit.”

Although the recent market reform era has witnessed a noticeable degree of economic diversification and development in the region, rice and its cultivation continue to be the region's economic foundation. New strategies, particularly short-term, circular labor migration, are beginning to be undertaken by substantial segments of the population to supplement the agrarian way of life. However, it is the rare rural household that does not derive a substantial proportion of its income from agricultural activities.

The ten communes that constitute the VLS study area are situated in the three provinces of Nam Ha, Ninh Binh and Nam Dinh (See Map in Figure 5.3). Located approximately 90 kilometers from Ha Noi, and with an aggregate population of approximately 3,560,000 persons, this sub-region features a high density of population with approximately 918 persons/km² (General Statistical Office of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, 1999). Depicted in the map are several important roadways and waterways, shown in red and blue, respectively, that influence economic activities within the region and its connectedness to sites of modernization and market economy in the broader national context. I elaborate in greater detail upon the influence of these transportation arteries for economic activity in a latter section of this chapter.

5.3 The Organization of Agricultural Production and the Socioeconomic Status of Agricultural Workers

As the hub of northern Viet Nam's economic life, the Red River Delta features a predominately rural population whose agricultural activities support approximately half of the

country's rice production. Since the reform of collective agriculture policies and implementation of land use and land transfer rights initiated with the 1988 and 1993 Land Laws, most cultivation of wet-rice plots, as well as vegetable gardens and orchards, has taken place on small, family-owned plots of land. In terms of the mechanism for reallocating collective land to households, the first Land Law contained a degree of flexibility; allocations were to be based on land availability, household labor force, and previous cultivation area of the households. Ceilings were placed upon the amount of land that could go to an individual household; however, these ceilings are not clearly delineated in the legislation. Although the design of land allocation was to distribute once-collective land in an equitable fashion, several observers have commented that the land allocation process was riddled with conflict and ambiguity, and placement of decision-making into the hands of provincial-level cadres likely contributed to inequalities and the maintenance of privileges that cadres had enjoyed during the collective era (Ravillion and van de Walle 2001; Kolko 1997).

Analyses of Viet Nam's agricultural economy suggest that *doi moi* property rights have created an increased commitment on the part of the farming families to improve productivity. Recent studies suggest that up to one-third of recent economic growth in Viet Nam is attributable to farmers' new land rights (FAO 2001). Agricultural productivity and diversification have been greatly heightened, and food exports have risen substantially during the 1990s. Viet Nam has been the world's second leading exporter of rice since 1999, and exports of other cash crops such as tea, tobacco and coffee have risen dramatically. As a result, rural poverty and child malnutrition have declined substantially since the early 1990s, and the proportion of agricultural income deriving from rice production has fallen slightly (from approximately 51% in 1993 to 44% in 1998).

Despite improvements in production that have resulted from allocation of land to households, application of certain high yield production technologies, and intensification through multi-cropping, households that subsist solely upon agricultural production still face very low levels of income, both in relative and absolute terms. A World Bank study analyzing per capita expenditure data from the 1992-93 Vietnam Living Standards Survey (VLSS) found that households headed by agricultural workers are the poorest in the region, whereas those headed by 'white-collar' workers are most well off. (Dollar and Glewwe 1998:35). The importance of occupational status as a factor determining relative household well-being was reiterated in a nation-wide analysis of household expenditures in which Dollar and Glewwe demonstrate that approximately 18% of all income inequality across households in Viet Nam is attributable to the occupational status of household heads (1998:41). These figures aptly demonstrate the marked economic status differences that accrue to professional workers and other high status workers compared to agriculturalists. Obtaining a career in a professional occupation continues to be a relatively rare occurrence in Viet Nam's largely agrarian economy (only about 5% of households in the VLS are headed by professional workers). Given the importance of occupational status as a determinant of household well-being, I explore the determinants of occupational status in greater detail in Chapter Eight to assess which characteristics and processes are influential for achieving these privileged status positions.

During in-depth interviews, men and women from agricultural households often described economic difficulties with a great degree of urgency and severity. By comparison, members of households headed by professionals spoke of challenging economic conditions; however, their difficulties tended to focus less often upon meeting basic subsistence needs than upon being able to provide suitable educational opportunities for their children and otherwise achieve social mobility. Workers, the relatively wealthy and the poor, employed in diverse

locations and employment sectors, seem to be collectively striving to enhance their income generating capabilities; however, the remotely-rural agriculturalists are more often preoccupied with securing economic survival, whereas the urban professionals and entrepreneurs are more often concerned with improving their chances, and that of their children, at achieving successful employment outcomes and improving their socioeconomic status positions. This research systematically addresses the approaches taken and employment outcomes obtained as workers from different social locations engage in an effort to generate income within their local employment environments.

The organization of labor required within an agricultural system that features small, fragmented plots of land, is such that labor inputs vary dramatically across agricultural seasons. This being the case, the sum of labor supply may be negatively correlated with household income in certain places, especially where land per capita is relatively low and there exist few employment opportunities outside of agriculture. Among households within the VLS study area, bivariate analyses of household land ownership and household income distribution across geographic settings display significant variability (See Table 5.1). The data in Table 5.1 suggest that the economic well-being of households is linked to geographic location and the diversity of local income sources. While position on the urban-rural continuum (i.e., the commune's relative distance from major regional highways) is correlated with household income levels, there is no straightforward correlation linking geographic location, or the commune's rural-urban location, with mean household income levels. Urban settings have some of the highest mean household income levels per capita, followed by proximate rural villages. Remote rural villages, those more than 10 kilometers from a major highway, tend to have the lowest household income per capita. However, there does not appear to be a straightforward, linear association between mean household income levels for communes and position on the rural-urban continuum. More so than

their rural versus urban location, mean per capita household income appears to be closely linked to the household structure of income sources. Specifically, households having a greater proportion of their income deriving from salaries and wages have the highest overall levels of income, whereas those households deriving the majority of their income from rice production are the poorest. This finding suggests that there is a socioeconomic benefit to households to be derived from diversification of income sources, to include multiple sources of income, especially income deriving from nonagricultural activities.

5.4 The Social Organization of Agricultural Work in the Red River Delta

The defining scenes of life in the Red River Delta continue to be composed of agricultural workers, usually women, hunched over expansive fields of rice, intensively working the land by hand. Such scenes are punctuated on occasion by buffalo-drawn plows, primitive tractors and bicycles hauling workers and their produce from the fields (See Figures 5.4 and 5.5). In his classic study, *The Peasants of the Tonkin Delta*, Gourou (1955) elaborates upon the intense manual labor performed by men to irrigate fields by hand-held instruments. While the establishment of elaborate irrigation works that mechanize water distribution throughout the region and the gradual introduction of some farm equipment has minimized the complete reliance upon human labor, it is not uncommon to observe peasants in the contemporary period relying on such 'primitive' implements as water-scoops and water-buffalo drawn plows (see Figure 5.6).

In a study of agricultural labor in nine communes of the Red River Delta, previously discussed in Chapter 3, Le Thi Nham Tuyet (1996) elaborates upon the ways in which policies for land re-allocation during the *doi moi* reforms tended to generate very small, scattered plots for rice production which have made traveling to and from one's numerous plots time consuming. Many families in their study have upwards of seven individual plots of land, scattered several kilometers apart, to which they must transport themselves and their field implements on foot or

by bicycle. In addition, some plots are so small that the application of mechanized technology, in the case that it is available, is not possible, given that moving a plow through the small patches of land can be difficult. Furthermore, their research confirms that the opening of market production has not necessarily reduced labor demands; peasants must maximize labor inputs to achieve subsistence through agricultural production. Most families, especially those poorly equipped to diversify their economic activity beyond agriculture, face great pressure to intensify production, often through multiple crop rotations and the application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. In addition, many households have members that have dedicated their labor to migration activities and nonagricultural occupational sidelines, thereby placing a greater proportion of agricultural labor burdens on a smaller number of workers.

Previous observations on the division of labor in northern Viet Nam (see, for example, Gourou 1955) suggests that the organization of agricultural labor in the Red River Delta was noticeably gendered, with men and women performing mostly separate tasks in a pattern that echoes Boserup's observations on high population density agricultural systems (1990:16):

“With permanent instead of incipient use of the land, the system of tribal ownership of land is usually transformed into a system of peasant production with private ownership of land and with use of animals for cultivation and transport. In addition, these changes are accompanied by important changes in women's position. The favored male group becomes owner of the land and usurps the use of the new and more efficient equipment. Men are taught to operate the animal-driven equipment while women continue to prepare the land with hand tools. Men use pack animals and wagons for transport while women carry head loads. The discriminatory use of technology continues even when the stage of mechanized equipment is reached...men ride tractors while women continue to work with hand tools or without any tools, performing the backbreaking, tedious work of weeding and transplanting.”

Gender divisions such as those mentioned by Boserup were prevalent during the collective period as well, as men more often than women were assigned to operate the plough or irrigation works. Exceptions to this gender division of tasks did occur, though, especially where war mobilization

generated a dearth of male labor supply (see, for example, Le Thi Nham Tuyet 1996). The gender divisions persist now that agricultural production has been re-incorporated into the household. However, breaks in this traditional gender division of labor tend to appear where extended or two-parent, nuclear household forms are disrupted, due to labor migration or the early death of a family member. Since labor migration streams originating from Red River Delta villages have tended to be dominated by men, there is often a deficit of male workers in remote rural villages, such as Xuan Thanh, because women are frequently left behind to perform the bulk of agricultural labor without the assistance of an adult male laborer. An interview with a 26 year-old woman in Xuan Thanh clarifies how the household and gender boundaries have shifted in her own family's agricultural production activity. Asked, "*But if your house has one man who goes away, then who does the work in the fields? The mother and younger sisters?*" she replies, "*Yes, I have to try and finish the work. The house does not have a man present to do the work so I also have to try to do it. There are still certain heavy jobs than I am not able to do so I have to hire someone.*"

Increasingly, women too have become involved in seasonal migration, often traveling to Ha Noi to work as scrap-iron recyclers. While men and women may both be apprehensive in having women leave the home for extended periods to work in Ha Noi or other distant locations, many have overcome this hesitation when they recognize that women scrap metal collectors may have even greater opportunities and more lucrative outcomes than male migrants who go to drive cy-clos or to do construction work and face a glutted market and competition for scarce jobs. In those families where women members frequently depart to work as migrants in Ha Noi and elsewhere, the gender boundaries of work may also shift as husbands and sons undertake the tasks usually performed by absent women. Many men elaborated upon how their own work changes when their wives go to work in the city; that it is at these times when they take to preparing meals

and other domestic tasks. Women, too, take note of the changes; one woman from Xuan Thanh remarked about her neighbor, whose wife regularly migrates to Ha Noi, as follows:

“He feels very confident in himself and believes in his wife so when I saw him staying at home and looking after the two children, he can do the farmwork very well and there is no complaint with this. I don’t know exactly what happened in their own family but from the outside I can see that there is no conflict.”

Instances such as these demonstrate that gendered work norms, in the context of underemployment and insufficient work opportunities in the local environment, may be relatively flexible if such flexibility brings economic benefit to the household. Apparently, “women’s work” can be suitable for men in contexts where economic difficulties are heavy and where outside employment in ‘men’s activities’ is limited.

5.5 Landscape, Architecture and Infrastructure in the Red River Delta

As the map in Figure 5.3 reveals, the VLS study area is intersected by several major regional highways. Among these are National Highway One, which connects Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi, and passes through many of the country’s population centers including Ninh Binh town. Nam Dinh city and Loc Hoa commune lie along another major regional highway. Estimating how relative distance to the major regional highways Numbers 10 and 21, and National Highway 1, influences economic activity and development has been a central objective of the VLS study project. Overall, we observe substantial diversity in the occupational structure of places in a pattern that correlates with distance to highways. Commerce, construction and transportation occupations predominate in urban settings and settings nearby highways. For those communes located on or near a major highway there is a constant flow of traffic that generates local business in retail trade and services. “Intermediate” rural areas tend to have mixed economies that incorporate traditional agricultural production and elements of the more modern

sector—such as trade and transportation. Remote rural areas located more than 10 kilometers from regional highways rely predominantly upon agriculture, with a small minority of workers earning a livelihood in trade, services, and other locally-based economic activities. During the off-peak agricultural seasons, many men and women in communes lacking a diverse occupational base are unable to earn supplementary income in the local economy. Thus, they migrate to urban areas, especially Ha Noi, in order to work as pedi-cab drivers, recyclable trash material collectors, and domestic workers. Others migrate further distances, and for longer periods of time, to work in areas experiencing greater demand for labor, such as the sparsely-settled, resource-rich Central Highlands and thriving market environment of Ho Chi Minh city. Population movement was severely restricted during the collective period through a system of household registration that anchored workers to their place of birth, or their husband's place of residence in the case of many women (Dang Nguyen Anh 2001). Nowadays, by contrast, in certain villages of the Red River Delta seasonal migration has become normative, such that nearly every household has at least one member who is a labor migrant.

Although their distance to the region's highways is one factor that precludes establishing more extensive, sustainable local business and development activities, the region's highways and a fledgling, informal public transportation network facilitate population movement out of areas where superfluous rural labor exists which can be absorbed in off-peak agricultural seasons. Few residents of the Red River Delta own automobiles or motorbikes, however one form of entrepreneurship that is becoming increasingly prevalent, in both rural and urban areas, involves several relatives or neighbors pooling funds to purchase a car or truck to operate a driving or transport service. Pervasive on the urban streets are small motorbikes, often seen carrying three and even more people. In rural areas the motorbike traffic thins and bicycles become more pervasive. While affordable, this mode of transit, especially upon old and heavily trafficked

highways and roads, poses many hazards. Air pollution and dust, and poor road conditions, in addition to dense traffic in certain areas, make travel difficult and dangerous.⁵ Many others regularly purchase an inexpensive bus ticket and travel with fellow villagers to Ha Noi. The site of large buses, piled high inside and out, with bicycles, baskets for carrying salable goods, and other personal belongings, is ubiquitous as one drives on Viet Nam's major highways, providing visible evidence to the great mobility of laborers in the region and across the country (See Figure 5.7).

Proximity to highways facilitates access to markets, and those communes located directly on the transportation corridor exhibit particularly vital commercial, transportation and construction sectors. The Vietnamese have a special phrase, and accord a special value, for homes that are built facing streets (in Vietnamese: *nha mat duong*), because such housing presents the opportunity to operate a business out of one's home. In cities and small towns alike, families with homes adjacent to busy streets frequently operate small shops, restaurants, and other businesses in the street-level quarters of their homes. While the time demands placed upon family labor are often great in these businesses, which often operate from morning to night to generate more healthy profits, such households often enjoy a degree of relative economic prosperity that derives in no small part from their location. The benefit that accrues to communes due to their relative proximity to major highways is analogous to this more localized, household-level phenomenon. Highway traffic allows for direct access to market opportunities, as the seemingly endless stream of restaurants, repair shops, and rest-stops lining the highway demonstrate. The highways also provide an indirect, though convenient, route linking the

⁵ In 2001 there were nearly 8,000 traffic fatalities and 22,000 traffic injuries on the roads of Vietnam, according to the Viet Nam Transport and Communication Technology Institute. These are particularly high numbers in a country where there are approximately 8 million motorbikes and 500,000 automobiles on the roads.

commune's population to labor market opportunities and markets for goods in population centers located along the highway.

Among the architectural features prominent on the Red River Delta landscape are those symbolic of religious and cultural belief systems. There exists an intermingling of Roman Catholic cathedrals and Buddhist temples in the cities and villages of northern Viet Nam that denote the diversity of religious beliefs and the importance of religious and spiritual ceremony in Vietnamese life, an importance that has reemerged in the doi moi era (Luong Van Hy 1992). While only about 10% of the total Vietnamese population is Roman Catholic, in certain villages of the Red River Delta the majority of the population is Catholic. Catholic families retain a degree of social isolation from the majority group that either follows Buddhism or does not adhere to an organized religion; this social distance may be rooted in the Catholics' unique religious practices, as well as their geographic concentration and segregated residential patterns (Mai Huy Bich 1995). Although Catholics continue to constitute a social group with a unique cultural identity and historical experience, few attempts have been made to examine the socioeconomic conditions and constraints to economic activity that characterize Catholic families and communities—a significantly sizable minority population in Viet Nam.

The secular cultural events and social life of the village tend to center around the village communal house, or Dinh. Each village possesses a Dinh whose semi-spiritual character is important to village members' identity and sense of community because it serves as a shrine honoring village heroes and heroines and as a site for village festival and ceremony. Furthermore, even for nonreligious persons visiting Buddhist pagodas also functions as a secularized social outing or leisurely pursuit for the general population. In addition to the Dinh, some of the largest built structures seen in the countryside at the present time are the newly constructed buildings housing governmental offices and living quarters for civil servants.

Towering high and often set apart from the concentration of residential areas, provincial offices are markedly different than the modest offices of the People's Committee that are erected in each village and urban district and function as a workplace for local-level civil servants. Usually painted in bright hues of yellow and red, colors of the national flag, in addition to the function they serve, these structures, both at the provincial and local level, are representative of the SRVN governmental organization as it filters from the nation's capital, through to the provincial, district and village levels.

5.6 Economic Participation and Occupational Structure

Aggregate levels of economic participation are consistently high across areas of the Red River Delta included in the current study; however, underlying this consistency is considerable diversity in the occupational structure of populations, as well as in the approaches to job combinations. First, considering employment rates, measured as the number of persons who responded that their primary activity in the preceding week was working, Table 5.2 demonstrates that in each type of place the proportion employed was between 74% (in urban areas) and 90% (in proximate rural areas). Urban areas do seem to be places where nonworking statuses are more common, and this may be the case for a number of reasons. A greater proportion of young adults in these areas are students. In addition, there are more retired persons, more men looking for work, and more women whose primary activity is keeping house. Working status is most prevalent among the population residing in intermediate rural-urban areas. While the simple cross-tabular data presented here are not conclusive, this pattern of results could be linked to harsh economic conditions that demand consistent employment, and/or the local labor market conditions that allow for diverse forms of work participation and hence relatively minimal obstacles in locating and maintaining employment.

Despite the relative consistency in economic activity patterns across areas, the prevailing patterns are instructive for understanding the organization of work activities in the Red River Delta, and certain important gender patterns. First, it is notable that women outnumber men, both in the local population overall and within the working population. In all types of places there are, on average, about ten women for every eight to nine men. Second, in terms of their reasons for not working, men more frequently than women report attending school and being retired. Women, on the other hand, tend to report keeping house. Finally, the frequency of persons in different nonworking status positions varies across different geographic areas. In remote rural areas the more prevalent nonworking status is reported as having a job, but not working in the preceding week. In urban areas, by comparison, going to school and keeping house are much more prevalent as nonworking statuses than they are in the rural areas where school attendance into the late teenage years is less common and where keeping house is most likely more compatible with economic work locations and informal schedules.

In many settings of the Red River Delta, where local demand for nonagricultural labor is limited, and especially where agricultural production is dominated by rice-cultivation, households face difficulties in achieving subsistence-level income. Circular, seasonal labor migrations, as well as longer-term, long distance migrations, are one of the routes whereby peasants in remote villages have adapted to rural poverty and the absence of work opportunities outside of agriculture. The frequency of this activity, and the predominance of men among labor migrants, is reflected in the imbalanced sex ratios shown in Table 5.2. Boserup (1970) acknowledged that migration patterns such as these played a role in delaying rural development, at the same time that they increased inequities between men and women. Scholars of internal migration in Viet Nam have demonstrated that labor migration is highly valued as a route toward enhancing rural incomes and releasing the superfluous rural workforce. Despite difficulties in adjusting to urban

living, and strained attachments to their home villages, many migrants from the Red River Delta who find themselves working in Ha Noi are of the opinion that ‘the poor in the city are better off than the rich in the countryside.’ (Dang Nguyen Anh 2001:55). Analyses of the 1997 Migration and Health Survey reveal that out-migrants from the Red River Delta have higher levels of education than nonmigrants, and that young men continue to predominate in migration streams (however about 30% of outmigrants are female). Given that outmigrants are disproportionately young, male, and educated persons, high levels of migration emanating from the Red River Delta have important consequences for the organization of family and economic life. Specifically, families may be absent several members, and hence experience a depletion of labor supply. However, they may receive substantial remittances that allow for education expenditures, hiring labor, and new forms of consumption. Whether or not migration from the Red River Delta has developed mechanisms of positive feedback, or ‘cumulative causation’ that heightens rural people’s migrating tendencies, has not been decisively determined. It is clear that women are increasingly undertaking migration and being exposed to opportunities that are absent in the rural economy; it is also clear that migrant remittances being sent to families in the Red River Delta constitute a substantial source of income. These findings suggest that labor migration, both temporary and permanent, is increasingly being incorporated into household economic strategies as a legitimate route toward improving household well-being and coping with overabundant labor supply.

5.7 The Economic Well-being of Households and the Threat of Poverty

Despite intensive agricultural production and various local entrepreneurial efforts, the Red River Delta region, especially its rural areas, continues to experience high levels of poverty. According to the 1992 VLSS, approximately 55% of the Red River Delta population lives in poverty (i.e., according to a food basket measure of poverty and estimation of actual versus

necessary food and nonfood expenditures). Red River Delta poverty is significantly variable across different groups--particularly across occupational groups. Nearly 65% of households headed by farmers live in poverty, compared to just 25% of those headed by white collar professionals and 30% headed by persons working sales/and services occupations (Dollar and Litvack 1998). Also, these poverty rates are rooted in high levels of underemployment and a rapidly increasing pool of labor force participants who face few employment opportunities, besides working in an already saturated rural labor market (Wiens 1998). High population density in the Red River Delta means that traditional agricultural activities are insufficient for lifting most rural populations out of poverty, thereby making structural diversification in rural areas, into nonagricultural jobs, an important process for improving economic well-being (Dollar and Litvack, 1998; Ronnas and Sjoberg, 1991).

Analyses of household income data from the VLS demonstrate that levels of household income vary significantly across communes. Referring again to Table 5.1, the distribution of household income sources provides another insight into the determinants of household income. Specifically, it appears that those rural areas featuring diverse household income structures, and especially those areas where a substantial proportion of income derives from wages and family business, have higher average levels of household income. Thus, it appears that rural versus urban location is not the sole feature influencing the relative affluence or poverty of households across areas. Local occupational opportunity structures, and particularly those offering opportunities to obtain income from more 'modern' sources, such as wages and entrepreneurial activity, are important features of community context that shape economic outcomes.

5.8 Economic Strategies in the New Market Economy

In a noteworthy ethnographic study of a commune in Nam Dinh province, Houtart and Lemercurier (1984) documented economic strategies made by peasant families in the 'gray

market,' or sideline private gardens and businesses that operated outside of collectives. In essence, their observations demonstrated that workers labored with greater intensity and zeal on land that was their own, while the work performed for the collective was less productive because the rewards were minimal, indirect, and did not correspond directly to individual worker effort.

While visiting the Red River Delta in the recent period, the words and actions of workers convey that they made efforts, and sometimes experienced difficulties, in order to respond to the market mechanism. Consistently men and women commented that while the *doi moi* reforms have opened opportunities and improved their economic well-being, they also note that they have had to work much harder in order to succeed. Numerous individuals recalled times that they had engaged in rotating credit associations, only to default on loans and fall deeply into personal debt. Their words convey the sense that they must struggle to succeed in the current situation, and without struggle they might fall below the level of subsistence that was guaranteed in the time of government subsidies. Several used the metaphor of being 'thrown into the sea,' set loose, tossed about, and attempting to survive and stay above the water, to describe the new market economic setting. The actions of some convey the sense that through hard work and forbearance they will rise above others and achieve their goals, whereas the actions of others suggest they are resigned with their current lot. Still others, those who continue to work as civil servants, or whom have retired after 25 years of service, are relatively sheltered from the new market economy; they may or may not choose to engage in new economic endeavors during their 'retirement' years. In addition to the differing experience with economic development and market development across geographic areas, it is also the case that individuals and households will encounter different experiences and outcomes in light of the market reforms, depending upon the nature of their employment, their stage in the life course, and other factors that may potentially mediate the impact of macro-level economic changes.

5.9 Gender and Participation in Education, Political and Economic Institutions

Among the social policies administered by the socialist government which rose to power in the 1950s was a system of mass education that delivered primary schooling to the masses. Whereas few working class and peasant men, and even fewer women, had access to the education system of the French colonial administration, educational reforms implemented by the early socialist administrations underlie the very high levels of literacy observed in Viet Nam, especially in the Red River Delta (see, again, Table 3.1 in Chapter Three). The attainment of such high levels of literacy at the national level is often viewed as a distinct achievement of the Vietnamese socialists—few countries at comparable levels of socioeconomic development have recognized similarly high levels of educational attainment and literacy. While blatant gender disparities in education enrollment may no longer exist in the Red River Delta and other regions of Viet Nam, as the research findings of Nguyen Lan Phuong (2000), Truong et al. (1996), and others demonstrate, marked disparities in expenditures for educational resources have emerged in the *doi moi* period, and these disparities may have gendered dimensions (see, for example, Vo Thanh Son et al. 2001:164). For families that have a limited pool of resources to allocate toward children's educational expenditures, one child may receive a larger share than others. It has not been clearly established at this point whether gender is a distinguishing characteristic in this resource allocation process. In addition, young adults may experience different patterns of time use that are stratified by gender, which in turn may impact educational enrollment and attainment outcomes. Especially in households that operate family-owned farms or businesses, school children may be expected to perform work activities, and thus time allocation is another dimension upon which gender discrimination may occur. Describing the activities of her younger siblings, this woman comments upon what seems to be a subtle form of gender-linked differential treatment in the household:

"--Are there many families discriminating not allow their daughters to go to school?
 --- No, it was in the past only. Now many people encourage their children to learn.
 -- Do your younger siblings often help your parents to do the housework?
 -- Yes
 -- Do they go to school and do the farmwork?
 -- Yes, my younger sister transplants the rice seedlings but my younger brother who is studying at the specialized school, just does the miscellaneous work.
 -- Why does the daughter have to work but the son does not have to?
 -- The younger sister has many friends, they work together happily and very fast. It takes them a little time, not too long.
 -- Does the boy have to do much in addition?
 -- Yes, we raise many rabbits, pigs and chickens so he has to feed them before studying, he is not allowed to go out to play like other boys. "

In the current era of increasingly marketized economic activity, in which the potential for rising socioeconomic inequalities mounts, it is important to attend to the subtleties of differential treatment and other inequalities among young men and women. With the diminishment of socialist institutions, heightened emphasis upon family-based organization of labor, and continuing exercise of son preference, we may witness the birth or re-birth of gender inequalities within the household, workplace, and myriad social institutions.

5.10 Community Study of Loc Hoa Commune: Tradition and Change where Urban meets Rural

Loc Hoa commune is situated just 3 kilometers from the provincial city of Nam Dinh (population approximately 200,000 persons). The commune is positioned on a canal between the Coi and Dai rivers, approximately 60 kilometers from Ha Noi. Loc Hoa residents derive their livelihoods in a manner reflecting their proximity to several major regional highways and Nam Dinh city. Historically a center for the silk and cotton industries of northern Viet Nam, Nam Dinh city has a sizable industrial base, currently operating several garment factories and construction enterprises. However, this industrial base is significantly reduced from past years, as many state-operated enterprises collapsed in bankruptcy in the late 1980s. In addition to spinning

and weaving plants, the area has traditionally featured jute-milling, sawmilling, salt-extracting, and distilling industries.

With the passage of time, the line delineating city and countryside has blurred to near imperceptibility within Loc Hoa commune. **Lộc Hoà** commune, then, is a site where the transition from rural village to city occurs (See Figure 5.8). Both Highway Ten and the main national railroad line run through the center of the district, such that the frequent horn blasts of transport and construction vehicles are intermittently muted only by the rumbling of passing, house-rattling passenger and cargo trains. The daily trains create a rhythmic distraction in the town, while signaling Loc Hoa's central position on one of the country's major transportation arteries. While the construction of new and more elaborate retail and residential buildings are scattered through the commune, there are far fewer in this outlying area than in Nam Dinh's city center. As in many suburban areas, simple, sparsely-furnished, aging structures stand beside much larger, newly constructed homes. Due to its proximity alongside a regional highway a large proportion of houses also serve as store-fronts. The range of businesses is wide—offering automobile repair, agricultural products, custom-tailored clothing and a variety of local food specialties (See Figures 5.9 and 5.10). Loc Hoa's residents are engaged in a diverse range of occupations that reflect its geographic location. Restaurants, street-side shops, petrol stations have a steady stream of business, often serving as foreground before expansive fields of rice.

The proximity of Loc Hoa to both the provincial city center, as well as the stretches of rural rice-fields, is revealed in the commune's employment structure (See Table 5.3). Specifically, workers are distributed across a wide range of occupational groups and no single occupational category is dominant (as is often the case in more urban and remote rural places). A significant number of workers, especially women, report working in textiles production, their work being largely performed in the Nam Dinh Textile enterprise originally established by the

French during the 1930s, and which has remained a state-owned enterprise in the post-*doi moi* period. Many men and women likewise are employed in sales and services (20%), and 35% continue to labor primarily in the field of agriculture.

Despite the mixed economy of the region, many families report low income levels, and although the reported cases of unemployment are low in Loc Hoa (i.e., just about 3% if we sum those looking for work and those having a job but not currently working) as in most other VLS communes, even residing near the city center does not guarantee rapid development and brisk business. For some, access to Highway Ten and entrepreneurial opportunities, coupled with the family's agricultural land, enables a diverse household economy to develop and lift family members out of absolute poverty. For other households, city-based wage employment constitutes the main source of monetary household income, while agricultural activity continues to feed the family.

The life stories of several men and women living in Loc Hoa depict how economic activities have shifted over time in response to macro-level economic and historical changes such as wartime mobilization and the late 1980s experience of market transition. In discussing their work histories, men and women also provide insights into the ways that shifts in family structure and family economic conditions shape orientations to labor force and social reproduction activities. As part of this community sketch I summarize the work histories of one woman and one man currently living in Loc Hoa. While their stories are unique in detail, each has experiences that generalize to a wider local population. Particularities in the lives of Ms. Ngo Lan Chi and Mr. Tran Van Minh⁶ enrich the portrait of life in Loc Hoa, and bring a degree of realism to the quantitative analyses on economic participation, occupational attainment, and historical economic roles of men and women in the chapters that follow. More importantly, their

experiences have been echoed by other men and women in the commune, and they resonate with empirical findings and assertions about gender roles, adaptations to market transition, and the demands of family life that have been stated in earlier studies.

Loc Hoa Case History #1: Ms. Ngo Lan Chi

Born in 1962 in the countryside of a neighboring province, Ms. Chi stood out among her six siblings in that she was the only one to complete a high school (i.e., upper secondary school) education. As a teenager she focused on school work during the academic year and during the summertime she did what most young and elderly women from her village did. Specifically, Ms. Chi and others in the village would travel together a distance over 50 kilometers (going on foot, mainly) to the nearby provinces of Hoa Binh and Thanh Hoa to sell fruits and vegetables. Despite her persistence in attending school, Ms. Chi's hopes for higher education were cut short when she failed to pass the entrance examination into the Law University. As a result of this failure, Ms. Chi's life followed a rather typical course for a young woman at the time—she was courted by her husband for about one year after high school, married him and moved to his home village, became a worker in the state enterprise and ended up enduring years of separation from her husband during the time he served in the army.

We see in Ms. Chi's life the way that family members, including parents-in-law, are influential to one's job opportunities and working career trajectory. Because her husband's father worked on the City's People's Committee, Ms. Chi was given an opportunity to work in a city-level production enterprise in Nam Dinh, where she worked manufacturing cigarettes and fireworks. Ms. Chi continued in this production work for about 8 years, until the birth of her second child in 1989, which coincided with the decline of state sector salaries:

⁶ These, and all other personal names appearing in this chapter, are pseudonyms, adopted to protect the confidentiality of results and privacy of the interviewees.

"I stopped working then and I was given an amount of money. Since the day the system of budget subsidies was eradicated, salaries had not been good. I have stayed at home [to work ever since]."

After this time Ms. Chi took to doing business out of her home, selling miscellaneous things such as peanuts, fishsauce and other food items and gradually diversifying her stock to include mainly small iron parts for machinery. The sales of iron machinery parts constitutes the bulk of her business to this day.

Currently Ms. Chi operates her business with a great degree of autonomy from her husband and other relatives. She has hired one assistant to work in the shop and is involved in making most of the decisions about operating the business, such as the decision to hire a worker and choosing which items to keep in stock. In fact, she and her husband, though they reside in the same home, seem to maintain a relatively great distance between themselves, both in terms of their economic activities and the closeness of their husband-wife relationship. Perhaps this distance is a product of their extended separation; since their marriage Ms. Chi has mostly lived with her children and her father-in-law, her husband being absent for lengthy periods of time. Ms. Chi's husband had been living far from home for nearly a decade, an absence that persisted even when she bore her children:

"He [my husband] only came back from the army when the eldest had grown up a little already. My mother helped me when I bore the small one. My husband is not very strong, he had stomach-aches often, so it was too hard for him to visit home by taking a bicycle. So I did it all [on my own]."

Rather than being assisted in household tasks by her husband, Ms. Chi received benefits as a result of working for the state at the time she bore her children. She was able to receive the official six weeks maternity leave after the birth, and soon after returning to work at the city store she was able to send her children to the nursery school. As such, the ability of women to rely upon state-provisioned social welfare seems to have been especially helpful for women like Ms.

Chi whose husbands were away and who did not have mother-surrogate figures to call upon for assistance with childcare and guidance.

Asked about her husband's influence in running the business, Ms. Chi comments, "*He does not care about the business. He just works in the political field... I manage all family affairs and let him have enough time to work.*" She further notes that she manages the household finances and all the housework on her own. This degree of inequality and separate spheres Ms. Chi does not worry nor complain about. But rather she 'accepts' her life and her fate. This is a type of terminology that many women use and which captures a seeming resignation; they may not be happy or satisfied with their conditions, but rather than complain or seek better conditions they view this as their 'lot in life,' something that they have little power to change. They can only take care of themselves and work hard to take care of their children. Ms. Chi expresses this sentiment, again, when conveying her suspicion that her husband engages in extra-marital affairs and neglects his family by going out in the evenings. Still, she maintains that divorce is not a proper solution. Divorce, she believes, should be outlawed because it is damaging to families and to the broader society. Rather than complain and attempt to address her husband's behavior, though, she only suggests that she is able to tolerate the situation if she continues to manage the family's finances so that her husband cannot spend their income on his mistress(es):

"I manage the children and raise the children, and he takes the money to go out with the girls and he asks for a couple hundred thousand (dong for this), then he returns home and I ask about some money to sew some clothes for the children, then it is too bad, there is nothing there."

Overall, Ms. Chi's account of her life suggests that she is a woman whose status in life was profoundly shaped through marriage to her husband—she obtained her first job with assistance from her father-in-law, moved away from her parent's home village into her husband's home village, and gave birth to two children. Yet at the same time, she has lived apart from her husband for most of her marriage, raised her children on her own and with state support, and has

made her own decisions for managing a business, with little input from her husband or other relatives. Thus, in many ways Ms. Chi's experiences and outlook demonstrate how the family is an influential institution and family role obligations may shape women's occupational trajectories and aspirations. Yet at the same time many women are relatively autonomous economic actors—managing household finances, operating family businesses and making decisions that affect family livelihood. When husbands are physically absent from the household for long periods of time, this autonomy, though constrained by maternal and filial role obligations, may be heightened significantly.

Ms. Chi's work history also reflects the nature of opportunities that young women encounter in Loc Hoa commune. After marrying her husband and moving to Loc Hoa, Ms. Chi resided close to Nam Dinh city and thus had access to employment opportunities in a state production enterprise. As the redistributive economy failed and many state enterprises were closed or equitized, Ms. Chi was able to shift her occupation and work location with relative ease, benefiting from the geographic location of Loc Hoa commune—a sort of rural-urban crossroads, as well as her household's location on a main thoroughfare in the commune. Operating a small business has been an opportunity offering a degree of relative profitability and autonomy to Ms. Chi. Were her life confined to a small, remote rural village, it is unlikely that Ms. Chi would have been able to reach the income-generating potential that she has enjoyed working as a shopkeeper in the informal trading sector of this suburban, or periurban, village.

Loc Hoa Case History #2: Mr. Tran Van Minh.

Mr. Minh's family works primarily in agriculture, however at the time of our interview it was the off-peak season and the harvest was weeks away, so Mr. Minh was spending most of his working hours operating a family-owned restaurant with his wife. The restaurant had only been

open for about one year, but already Mr. Minh had developed what he called his own ‘trade secret recipe’ and had a well-established routine for operating the business. Shops such as that operated by Mr. Minh and his family are scattered along the roadside leading into Nam Dinh city. And while the hustle-and-bustle of activity during operating hours is quite obvious, less noticeable are the hours of preparation that must take place every day in the early morning hours. Although they only serve one meal per day—a pig-tripe soup that Mr. Minh is very proud of—he finds this work, in addition to raising several pigs and cultivating rice, to be sufficient to pay for his two daughters schooling and other household expenses.

Mr. Minh’s day begins at 4 a.m., when he goes to obtain fresh ingredients for the soup, returns to finish the work of cooking that his wife has begun, and then opens the shop at 6:00 a.m. The breakfast hour ends when the soup runs out—usually around nine or ten a.m. It is interesting to note that Mr. Minh claims the cooking of the soup, and the recipe, his own, establishing this as his domain of activity and expertise. It is unclear from his comments how he and his wife have allocated labor and made decisions about opening and operating the business. Given that Mr. Minh owns a house facing the street, which is good for business, we are surprised that he does not attempt to diversify his family’s restaurant business or rent his storefront to obtain additional income. In the new market context many households maximize time and proximity to the market by operating shops and services with around the clock hours. With his work completed in the morning, Mr. Minh may experience limitations in ability or capital that limit his attempts to further exploit the prime location in an attempt to make more money. His seeming satisfaction with the income from breakfast sales and pig-breeding is also somewhat contradictory to expectations, given that Mr. Minh consistently refers to his family’s impoverished condition as limiting his opportunities for advancement and his daughters’ chances for success in education. When we ask about his business plan, he provides only vague answers, mentioning, for example,

that he need not pay taxes on his business since he only operates for a few hours in the morning, and that he doesn't plan to extend the business, largely because he lacks the proper investment capital.

Mr. Minh does not convey any genuine sense of satisfaction with his economic position. His attitude is perhaps best characterized as a combination of resignation and frustration at his relative social position and economic opportunities. Asked about aspirations for his daughters' future jobs, for example, he replies, *"I think it is so difficult for common people like us because we are so poor."* Then he elaborates a bit on the source of his frustration, namely, the unfairness he perceives in the current, formal-sector employment system:

"It is now the renovation period, if children are good students, including my children, but we don't have enough money for them to be able to apply for a job, then we also can't do anything about it. I just pay school fees for them depending on their ability, that is our set standard. But keeping up with the rest of society, that is something that we are not able to do."

He continues, *"[People in our situation] don't have enough money for their children to find a good job. For example, my neighbor's child now is selling beer after leaving the university."*

This frustration with wealth and social class factors determining opportunities during the current period of renovation was a theme commonly mentioned among working class and informal sector workers in several settings. In chapter eight I return to this problem and provide more detailed analyses on the ways that social class background influences the educational attainment processes.

Mr. Minh's comments are instructive for understanding structural obstacles to status attainment in education and employment in Loc Hoa. He states that very few young people here move into education beyond high school and the few who do attend college usually cannot find work in the commune afterwards. For most parents in Loc Hoa the costs for education above and beyond primary and lower secondary school are simply prohibitive, and so they aim 'more

realistically,' and just ensure that their children can read and count and calculate—skills that will at least assist them in working in a family business, their most likely occupational outcome. So, in comparing the hardships his family faced when he was growing up to those faced by young families now, Mr. Minh suggests that the outcome is not so different:

"Because my family was so poor, the economy didn't allow for [us to go to high school]. That was the time of budget subsidies, all families were poor and didn't have money for their children to study, even though school fees were very low and schools gave textbooks to pupils then. Now in the renovation period, all families must pay school fees for their children. In the 4th hamlet⁷, there isn't anyone studying in high school, all of their children just finished secondary school. They just want their children to be able to write, and read, and count money - their children will [have to] make arrangements for themselves.

Some things have changed, he admits, he can now own a few more luxury items, like a TV, however looking for work now is still a great challenge: *"Because of society, the life is better: we don't lack of clothes, work is not as hard as in the past. However, applying for work, and study for the children is not better, they still do not have the potential to achieve."*

Mr. Minh's family economy provides a good example of how residents of Loc Hoa, and other rural places close to cities or major roadways, can straddle the divide between the rural, agricultural economy and the modern, market economy in a setting such as Loc Hoa. Minh and his family possess 1.5 mau of farmland, on which he cultivates two crops of rice per year. They also raise several pigs as an additional source of money, and they operate the restaurant. This sort of diversified economic base would not be as viable in most remote rural places or urban centers. Mr. Minh and his wife do not seem to have reached the limit in the entrepreneurial activities that they might attempt to undertake given that they possess a house on the main road. Other men without such valuable property, he admits, are more limited in their opportunities. In the off-season they might find work as day-laborers—laying bricks or mixing cement. However, Minh

⁷ This is a hamlet populated predominantly by Catholic families, whose children, on average, have lower levels of education than children in non-religious or Buddhist families.

suggests that he is resistant to expand business because he lacks the necessary capital to set up any other sort of business. While his explanation is vague, he comments upon a time when his mother was arrested by the Viet Minh, an event that may still factor into his own relationship vis-à-vis state sector institutions, and hence may limit his ability to obtain a small business loan from the government.

In many ways Mr. Minh expresses a degree of hesitation and aversion to taking risks in the new market economic context, where there is little or no social insurance to protect oneself after a failed crop or business venture. When asked about whether the current period is preferable to the period of budget subsidies he responded as follows:

"The two periods are [about] the same. If we earn a lot of money, our lives are still good. If I transplant 1 mau of land, but mice break into my field, then I haven't anything [to show for my work and investment]. In the fifth month's crop [last year] I lost 4 sao⁸ of rice because of natural calamity—mice and insects—but I didn't get any compensation from the commune. The commune still asks me to pay off a debt."

As far as gender roles are concerned, Mr. Minh expresses views that are more consistent with tradition than with the more recent period's emphasis on gender egalitarianism. He hesitates to attempt to have another child, not because he is satisfied with having two daughters, but because he is apprehensive about the economic strain and the likelihood that he would be fined by the government. When asked what his wife thinks about the issue he replies, *"I don't know, I haven't asked,"* suggesting that he perceives the decision is ultimately up to him. Like many other men, he allows his wife to manage finances (i.e., to hold the 'purse-strings'), but maintains the belief that men are better decision-makers, because *"they can calculate with greater certainty than women."* While at first he states that he and his wife jointly decided to open the soup restaurant, soon later in the interview he agrees that he is the primary decision-maker, *"because my wife is not good at doing business."*

While it is certain that Mr. Minh and his wife work together in agricultural production and operating their business, it is unclear from this one-sided account how labor is allocated and decisions are reached. From Mr. Minh's casual comments we might gather that he devalues his wife's role in maintaining the family economy. He also made similar comments, more generally, which suggest his tendency to overlook the time, energy, and knowledge that women require in doing their work. Overall, Mr. Minh's case demonstrates how one man is struggling in the transition to private, entrepreneurial activity, and reveals his awareness of emerging inequalities in access to opportunities, such as education, and resources, such as investment capital. The local context provides a relatively diverse set of opportunities for economic activity, however these opportunities are not without risk, nor do they promise the prestige and stability that continues to characterize employment within the state sector.

5.11 Van Giang district, Ninh Binh town: Facing the New Market Economy in a Provincial Red River Delta Town

Glancing around the slightly decrepit streets of Van Giang District in Ninh Binh, a provincial town with a population of about 200,000 people, and located about 90 kilometers from Ha Noi, it is common to encounter signs of economic prosperity and smooth transition into a newly marketizing economy. Entrepreneurial ventures and a spirit of consumerism are especially visible on Van Giang street, which defines the town's central business district and which runs through the heart of Van Giang district—one of the 10 district/communes constituting the VLS study area.

Often in the same glance, though, one observes signs that the adjustment to a market economy is more difficult for some than for others—that a modicum of success has been

⁸ A sao is the most commonly used measurement unit for land. One sao is equal to 360 square meters.

achieved by some families, while others are struggling to keep up. Small, unimposing homes in need of repair stand beside newer, taller, more elaborate houses that seem to tower over the town and reflect the disparity in economic well-being that has become more pronounced in recent years. Men and women work with outmoded technology (even animal-driven vehicles) while their neighbors sell and purchase the latest, most modern products (See Figures 5.11 and 5.12).

Young men and women in Van Giang also reveal disparate outcomes in schooling and in their social adjustment to the market-oriented economic context, with its sharpened focus on consumerism and incorporation of Westernized youth culture images. Teenagers in Van Giang are surrounded by marketing and popular culture images—such as posters of English football players, American popstars, and Western-style beer advertisements (complete with young, Caucasian female models)—that are an accompaniment to the heralded market economy. These images, as well as a growing market of consumer goods, are likely to enter into adolescents' self-perceptions and shade their aspirations for family and careers.

Very frequently students attending upper-secondary school in Ninh Binh town, and their parents, spoke about the demanding challenges of enrolling in extra classes and tutorial sessions. Undertaking additional hours in preparing for courses or for university entrance examinations is a common practice among Van Giang youth. A group of young women whom I met welcomed me to attend their after-school English language class, in which a group of about 20 young people met in the late hours of the evening to work with a young teacher, in a desolate school room, to practice their English skills. Their studying into the late hours, the heir of seriousness and competitiveness in their demeanor, and the meager resources at their disposal suggest just how strongly success in education is emphasized within this district. Most youth and their parents, irrespective of their social class backgrounds, believe that college attendance is the only pathway to economic success. They are quick to comment, though, that a college education is not

sufficient for obtaining a job outside of petty trade and basic services jobs that characterize the informal, family economy. Many young people return from universities in Ha Noi only to wait for years to find a job, often resorting, in the end, to working for their parents in small, family-owned shops.

A few young people whom I interviewed suggested that there was a linkage between living in the relatively depressed Ninh Binh community and the incidence of social problems such as drug use, prostitution and petty thefts. The Vietnamese government has developed many awareness campaigns and efforts to police so-called 'social evils' such as sex work and drug abuse (See Figure 5.13). To date there has been little research that attempts to discern the extent to which the causes for young people's social deviance arise from their disadvantaged economic opportunities in the new economic environment. The young people with whom I spoke, both in formal interviews and casual conversation, said that there was visible and sizable involvement of young people in their community in selling and using drugs (most often a form of heroin that is consumed through inhalation). One eighteen year-old woman whom I spoke with attributed these problems to the malaise and disenchantment experienced by youth who do not have positive economic conditions. She commented:

"There are certain people, people who do not know of any work, they are very sad and despondent, so they take steps leading into damaging things, like drinking a lot, smoking drugs. There are quite a few of these people [around here]."

Residents of Van Giang district have work opportunities in a diverse, though restricted, set of income-generating activities, some more profitable than others. Being in the town's central business district, many families operate businesses out of their homes, selling everything from clothing, grocery items, candies and deserts, motorbikes, and accoutrements for funerary alters. Some operate stores with diverse merchandise spilling out onto the sidewalk, while others simply display a number of items, like cigarettes and soft drinks, in a small glass case at their entryway.

Especially fortunate are families whose homes face the major thoroughfare and who therefore witness the largest amount of foot and vehicular traffic—potential customers in a town with relatively ‘sleepy’ economic development compared to other urban centers in the Red River Delta, such as Ha Noi and Nam Dinh cities.

Closer to the edge of town lies the Ninh Binh electric station, which has employed a large number of Ninh Binh residents. And along the river-ways one can see many people earning a living through fishing, river transport, and quarrying the large limestone karst-formations that characterize the Ninh Binh landscape (See Figure 5.14). Men and women alike are seen performing manual labor, though work is often performed on gender-segregated work crews. Looking to Table 5.3 again demonstrates that workers in Van Giang are concentrated in professional, sales and services, and manual labor occupations (both skilled and unskilled). Males dominate in the manual labor category, whereas women dominate in the sales and services category, but in neither case does either gender constitute more than 70% of the labor force in a given broad occupational category. Because the VLS randomly selects just one district of the city, our interviews often took us to one of two distinct neighborhoods--a ward within the district that was comprised mainly of retired military personnel (they were relocated here after the war), as well as a section of the main business district on Van Giang street, where nearly every home is occupied by a family operating a business, or that offers the first-floor entry way of their home for rent as a storefront. Furthermore, the street that runs through Van Giang district ends at the town’s newly constructed marketplace, which bustles, inside and out, with traders (mostly women) selling local produce, locally-produced goods, as well as goods imported from China. Thus, the VLS data and the interviews included here and in subsequent chapters of the dissertation focus on a subset of the city’s population that may over-represent certain occupational categories. With this caveat in mind, I turn to a summary and analysis of three case

studies that offer a window into the diversity of working lives and experiences with economic transition that have unfolded in Ninh Binh town.

Van Giang Case History #1: Nguyen Van Si

Nguyen Van Si's life story illustrates the difficulties faced by a certain subset of underemployed men, many of them former soldiers, during the market transition period. One of six children, Mr. Si was born in 1959. When he was a boy and still attending school he assisted his father in his work as a tailor, sewing buttons and doing other light tasks. Si's first work outside of the home involved joining with the army after he completed the ninth grade. His mobilization lasted for approximately 9 years, until 1983, when he moved to Van Giang because his parents' land in the home village had been evacuated and turned into an electric station during the war. Just one year later he married his wife, who operated a food stall in the local market, and in one additional year, it was now 1985, they had borne their first of three children.

Mr. Si described at length the numerous economic difficulties he and his family have faced since he left the army. Having left school in the ninth grade, and having received no additional training or schooling during the years he served in the military, he states that he '*had no knowledge*' and that '*there was nothing I could do*' when he left the army. At this time many state sector enterprises were beginning to fold and earning a livelihood in the new market economy was quite challenging. His situation being such, Mr. Si took on the only employment that he perceived to be available to him—becoming an assistant to his wife who was selling a prepared dessert dish in the market. Apparently in an effort to explain and legitimize this low-income and low-prestige work, Si suggests that the work would have been very difficult for his wife to do on her own. For his share of the work, Mr. Si makes food preparations at home (crushing ice, preparing food and cooking vegetables, tapioca and other ingredients) and then

delivers them to his wife in the market. This way her work at the market is uninterrupted and she can have a continuous supply of the product to sell. While it is not particularly difficult, this is not necessarily a job that Mr. Si enjoys or desires. Conveying a self-conscious awareness that he is 'stuck' doing work usually performed by low status women, he notes: *"I don't have another choice. No one likes cooking, but I don't have knowledge, I have no capital, so I accept it."*

Without a pension from the army, which would have required a lengthier period of service, the income from their small business has been meager. It is likely that the economic difficulties faced by Si and his family led them into an even more dire situation. Desiring a loan of money in an economy practically devoid of credit markets, Mr. Si became involved in a rotating credit association and then defaulted on his loan. The results were disastrous, his family was threatened with having to leave the city to escape the wrath of neighbors whose borrowed money he had lost. Somehow Mr. Si and his family managed to remain in Ninh Binh and he suggests that the family only overcame through hard work and economizing. His siblings have found more lucrative work than himself—two sisters sell homemade clothes, one brother works for a state office, and another brother went to labor abroad in Croatia and returned with significant investment capital. While Si does not suggest this to be the case, these more well-to-do siblings were likely able to help him out when he failed to pay on the credit association loan. Their superior economic status positions suggest, too, that not all siblings achieve or inherit similar class positions. Rather, their opportunities as young people in the educational system and labor force, and decisions made early in life can have powerful consequences for their subsequent economic outcomes. That Si is the youngest of six children, was born at the beginning of the American war, and reached adulthood when the war effort was subsiding and the collective economy had entered into decline, are also factors that likely influenced his career aspirations and opportunities.

Almost twenty years after leaving the army, their difficulties may have subsided slightly, but the family continues to face great difficulty. Mr. Si still works with his wife and takes care of his 10 year-old son at home, and suggests that his efforts to locate a job continue, but to no avail. His awareness of how men such as himself are evaluated in the society is revealed when he talks about his notion of an 'ideal' occupation in the commune:

"A permanent - state job [is ideal], for example, near here there is a doctor couple and they have respectable clothes. We are poor, so I ' m looked down upon. A cyclo rider is also not as (ánh sáng) highly respected as a motorist (xe ôm). They often comment "He's only a cyclo driver"

--Do they still discriminate now?

--Yes, Although a cyclo driver sometimes gets more money"

Regarding his own position with a degree of shame, he recalls an encounter with his daughter when he was talking to her about her future:

"--I 'll consider her ability, if she would like to be a tailor, she has said, "I'll never go to work in the market to sell things " She dislikes it.

-- But maybe, when she gets older she 'll change her mind.

--Before, I told her that I would sell hydro balloons but she was ashamed and she disagreed. She wants me to do a noble job.

--In the end did you sell balloons?

--That's her idea but I was on my own, anyway I am so busy. In summer time I often make kites to sell to children, but not much.

-- Why don't you find some jobs to do?

-- If I do so, my wife can't sell on her own. "

This last comment suggests that Si rationalizes his occupation as providing a form of needed help to his wife—thusly, she remains dependent in his frame of reference, and his status as the man of the house, the main income provider, is less threatened. Mr. Si is not alone in his condition—underemployment and unemployment is evident around Ninh Binh town. It is not uncommon to see small gatherings of middle-age men waiting on street corners for hours, hoping to earn a bit of

money by offering a ride on their motorbikes (See Figure 5.15). What is perhaps unique in Si's case is that he labors in a traditionally female job, and that he has a source of income only as a result of carving out a role in his wife's small business.

While his situation may appear particularly desperate, even Mr. Si feels the need to keep up with the pressure to provide high levels of education to his children. He has one daughter enrolled in a private high school and taking extra after-school classes, an expenditure that takes a significant toll on the family's financial situation. The drive to educate one's children is strong in cities, and more impoverished families face this pressure as well, with perhaps a greater hunger to find success for their children. Summing up his own aspirations for the future, he conveys the great importance of providing one's children with a decent education. Asked whether he would ever considering advancing his own education, Mr. Si responds: *"Now I only want to be at home and earn money to support my children as much as I can, so that they can go to school."*

Mr. Si's situation is also important, for it reflects how many men, young and old, have moved into supportive roles in the household economy. Especially as thousands of former military personnel have been demobilized, there is an 'army' of labor to be absorbed in local economies. For many of those who lack the conditions to establish their own line of work, there is often the opportunity to take part in a pre-existing family business, in a position perhaps traditionally held by a woman worker (See Figure 5.16). Thus, not only does the transition back into mainstream society, and the new market economic context, pose challenge in terms of finances and monetary issues, but it also may call for a re-adjustment of gender roles and status positions in the household economy.

Van Giang Case History #2: Pham Van Duc

Born just four years later than Nguyen Van Si, in 1963, the life circumstances and decisions of Pham Van Duc have brought him a relatively greater degree of economic prosperity.

His childhood also began in economic hardship; as one of ten children who were forced to leave their homeland during the war, Mr. Duc had to work the farmland from around age ten in order to help support the family:

"We would have died of starvation if we just lived on his [my father's] salary because we had so many people in the family. That's why, firstly, we had to cultivate vegetables to sell to _____ Stone Factory. Secondly, we had to go fishing on the fields. I started to do so when I was in the 2nd grade. In addition, I had to fetch firewood. We worked and studied at the same time."

Despite challenging beginnings, Mr. Duc was able to complete all 10 years of primary and secondary schooling and subsequently received three years of training at a school for mechanical workers in Ninh Binh. After receiving this training in 1981 he went straight to work in an electricity factory for two years. Entrance into this training school was pivotal for his career, and while his skill and ability were important, his father's occupational position was also crucial in opening the doors of opportunity. When he started high school, Duc's father was starting an enterprise producing machine belts and other rubber products. Mr. Duc and his siblings assisted him during after-school hours. Besides providing valuable work experience, his father's personal relationships to men in the state-sector industry were fruitful for beginning his own career; the same was true for many of his siblings. To begin, his entrance into the training school was made possible through his father's privileged information and relationships:

*--Who suggested that you go to the course of machine assembly?
-- In fact, it was very difficult to get a job at that time. At first, in 1981, there was a scholarship for studying in _____ Electricity School. We got a scholarship [for me] because three of my older sisters worked there. We let the 7th sister take the chance because it was hard for her to get a job. Furthermore, she was waiting for a job for a very long time. She got very little money during the time working for _____ sewing co-operative. Then through the close relationship between my father and Mr. Vice President, we knew that there were several scholarships for cadres' children to go to the Machine Assembly School. That's why I applied and got one of them."*

Following training and his first company job, Mr. Duc entered the army for two years and then went to work for the commune in an electric factory for 4 years, from 1989 to 1993, and then moved into the private, self-employment sector. In moving out of the state sector and into self-employment as a trader of electrical parts, Mr. Duc suggests he met opposition from his father, who evaluated his movement into the private sector as politically disloyal. His account also emphasizes the emotional and social conflict experienced by certain workers who've taken part in an early wave of transition from state sector to private sector employment:

"My father in law didn't agree. He is very "Marxist". He worked at the Provincial Communist Party. Now he still shouts at me whenever I leave early from a meeting of the Communist Party. He also shouts severely at me when I say that I want to give up the Party's activities because I am too busy."

Mr. Duc expresses that finding more lucrative employment superceded any sense of political loyalty. During the late 1980s salaries for state employees like himself were quite low, except for those persons with high-ranking positions. Although the risks of entrepreneurship were high, after several years of successful trading, he comments that he decided his wife, too, should quit her state job working in a cereal production facility. The justification for making this decision is based on maximizing profit for his company. Regardless of whether his wife's job earned her a degree of prestige or autonomy, this was not as important as the fact that her salary was lower than the cost of hiring a non-family worker. When asked about whether marriage has imposed difficulties or provided benefits for his work, Mr. Duc replies:

*--Have you had more advantages in doing your business after getting married?
 --Yes, generally it's more advantageous because I have someone to take care of the shop when I go out somewhere to get the goods.
 --Why didn't you hire some one to help?
 --If I had done so, we would have experienced no benefit. I would have to pay 500,000 VND per month for that person, compared to 200,000 VND from my wife's salary if she goes to work."*

This situation offers an interesting contrast to the case of Mr. Si. In Mr. Duc's case, the profitability of his business is enhanced by his wife leaving her relatively high status employment. With Mr. Si's movement into the role of assistant to his wife, there is an apparent attempt to render his wife as requiring assistance and being incapable of operating the business on her own. While it is unlikely that the individuals involved focus critically upon the gender dynamics of their roles within the household business, through my own eyes as a foreign researcher I perceive that each woman's autonomy is lessened in both situations due to their husbands' occupational situations.

In discussing aspirations for his own children's future employment, Mr. Duc is quite adamant that he would prefer his children not become involved in working for him or in some other capacity the private sector. He suggests that his relative success is not common—that it comes through long days of hard work and as a result of a special type of business acumen—and that state sector employment is more secure and generates more definitive rewards for less stringent demands. It is also possible that he would prefer not to base the entire family economy on a sole, private venture. Asked whether he wishes his son to join him, he comments:

*" --No, it's very hard to work in this field. I know that it's rather easy to work for the State because I used to work there. It's just 8 hours of working a day. We now have to serve customers until 10 p.m. Furthermore, there are so many complicated relations [in operating a business]. It's simpler to do your specialization in the state office.
 --You mean you want you child work for the State?
 --Yes. "*

The remainder of the conversation suggests that government employment can be lucrative for a few educated individuals, thereby explaining why so many parents seek high education and state employment for their children. What also comes across is that many individuals are unaware that the salaries of many civil servants are very low compared to profits in some private sector ventures. Here Mr. Duc responds to a question regarding the seeming contradiction between his own behavior and his attitudes about state employment:

--So why did you make your wife give it up?

--That is because our salary was so little at the time. Now you can get good payment if you have degrees or diplomas. You can get at least one million Vietnamese Dong if you are an engineer.

--The payment for people who work in the Administration sector is rather low, do you know? It's only high in joint-venture companies.

--But it's high for teachers, isn't it?

--No, it's not much with only their state salary. They can only get more money from extra-teaching...which grade do you intend to let your children to fulfill?

--It must be university."

Drawing from the experiences and observations of Mr. Duc we might conclude that massive changes in economic organization and shifts in the local employment structure pose difficulties for formulating wise career plans and navigating the labor force. One thing that individuals in the private sector consistently agree upon is the extent to which private trading involves a degree of risk and unpredictability that poses severe consequences. As Mr. Duc comments:

"It was different in the old time with the system of budget subsidies. We didn't care very much of how much we could sell goods. Now we do have to pay either way, so we would lose our money if we are not successful in selling our goods. [In my own case] the price of electronic goods is rather stable this year, so we don't sell them at a loss. It was terrible last year. We lost a lot of money. We couldn't avoid the risks."

Faced with palpable risks on a regular basis in a business context that offers little in the form of credit or insurance, it is not surprising that many men and women desire to hold onto some of the security that is offered by state employment, security that they themselves may have lost in state sector employment when the collective economy went into decline and state sector retrenchment was widespread. Or, as in the case of Mr. Si, a security possessed by neighbors and kin who work as civil servants, that is perceived as desirable and out of reach.

Van Giang Case History #3: Ms. Nguyen Thi Bich

Turning to consider the life of Ms. Nguyen Thi Bich, born in 1960 and also living in Van Giang district, reveals how women have experienced the collective period and market reform

era—as mothers, wives and workers. Ms. Bich, too, went to labor in a state enterprise, but her state employment did not really remove her from female-typed employment. After finishing just seven years of schooling (out of a maximum of ten years), Ms. Bich undertook 1.5 years of training in preparing and preserving foodstuffs. With this knowledge she moved into a state enterprise, where she worked and lived in a company-owned housing block for several years. While living in public housing did lift the burden of social reproduction tasks—for example by sharing in common meals—Ms. Bich, referring to the time when she had her first child at age 24, still describes a somewhat typical, demanding workday schedule for the mother of a young child:

“I had to get up early to do the housework, feed my baby, then send her to kindergarten. I went to work and then I picked her up when I left the company, then I prepared feed for the pigs that I kept in order to earn a bit more money.”

As also was somewhat typical for the period, Ms. Bich’s husband played a very limited role in raising their children, as he lived in a separate block of housing for his own company and he rarely made visits to his wife’s apartment. In his place, both mother and mother-in-law offered their help when the children were small. Her husband did not move in to live with her until her third and final child was born and the first two children were already old enough to help her with housework. Even while present, Ms. Bich recalls that it was she and her elder children who did the bulk of the housework, her husband working only to earn a living. Her situation, thus, demonstrates the case of the ‘visiting marriage’ described by Pham Van Bich (1999) and others, and how women were able to cope without a husband present by relying on the state’s housing and childcare and the assistance of female relatives.

Ms. Bich describes the times when the collective period was on a severe downturn, during the mid 1980s, as the most difficult period in her lifetime, when it was difficult to raise the rations to feed her family because there was no work to do in the state company. This hardship

was common throughout the country, she notes, but her situation improved when the system of budget subsidies was dismantled and she went to work as a trader in the town market. However, working under the market mechanism did exact a toll in terms of time and energy. Ms. Bich's description of her usual work schedule is as follows:

"I get up at 6 a.m. and have breakfast, then I go to the market to buy food and I do the cooking for my family and cleanup. I go to work at 8, return home to have lunch [and prepare the meal for the children]. Then I continue working until 10 or 11 p.m. In summer I often go to sleep at 12...I really do not have any free time."

The many hours of labor makes it understandable why she, like other parents, prefers that both of her children eventually find employment in a branch of the government (with defined, 'office hours') rather than working in the market or operating a restaurant.

From the beginning of her workforce participation in the state enterprise (when she also did sideline work raising pigs for extra income) to the present time in her restaurant business, Ms. Bich has been a primary breadwinner and supporter of her children. Her husband's employment has been much less consequential for her own economic well-being and that of her children. Not only is her own retirement salary greater than that of her husband, it is also the case she performs the bulk of the restaurant work on her own while her husband does a small amount of work in a packaging operation. Overall, Ms. Bich's work history demonstrates how important the labor force participation of mothers can be for a family's economic survival. Her case also demonstrates the time demands required for being a successful entrepreneur in the informal sector of the new market economy.

Leaving Van Giang: Summary Remarks:

Due to its high concentration of pension-receiving retired soldiers and state sector employees, as well as large number of men and women who operate moderately successful family businesses, Van Giang is the most wealthy locale among the ten communities included in

the VLS. Still, economic hardship is prevalent among many families in the district, such as the family of Mr. Si. For others, while income may be secure, this is only as a result of very long hours toiling to make an income in the informal sector-as the story of Ms. Bich reveals. For still other Van Giang residents, stable incomes are less demanding of long, arduous labor, due to the benefits of pension salaries rewarded for work and service performed for the government. What the three case studies shown here demonstrate is that women, more often than not, play central, if not primary, roles in contributing to the household economy. Women's economic roles are not novel and a product of the market reform period, rather, they have been pivotal for the past several decades, spanning the collective and market transition periods. We also observe in Van Giang, as in Loc Hoa, that children and their parents commonly aspire to locate stable, prestigious positions in the state sector of the economy. These aspirations appear to stem from the unpredictability and inexperience that surrounds entrepreneurial efforts, as well as the high levels of risk and demanding work schedules that accompany this emergent economic role. The shrinking size of the state sector, along with the seeming insularity and relatively exclusive nature of routes to securing state sector jobs, generates a small strata of uniquely valued, high status jobs that are widely desired but infrequently obtained. The small size of the town and the very gradual pace of economic development means that a limited subset of the population is able to work as petty traders and entrepreneurs, however the economic insecurity and demanding work hours associated with this approach has generated a sense of reluctance to leaping forward wholeheartedly into the marketizing economy.

5.12 Xuan Thanh Commune, Nam Dinh Province: Adapting to Market Reform Economy in a Remote Rural Village.

In many ways, the picturesque images of Xuan Thanh village seem to convey a traditional landscape and way of life of the peasant agriculturalist. Expansive fields of young rice

are interrupted by riverways and limestone hills that rise out of the pastoral landscape.

Agriculture is still the predominant economic activity in the area, and it is performed with few mechanized implements; families pool their labor to harvest several crops of rice per year. They raise a few small animals and a garden of vegetables to supplement their incomes. During the harvest season nearly every flat area of land is covered with shafts of rice drying in the sun, and families flock to the village center to make use of village-owned machinery to husk their season's harvest (See Figure 5.17).

Xuan Thanh is located a significant distance from the region's major highways, and this conveys an image that the village is relatively 'untouched' by market activity and modernization that is occurring in larger urban centers. In comparison to the large, bustling markets one can find in Ninh Binh and Loc Hoa, most trade is small scale in Xuan Thanh, with the exception of the bi-monthly market activities that are organized in the village center and which offer local producers the opportunity to buy items produced by locals and merchants from neighboring provinces, and to sell locally-produced items. The remote, rural setting does not allow for many opportunities in addition to agriculture, activities that are thought to be necessary to alleviate the high levels of population density and underemployment that restrict economic growth in the region. Save for the small segments of the male population who seek work in the transportation and construction industries, or the small numbers of women who have found work making and selling traditional handicrafts, such as the 'non' conical hat and sedge-woven sleeping mats, there are few non-agricultural opportunities (See Figure 5.18). When asked about their options for locating work in the off-season, many women harkened back to a time, several years past, when a Korean company had recruited young women to assemble false eyelashes. That opportunity, too, has gone, maintaining the relative purity of the agrarian local economy.

The social organization of labor in the production of handicrafts for the market place has placed young women in weak positions, both within the household and the labor force. Representatives of the firms provide women workers with the raw materials for hat production (such as palm fronds and needles) and then return to collect the finished products that are distributed and sold in local and regional markets. Through this home-based labor organization the young women are free to labor up to eight hours per day (longer hours, they complain, pose too great a strain on their eyes), and are continuously available to family members, should they desire to interrupt their work and request their assistance with household duties. Few young men engage in this home-based handicraft production ('women's work'), and in fact their typical activities (for example working on road construction crews) involves much steeper fluctuations related to market demand and seasonality, thereby naturally creating more potential periods of leisure and respite, and removing them from their parents' homes, thereby fostering autonomy and independence in their work activity and their utilization of income. The seamless continuity between workplace and the family domicile faced by young female handicraft producers thus represents a situation of structured inequality between men and women, in which the location of young women's work not only lessens their social autonomy, but also perpetuates involvement in lines of activity that offer meager remuneration and seemingly endless hours of labor. Furthermore, several women confirmed the extremely low rate of compensation for sewing the hats; they are paid approximately 2,000 dong for completing each hat⁹, and can produce a maximum of two hats in one workday by working without interruption. This very low rate of pay, compared to the average payment for one day of hired manual labor—approximately 15,000 dong—further suggests the very low valuation of women's labor in villages such as Xuan Thanh,

⁹ This is equivalent to approximately fifteen cents based upon the exchange rate (1USD=15,000 VND).

and demonstrates the relative appeal, if not perceived necessity, of traveling to urban places to seek seasonal, or even permanent, employment.

Lacking off-farm opportunities in the immediate environment, more and more men and women are undertaking labor migration to supplement income in the family economy. Interviews with local officials confirm that migration is very widespread, with nearly every household in the village having at least one member of the household who travels far from home to seek employment for a portion of the year. Men have traveled to the new economic zones in the northern and central mountainous zones to work in forestry and cash crop production. Many men, too, travel to Ha Noi and other regional cities on a regular basis to work as cyclo drivers or on construction crews. Women migrants, also numerous, most often travel to Ha Noi for brief spells of approximately 1-2 weeks during off-peak seasons to work as collectors and recyclers of scrap metals.

In relaying their life stories, the men and women of Xuan Thanh often commented upon the difficulties and shortcomings they met as a result of depending upon the local economy. They also frequently raised the issue of labor migration, how common it had become, and how it has influenced life in their remote rural village. Their comments confirmed that young people's educational enrollment is often cut short due to economic difficulties; young mothers often find themselves attempting manage agricultural labor and childcare on their own when spouses have migrated for long periods of time. Young men and women transition in and out of miscellaneous jobs, searching for work that provides paltry, though necessary, additional income for their own expenditures and to supplement the family's economy. Many women and men communicated personal stories of great hardship in facing war and poverty, of maintaining loyalty and connection to their families, and of experiencing loneliness and fear as they have ventured into

the cities as labor migrants searching for opportunities. The following case histories represent the experiences and dilemmas that were frequently communicated by residents of Xuan Thanh.

Xuan Thanh Case History #1: Nguyen Thi Thuy

I first turn to the account of Ms. Thuy, who at age 25 had already took part in nearly ten different lines of activity in order to support her family. Beginning to work in the fields with her mother when she was about 10 years old, Ms. Thuy left school after finishing eighth grade, because, she says,

"my family met many difficulties with financial problems at that time. The second reason was that it was the way of the times; in our classes there were only some pupils studying up to the 12th grade. Seeing my friends leave school, I left too without thinking much about my future."

After leaving school she began a long spell of brief work experiences, each lasting usually no longer than a year. At age 16 she went to watch children in the local nursery school, but felt the need to return to work closer to home when her elder brother moved to work as a cyclo driver in Ha Noi and her elder sister married and moved away from home. She later would move from several jobs in sales—even making and selling ice cream which she and her family would have to eat at the end of the day when business was slow on a particular day—to hard manual labor in hauling rock and stones that were being delivered transported from a nearby quarry. It was not uncommon for young women to do such work, and her elder sisters had done this work too before they got married. Having attempted so many different types of work, Ms. Thuy almost failed to mention that she had worked for about one year sewing 'non' conical hats and selling them in the market. Almost surprisingly, she suggested that this work was more physically taxing and difficult than hauling loads of sand and stone—" *all day I had to sit and have my eyes focused, I had to work very long, all the time... if I ignored the details then I could not do a proper job.*"

Asked whether these jobs were suitable to her ability and strength, Ms. Thuy made the following comment, which speaks to the high levels of youth migrating to seek employment elsewhere:

"Generally speaking, in all the jobs I have done, I think there was no job that suited me. I wish there was a job for the youth in our commune. There are many youth in my commune but they have gone all to work in Ha Noi. I have gone to Ha Noi two times but the place is not suitable for me."

In addition to the apprehension and discomfort she experienced while working in Ha Noi (which resulted in part through rumors of a young migrant girl being raped in the migrants sleeping quarters), Ms. Thuy's ability to work far from home is also restricted due to the roles she must perform in the household economy. Specifically, she is the only physically capable youth who continues to live at home and thus has become the sole performer of household tasks and agricultural production tasks. These tasks are compounded because her elder brother and his wife have moved to Sai Gon, in southern Viet Nam, to work as junk collectors, and upon leaving, Ms. Thuy has had to take upon herself the care of all the family members' farmland. Her brother and sister-in-law also left their two young children in the care of Ms. Thuy and her mother. As a result she faces an amount of work that is practically insurmountable, particularly during the harvest season:

"I find it hard at the harvest time. My elder brother goes out to work so that I have to transplant rice seedlings on his farmland. I myself have to dry the paddy in the sun, put them into a sack and carry it on my head to go upstairs to the ceiling ground. If my two brothers helped me, I would work hard no longer. I am the only one who stays at home so I have to ask my neighbors for help. I am often reluctant to do that."

Under these conditions, Ms. Thuy is in charge of cultivating 13 sao of farmland (this includes the 7 sao that were allocated to her elder brother) and raising several small animals to produce food for subsistence and a small amount to sell in the market. At times the work is so much that she must arrange a labor exchange with her neighbors. At age 25, an age that many would regard as edging beyond marriageable age for the countryside, Ms. Thuy remains single

and appears to be resigned with her role as caretaker for her brother and parents. When asked about missed opportunities or whether she is worried about not finding a husband, she responds by reflecting upon her duty to her family and her desire to remain close to home. A theme that emerged continually while conversing with Ms. Thuy was that of her sense of devotion and obligation to family—of fulfilling the virtue of ‘*hieu*’ or filial piety. Rather than framing her situation as being trapped and incapable of escaping the countryside and agricultural work (a phrasing that other young men and women used to describe their rationale for becoming migrants), Ms. Thuy uses poetic language to frame her situation—as being strongly attached to her family and unwilling to leave, to explain why she has not ventured further from home:

“It is said that the ship has to follow the steering, just as the wife has to follow her husband, she must live in her husband’s family’s land. In my opinion, my homeland is still a group of sweet star-fruits. There were many times that my elder brother and his wife asked me to go to the South to work with them, but whenever I think of my parents, my homeland, I am not able to leave.”

Barely 25 years old, Ms. Thuy has undergone a great deal of stress, hard labor, and occupational transitions—even for a woman from an impoverished, rural family. Her story reveals the difficulties experienced by women when they remain in the countryside and attempt to uphold the family economy after others have withdrawn their labor and gone to work faraway. Rather than feeling shameful for her poverty, the childish attachment to home that she brandishes, and her status as a single woman in her mid 20s, Ms. Thuy suggests that she is not suffering as a result of these circumstances, but is satisfied and gains a sense of accomplishment by fulfilling her filial duties. As more young people, men and women, leave the remote areas of the Red River Delta, and leave behind “incomplete” families to maintain family farms, domestic duties, and care for elders and other dependents, it will be interesting to observe the extent to which these duties are undertaken by men or women. Ms. Thuy’s case suggests that the young woman’s normative role—that of marrying at a young age and moving to her husband’s homeland—may

be altered as the culture of labor migration and diverse pathways of social mobility are integrated into rural life.

Xuan Thanh Case History #2: Mr. Dang Anh Nam.

I include the account of Dang Anh Nam in part because he is a member of the Catholic minority group in the Red River Delta. His experiences thus provide insights into how Catholics' social positions influence their educational and occupational outcomes. Furthermore, Catholic beliefs and cultural practices not only underlie their status as a unique, minority group in the society, but also formulate a unique orientation to working life. Again, while Mr. Nam's case may or may not be representative of a large segment of the Catholic population, the themes arising in his personal account most likely generalize to a wider group of people whose lives have been impacted by their Catholicism.

Born in 1949 and reaching adulthood at the height of the American war, Dang Anh Nam left school after finishing the 7th grade, which was an above average level of education for Catholic boys at the time, who tended to complete just primary or lower secondary school—a pattern that has changed significantly in the recent period. He comments on this change:

"Yes, [Catholic children would leave school early, even if their parents had money] because they followed their friends. But it is a fact that at that time we had it so difficult. Now the society is developed, the parents try their best, even excepting hunger in order to support their children's schooling. In the past, even if we were asked to learn by our parents, we still stayed at home to do the farming."

After completing school he began what would become a long pathway of occupational transitions. First was a brief spell working as a remedial reading teacher in the commune, interrupted by two years of military service in the mid 1970s, and continuing to 1980. A change of law, and perhaps a change of sentiment regarding persons of Catholic background, caused Mr. Nam to lose his job, and so he turned back to the agricultural work that he had grown up doing—occasional, day labor as a carpenter, and 'whatever work would come to me.' In 1982 he became

a leader of the food transport brigade, physically collecting and redistributing the collective's rice product. Always though, until the recent period, he comments that it was necessary to rely on something besides farming:

"I can tell you that we could not all lean on the farming. Recently there are new kinds of paddy with high productivity so we would have enough to eat. Five or six years ago we were so hungry, as in 1973, we had to divide the rice among us."

Mr. Nam goes on to describe how he also worked as a flute-player in a band that played in funeral ceremonies to earn some extra money, and finally, in 1992 he moved into the job that he currently holds—the head administrator for his hamlet (i.e., *chu tich xom*). Impressed by the range of his experience and talent, we asked what compelled Mr. Nam to do so many different jobs, to which he replied: *"There was nothing that forced me to do this, but my children were so hungry, so I felt that I could do it all."* During the collective period, as now, Mr. Nam made efforts to combine tasks—going to work loading lorries with rice for the commune, then returning home to finish carpentry work when the load was taken away. Currently, he will work in the commune office, return home to do ploughing in the afternoon, then do bookwork for his commune job in the evening. His wife, too, combines work in this fashion. Besides forming the backbone of agricultural labor, cultivating rice and raising pigs and chickens, she also works making and selling sticky-rice pancakes and distilling alcohol. Basically, Mr. Nam describes his life as having exhausted all possible sources of employment to provide for his family's survival. Asked, *"Was there anyone who gave you a helping hand?"* he replies: *"No, I considered myself an 'arrow.' I took part in every type of work, I would do anything that came to me."*

In addition to working many jobs, Mr. Nam also talked about many of the methods his family used to economize and save money during the especially difficult times. Most men and women told stories of the thrifty ways they stretched food when rice production was very low; Mr. Nam described how he bought a pair of scissors to cut his four sons' hair, to save 4,000 dong

each month. He admits that having six children has imposed great costs upon his family. Providing education, in particular, was especially difficult, and it continues to motivate his work and that of his wife, since they have one son enrolled in college in Ha Noi and two teenagers in high school. That his 17- and 16 year-old children continue to attend school speaks to their relatively high status among rural people, and among members of the Catholic church in rural Viet Nam. Substantiating this assertion, Mr. Nam comments that his family generates about 500,000 dong per month, with nearly half of this sum coming from his salary, and another substantial proportion from the remittances his second son sends from Sai Gon. The remittances from his son assist in paying for the younger children's education; in addition his son's allocation of farmland enriches the consumption base for the rest of the family. He also has borrowed money from a state fund to help pay for his children's education. By comparison, Mr. Nam suggests that among the other Catholic residents in the village nearly all work solely in agriculture, except for those families in which, after the transplanting is complete,

"the wives go out to work as junk-dealers and the husbands stay at home and do farming, or the husbands go out to work and the wives stay at home. [These men] would go out to work as junk-dealers or go out and haul the coal."

This arrangement is possible, he explains, without a major reallocation of work activities because farm work, during the off-peak season, can usually be accomplished by one person. It is only during the harvest times (generally the months of May and October) that all family labor is needed. In fact, he notes, the dearth of labor in off-peak seasons creates problems, such as men going one another's homes to 'play around,' often getting involved in gambling and fighting. While his high-ranking position places him in charge of policing these sorts of problems, Mr. Nam still must partake in the work of harvesting rice during the season, rising at five and working through the day until about 7 p.m.

Perhaps unlikely for a Catholic, Mr. Nam was able to access employment in both the informal, family sector (working for his father-in-law) and in the state sector. He learned the skill of carpentry from his father-in-law; in this and several other ways, Mr. Nam's family conveys a more matriarchal tendency than is observed in most Vietnamese (non-Catholic) families. It is significant, too, that Catholics make up around half of the commune's population. As a result, they did not exist as minorities in the community, and certain people among them might benefit from occupational opportunities and social connections to influential leaders and employers, more so than in a place where Catholics are a small minority and discriminated against. It is important to recognize that Mr. Nam and his family are unique, for their high status position and for their high levels of investment in children's education. For the majority of residents in Xuan Thanh, Catholic, Buddhist and non-religious, opportunities are limited and most resort to a combination of agricultural work and seasonal labor migration activities to support their families.

Concluding Remarks on Xuan Thanh

These selected accounts from men and women who call Xuan Thanh commune, a remote village, their home village demonstrate that although agricultural employment predominates in the present and earlier periods, it is much more than agriculture that fuels the local economy and provides a livelihood for the families who live here. In many interviews, including the two presented here, men and women spoke of numerous occupational transitions occasioned by historical change, economic transition, and their own experience with changes in family composition and life course transition. Furthermore, many people, both men and women, elaborated upon their attempts to combine jobs in order to make ends meet. Lastly, household economic strategies frequently feature labor migrants, whose movements to and from the village exert powerful effects on labor relations in households and the village's integration with the broader regional economy. The geographic remoteness of Xuan Thanh, its relative absence of

nonagricultural employment, and the existence of an established culture and infrastructure encouraging seasonal labor migration, are powerful features of place that operate to shape men's and women's economic activities.

5.13 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have attempted to provide an introduction to daily life and historical experience in the Red River Delta by presenting an overview of the region's history and economic bases, and by analyzing selected men's and women's personal accounts of their work histories and economic situations. While the accounts are unique and I do not purport to provide a representative viewpoint through the qualitative results, I have attempted to incorporate a diverse range of stories, speaking with young and old persons, men and women, rural peoples and urban. I also include the account of one Catholic man whose situation, though rather distinct from the majority of Catholics, represents the population of Catholics in the Red River Delta. Although Catholics constitute only about 10% of the national population there are villages in the Red River Delta that are majority Catholic, thus it is important to incorporate their experiences into any complete portrait of the region.

By way of summary I would like to delineate several major themes that emerge across these individual accounts, so that we might link together their experiences and illustrate certain patterns that resonate through the Red River Delta. First, it is obvious from the accounts presented here that women play central roles in household economies, both in urban and rural settings. Whether the women are farmers cultivating large plots of family land, operating small businesses in the market, or 'assisting' their husbands in entrepreneurial activities, it is clear that household economic survival often rests upon the shoulders of women. This is especially true in those cases where men are, or have been, absent from the home front.

We also observe that the demand for labor is often quite weak, both in urban and rural areas of the Red River Delta, such that many workers must undertake work in family businesses or family agriculture that is 'unsuitable,' according to gender and other social norms, or they undertake migration to seek labor opportunities. This dearth of labor demand appears to have great potential to shape the gender stratification of occupations, as women subsume a diverse range of activities in agricultural production, and men turn to market trading as to work as shop 'assistants' in the businesses and restaurants operated by their wives. The absence of diverse industrial development in rural areas has created very restricted employment opportunities that confine choices of both men and women.

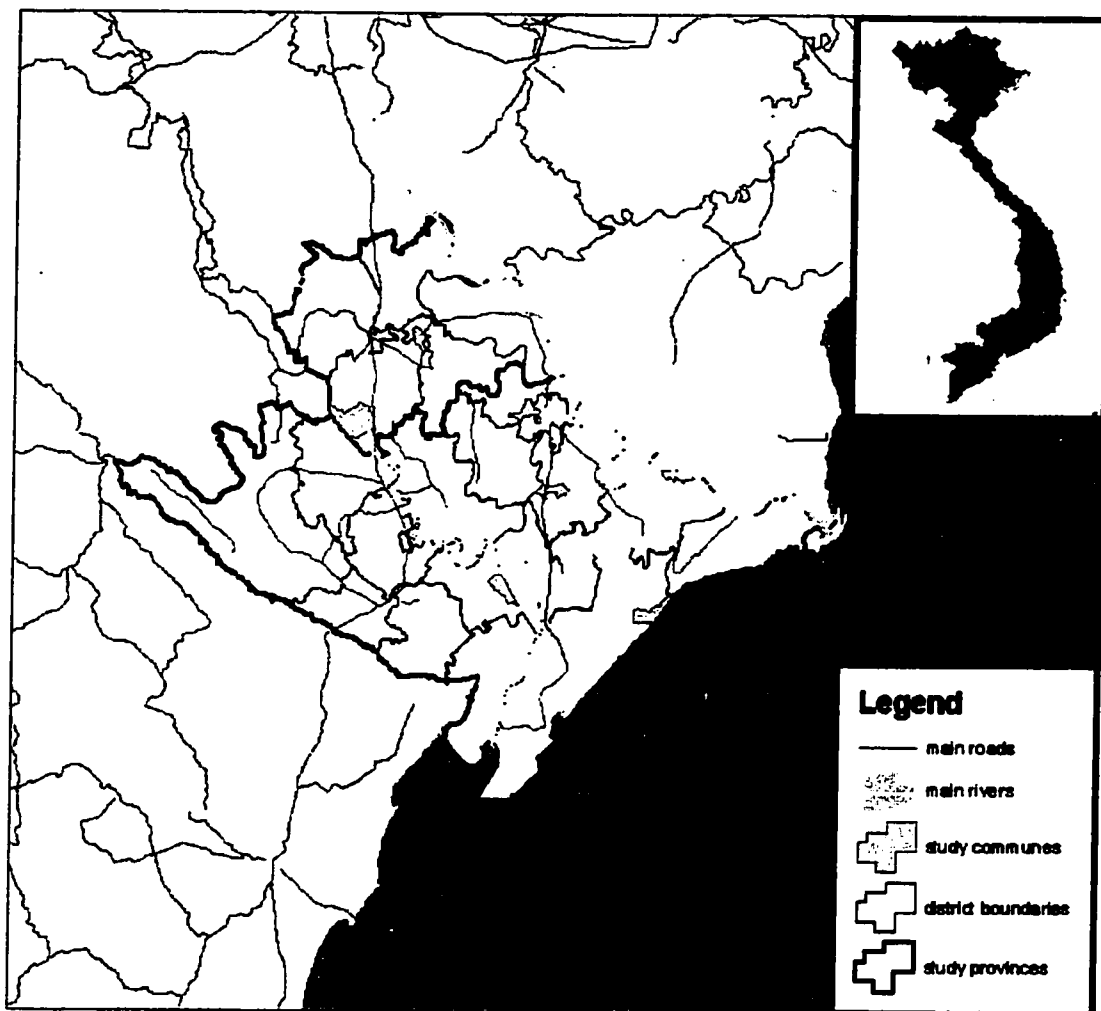
Another finding significant for the analyses that follow is that informal sector small-scale entrepreneurship is opening in certain areas of the Red River Delta since the *doi moi* reforms were initiated. Operating restaurants, shops, services for vehicle and electrical appliance repair are among the businesses that have been established in greater numbers in the three communes featured in the qualitative round of the study. At times these business ventures have brought, if not fortune, a generous livelihood to their operators, and they have provided valuable outlets for employment in the family sector. Still, there remains reluctance on the part of many adults and youth to seek out private, entrepreneurial activity wholeheartedly. Employment in the state sector is commonly sought after, due to the greater promise of security, the less demanding hours of labor, and the continuing uncertainties that surround self-employment in new marketizing economy. Each of the villages and towns of the Red River Delta explored in this chapter reflect, in unique ways, the effects of transition to market economy and economic development. At the same time, given the gradual pace of pace of economic development and its nascent character, many traditional economic activities and their organization have remained intact.



Figure 5.1 Men and Women Tending Fields, Ninh Binh Province, Viet Nam's Red River Delta.



Figure 5.2 Agricultural Plots in Xuan Thanh Commune, Nam Dinh Province, Viet Nam's Red River Delta



Source: WHO 2000

Figure 5.3 Map of 10 VLS study communes in the Red River Delta provinces of Nam Dinh, Ninh Binh, and Ha Nam.

Table 5.1 Annual Per Capita Household Income Levels and Proportion of Income from Different Sources by Commune, 10 VLS Red River Delta Communes, 1995									
	Total Agricultural Land--Per Capita within Households		Mean Values--Household Income and HH Income Distribution:						
			Total Mean PC HH Income ¹	Mean for HHs--% of income from Rice Agriculture	Mean for HHs--% of income from Other Wages	Mean for HHs--% of income from Fam. Business	Mean for HHs--% of income from other sources	Total HHs (N)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation							
Urban Areas									
Minh Khai	0.01	0.16	8,743	0%	1%	40%	50%	10%	
Van Giang	0.01	0.15	14,302	0%	0%	43%	38%	19%	
Truong Thi	0	0	9,720	0%	1%	34%	53%	12%	
Peri-Urban Areas									
Loc Hoa	1.14	2.6	10,933	20%	7%	35%	29%	9%	
Thanh Nghi	1.31	0.94	6,827	31%	17%	28%	11%	14%	
Intermediate Rural Areas									
Trinh Xa	1.73	0.66	5,548	50%	6%	26%	14%	4%	
Nam Duong	1.04	0.58	8,478	28%	27%	35%	6%	4%	
Remote Rural Areas									
Xuan Thanh	1.52	0.56	7,591	43%	9%	30%	12%	6%	
Khanh Mau	2.12	1.75	6,151	44%	23%	20%	8%	6%	
Hai Dong	1.52	0.79	6,940	56%	15%	24%	3%	3%	

1. Income is reported in 1995 Vietnamese Dong; Approximately 12,000 Vietnamese Dong equivalent to \$1US.

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey



Figure 5.4 Man Hauling Rice Shafts with Shoulder Pole



Figure 5.5 “Cong nong” soil tiller, fashioned from recycled engine parts, in the fields of Ninh Binh province.

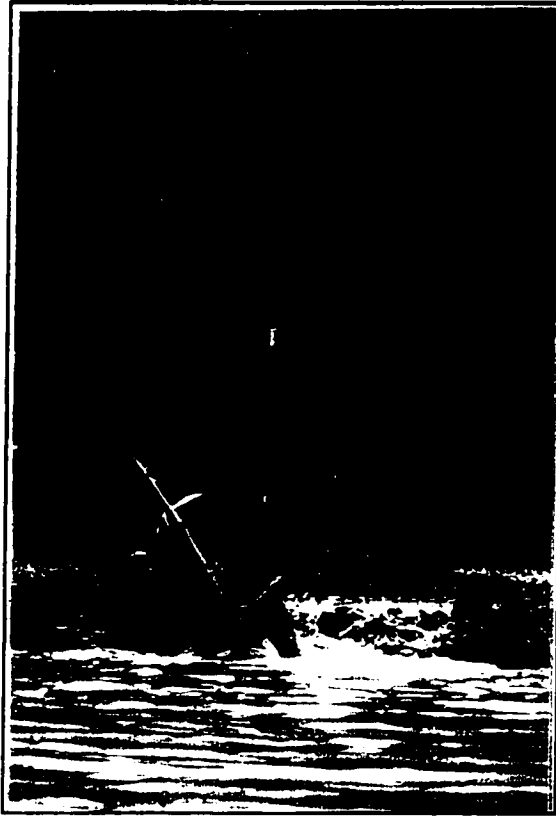


Figure 5.6 Man Irrigating Fields with Water Scoop, Ninh Binh province, the Red River Delta.



Figure 5.7 Migrant women outside bus station, Ha Noi, Viet Nam

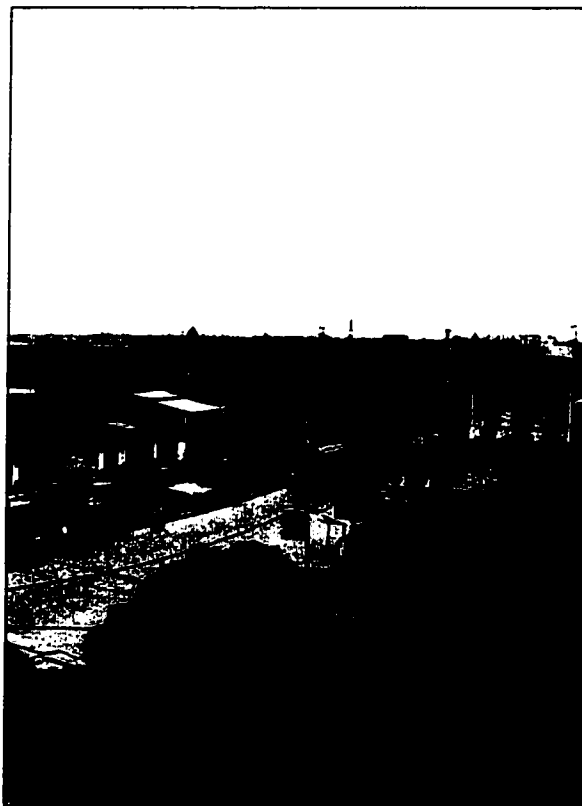


Figure 5.8 Main street running through Loc Hoa Commune, Nam Dinh province



Figure 5.9 Agricultural Products Shop in Loc Hoa Commune



Figure 5.10 Tailor's shop, Loc Hoa Commune

Table 5.2 Activity Status During the Previous Week, by Gender, Persons Age 15-65, Viet Nam's Red River Delta

	Had a Job,							TOTAL (N)
	Working	Not Working	Looking for Work	Keeping House	Going to School	Unable to Work	Retired	
Urban								
Women	74.8%	0.9%	0.7%	10.1%	7.3%	1.4%	3.2%	1.6%
Men	72.3%	1.0%	2.5%	3.6%	11.2%	0.5%	7.4%	1.5%
Total	73.6%	1.0%	1.6%	7.0%	9.2%	1.0%	5.2%	1.6%
Ratio of Men to Women	0.87	1.00	3.33	0.32	1.38	0.33	2.07	0.86
Peri-urban								
Women	87.2%	0.8%	0.3%	7.5%	2.3%	1.3%	0.3%	0.5%
Men	86.2%	1.4%	1.4%	1.9%	4.1%	2.8%	1.7%	0.6%
Total	86.7%	1.1%	0.8%	4.9%	3.2%	2.0%	0.9%	0.5%
Ratio of Men to Women	0.90	1.67	5.00	0.23	1.67	2.00	6.00	1.00
Proximate-rural								
Women	89.1%	1.7%	0.2%	3.8%	2.3%	2.7%	0.2%	0.0%
Men	90.0%	1.2%	0.2%	1.7%	2.7%	1.7%	2.0%	0.2%
Total	89.5%	1.5%	0.2%	2.8%	2.5%	2.3%	1.0%	0.1%
Ratio of Men to Women	0.85	0.63	1.00	0.39	1.00	0.54	8.00	—
Remote-rural								
Women	78.1%	5.5%	0.1%	9.7%	3.7%	2.0%	0.3%	0.7%
Men	79.9%	8.3%	0.6%	2.8%	4.8%	1.5%	1.2%	0.9%
Total	79.0%	6.8%	0.4%	6.5%	4.2%	1.8%	0.7%	0.8%
Ratio of Men to Women	0.90	1.33	6.00	0.25	1.15	0.67	3.67	1.14
								0.88

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

Table 5.3 Economic Activity Status and Employment Structure of Communes/Districts in Qualitative Research, All Persons Age 15-65, 1995

	Working					Non-working Statuses:										Commune Total Persons 15-65
	Profession al, Technical and Clerical Workers		Agricultur al Workers and Services Workers		Transport, Constructi on, Mining, Repair, and other Laborers	Had a job, Looking Not for a Working Job					Percent of All Respondents:					
	Total	Workers	Workers	Fishers	Workers	House Keeping	School Going to	Unable to Work	Retired	Other	100%					
Loc Hoa Commune Percent of Persons 15-65 (N)	291	7%	20%	35%	14%	25%	2%	1%	7%	3%	1%	2%	1%	100%		
Of whom, ___% are Female	51%	19	57	102	40	71	6	5	26	11	4	6	3	352		
Of whom, ___% are Under Age 30	24%	42%	67%	53%	70%	27%	33%	20%	77%	55%	50%	17%	33%	51%		
Of whom, ___% are Over Age 45	24%	11%	19%	24%	30%	28%	17%	60%	31%	100%	0%	0%	100%	27%		
Van Giang District Percent of Persons 15-65 (N)	208	23%	54%	2%	1%	20%	1%	3%	7%	9%	0%	4%	1%	100%		
Of whom, ___% are Female	52%	48	112	5	3	41	3	7	20	26	1	10	2	277		
Of whom, ___% are Under Age 30	15%	48%	63%	20%	33%	34%	33%	43%	75%	31%	100%	30%	0%	50%		
Of whom, ___% are Over Age 45	28%	15%	10%	20%	0%	32%	--	100%	20%	100%	--	--	--	25%		
Xuan Thanh Commune Percent of Persons 15-65 (N)	541	4%	10%	65%	4%	16%	5%	0%	5%	5%	1%	1%	1%	100%		
Of whom, ___% are Female	55%	24	55	356	20	89	30	3	31	30	7	8	8	658		
Of whom, ___% are Under Age 30	36%	54%	51%	64%	75%	17%	57%	0%	77%	67%	71%	25%	75%	57%		
Of whom, ___% are Over Age 45	24%	21%	20%	28%	10%	11%	27%	0%	52%	0%	28%	100%	50%	40%		
													13%	25%		

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

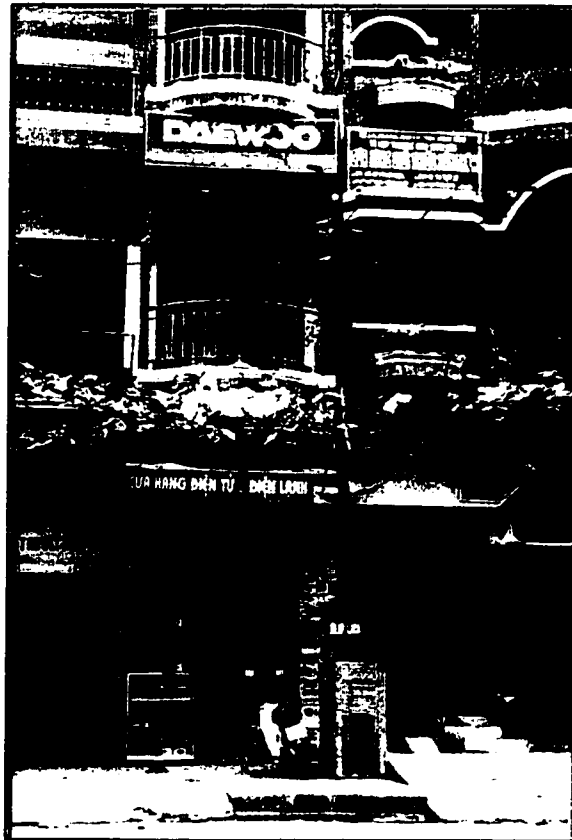


Figure 5.11 Merchants' Houses, Van Giang Street, Ninh Binh town



Figure 5.12 A row of houses, Van Giang District, Ninh Binh town



Figure 5.13 AIDS awareness poster, Van Giang district, Ninh Binh town

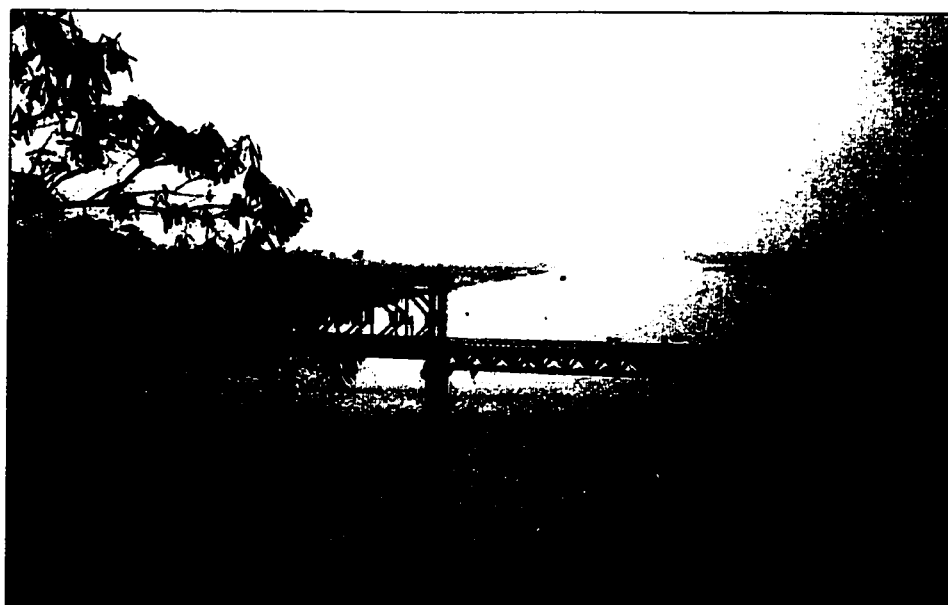


Figure 5.14 Bridge over the Red River, Ninh Binh town



Figure 5.15 Motorbike Taxi Drivers, Ninh Binh town



Figure 5.16 Husband and Wife Operating Noodle-making Machine.

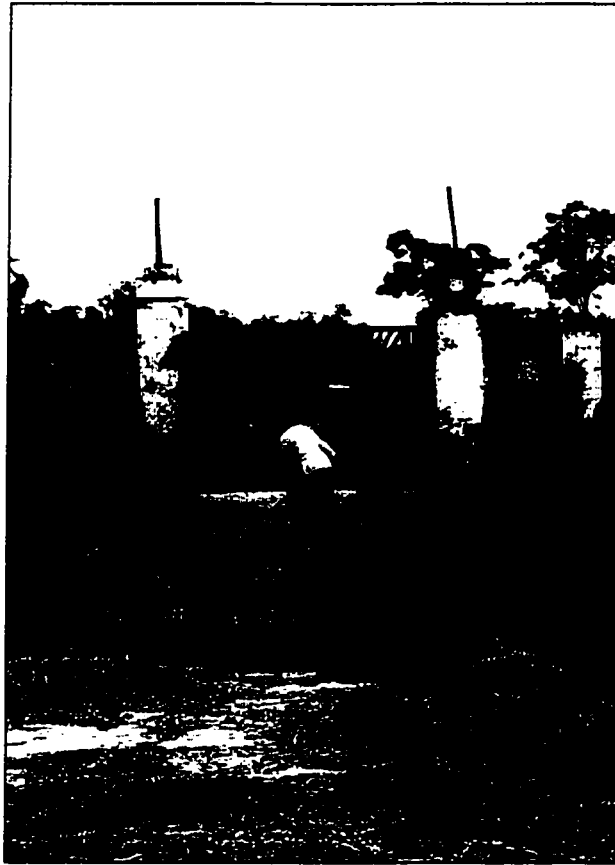


Figure 5.17 Woman Raking Drying Rice Shafts, the Red River Delta

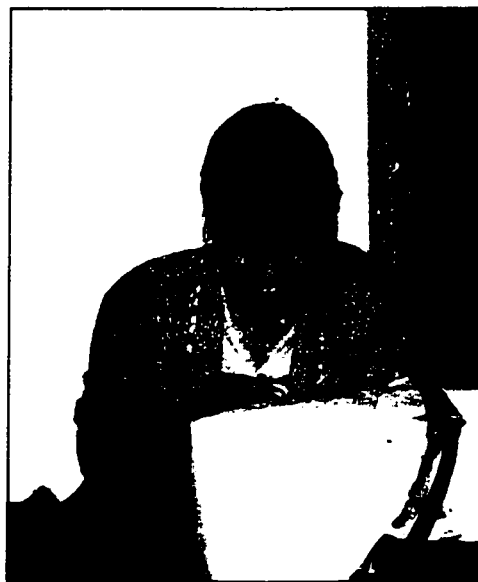


Figure 5.18 Adolescent woman sewing a conical hat, Xuan Thanh commune, Nam Dinh province

Chapter 6. Piecing Together a Living: Economic Participation, Working Hours and Multiple Jobholding in Viet Nam's Red River Delta

6.1 Chapter Introduction

Research in the fields of sociology and social demography has illustrated the diverse pathways whereby life course transitions and changes in family structure, brought about through family formation and childbearing, differentially influence men's and women's time allocation and economic participation decisions. Another body of research has further demonstrated that women's levels of economic participation reflect upon local demand for specific types of (female) labor and opportunity structures that influence women's employability (see, for example, Brinton et al. 1995). Family structure and family role obligations, as they are experienced by men and women embedded in social-institutional and cultural settings that either facilitate or limit their propensity to engagement in economic activity, operate jointly to shape men's and women's economic participation. In this chapter I establish the gendered pattern of economic participation that prevails in the Red River Delta. Revealing the significant diversity in men's and women's levels of labor force participation, I examine the influence of local economic opportunity structures, family compositional features, and individual traits as they operate to both inhibit and facilitate economic participation. Central to this investigation is the widespread experience of impoverishment and insecure economic conditions that frame labor force participation decisions by peasants and urban workers whose work experiences are embedded in a shifting macro-level economic context undergoing transition from central planning and socialism to a more liberal, market-oriented economy.

Reviews of the literature have established that for the duration of recent history, Vietnamese women have been very much engaged in the labor force. While their occupational status positions and the remuneration for their labor may not be commensurate with men's, aggregate rates of economic participation suggest relative equality between men and women. However, while nearly every man and woman participates in some form of economic activity in Viet Nam, this participation is not 'equal,' per se. I disaggregate aggregate rates of labor force participation to demonstrate that important variations underlie this observed, nearly 'universal' economic participation by men and women. Past studies of the gender division of labor in Vietnam have suggested that women are responsible for the vast majority of childcare and domestic work, and most often they are simultaneously engaged in "productive" employment. One typical description states that: "women manage, look after children and do all of the housework. Moreover, as the family in Vietnam is becoming more of an economic unit these days, women also become an important and even main source of income for the family"(Vijverberg 1998: 87). While such descriptions highlight women's full and intense engagement in economic roles, they leave many questions unanswered about the extent to which the economic activities of men and women are compatible with, and shaped by, family structural features, childcare and other social reproduction tasks. Furthermore, it is unclear whether and how men and women attempt to alter their labor force participation when they meet unique challenges in providing for household members' economic needs, especially those of dependent children whose costs of educational enrollment and other expenses may exact significant burdens upon household budgets. It is unclear, too, how it is that married women with young children are able to continue their labor force participation, practically uninterrupted, across the life course.

Rather than viewing each individual as identical in terms of his/her personal labor supply contributions, by disaggregating economic activity into two constituent components—working hours and multiple jobholding—I examine a more fine-tuned measure of labor force involvement. Thus, a focal point of inquiry in this chapter is to address whether variation in economic participation across individuals is meaningful, and whether it represents men's and women's attempts to labor with greater intensity and in more diverse lines of activity, when faced with unique economic pressures in the household.

I use data from the Vietnam Longitudinal Survey (described in detail in chapter four) to address these questions concerning women's and men's economic participation. Selections from in-depth interviews further illuminate the rationale underlying economic participation, the constraints and pressures that women and men experience in undertaking economic participation, and the strategies that women undertake to combine the laborer and maternal roles.

6.2 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In order to construct a framework for understanding and interpreting men's and women's patterns of economic participation I draw upon the principles of subsistence economy within households of developing countries, as well as theories of time allocation and the organization of work and childcare as they have been elaborated in less developed country settings. Combined, these perspectives provide a useful framework for examining how gender status and family structure influence economic participation in the Vietnamese context. Furthermore, comparative research that has emphasized the embeddedness of women's economic participation in social-institutional contexts enriches understanding of how 'demand' factors in local economies shape employment outcomes (Brinton et al. 1995). Brinton (1993) has emphasized how 'individual-level processes producing large-scale stratification patterns' occur within "social-institutional

constraints and the structure of human relationships,” and these structural constraints are oftentimes missing from analyses of male/female employment differences. These frameworks assist in delineating the individual, family, and community contextual variables that represent needs, constraints, and opportunities influential to men’s and women’s involvement in “productive” work or employment. Previous works on the organization of work in less developed countries and those places that frequently experience economic hardship and severe poverty will also shed light on the unique approaches to productive work and reproductive work, or domestic work and caregiving, that guide the choices and orientations of men and women living in the Red River Delta.

Rural Poverty and Decision-making in the Subsistence Economies Framework

Within the Red River Delta it is often the case, especially for agricultural families, that minimizing the risk and severity of impoverishment is a powerful inducement to widespread, intense economic participation in whatever jobs are available. Where employment is lacking in the local community it is not uncommon for men and women to innovate and create employment opportunities—by setting up a restaurant or market stall, for example, or by taking up labor migration strategies. An extra hour of labor that generates economic rewards for the household is often deemed very valuable, if not required, for survival. Economic hardship, coupled with a relative scarcity of opportunities for work and enterprise, place a premium on every hour of productive employment.

Observations of living conditions endured by peasants in northern Viet Nam during the 20th century have highlighted the precariousness of living situations and the important reliance upon secure, minimally stable agricultural cultivation activities. Gourou (1955:91), assessing the life of peasants in the Red River Delta during the 1920s and 1930s, comments on their precarious, subsistence-dependent way of living:

“The loss of a crop is grievous to the peasant, who has nothing to live on until the following harvest...He must go into debt to buy his food, his seed...If these peasants

lived in easy circumstances, provisioned with reserves, they could easily stand the loss of one crop, and would gaily wait for a richer land to bring them in more bountiful harvests. Unfortunately the Tonkinese peasant has not attained this kind of detachment.”

This theme of living close to the margin, of relying upon agricultural production for subsistence, and working in sideline economic activities, continues to characterize the work of Red River Delta peasants in the current period. The gradual pace of development and urbanization has opened several new economic activities to residents of outlying villages, and certain sources of loans are available during difficult times. However, many describe their existence in similar terms to those observed by Gourou. A woman, Ms. Huyen, from the village of Xuan Thanh, Nam Dinh province, remarks:

“It is the truth that we have to try our best to work only because of our troubled economic situation. We are short of money but we spend much. The paddy, its price is not even worth mentioning, so we are forced to work in addition in order to have enough money for the family's expenditures.”

Like many women in her village, she engages in seasonal migration, making numerous trips to Ha Noi in the off-peak season to collect recyclable scrap materials. Her family, like many others, lives close to the margins of subsistence, and the costs of sending children to school impose a significant strain on the household economy.

A theoretical perspective formulated to explain the economic behavior of peasant populations, particularly those who earn their subsistence through the cultivation of wet-rice agriculture, and populations living in nascent market economies where wage employment and labor markets are restricted, underpins this analysis of labor supply. The approaches to labor and production within these informal, subsistence economies diverge from the rationality of market

economic actors in that they are not geared toward utility maximization, per se, nor do they often incorporate wage labor. Beginning in the early 20th century, theorists such as Chayanov (1925) offered a perspective on the organization of the ‘peasant family farm’ that continues to fuel debate in the field of peasant studies. The ‘peasant family farm,’ according to Chayanov (1925: 5) produces a ‘family labor product’ that derives from “the market situation, ... location relative to markets, availability of means of production, family size and composition, quality of the soil, and other production conditions.” In his classic *Theory of Peasant Economy*, written in 1966, Chayanov established a theoretical perspective on the peasant family and its labor organization that has proven useful in understanding how family composition and life course influences economic organization and the economic activities of household members. Specifically, through Chayanov’s insights, we come to see how, in regions where peasant household economies prevail, family composition influences the ratio of workers to consumers in the household (i.e., constituting the ‘dependency ratio’), and thus the amount of labor necessarily performed by household members to provide for subsistence needs. Specifically, Chayanov notes (1966:60):

“Since the labor family’s basic stimulus to economic activity is the necessity to satisfy the demands of its consumers, and its work hands are the chief means for this, we ought first of all to expect the family’s volume of economic activity [agricultural work and the total group of crafts and trades] to quantitatively correspond more or less to these basic elements in family composition.”

Furthermore, Chayanov notes (1966:60) that the “number of working hands” in a family influences its capacity for complex cooperation in work, on a sort of micro-level “economy of scale.” The age and number of children, the addition of daughter-in-laws, the infirmity and illness of elder members are all important factors that represent either an increased or decreased consumer demand in the household, and either a drain on household labor resources or a boost to its labor supply. The expenditure of time and energy devoted to labor, or the degree of ‘self-

exploitation,' in the terminology of Chayanov, depends heavily upon 'consumer' demand in the family. However, where technology and land are insufficient (as is frequently the case) the peasant will often attempt to maximize labor output while achieving limited economic returns, just in order to meet subsistence demands in the household, such that "due to necessity, the peasant initiates what are, at first sight, the most disadvantageous undertakings" (Chayanov 1966:87).

The motivation for labor in this type of setting, then, is to provide a stable livelihood for family and some modicum of social insurance. As such, "production is not geared to the market, and family labor is motivated by needs primarily, rather than gain" (Beneria 1999:71). Referring to previously formulated expositions of peasant economies, Scott (1976:13) notes that the labor efforts of peasants oftentimes appear to run contrary to the principles of rational, cost-benefit analyses. He observes:

"Peasant families which must feed themselves from small plots in overpopulated regions will (if there are no alternatives) work unimaginably hard and long for the small increments in production---long after a prudent capitalist would move on... That the marginal return on his additional labor is miniscule matters little to the capital-poor, land-short peasant who must wring the family's food out of what he has."

Scott further describes an approach to work activity that remains common to rural dwellers of the Red River Delta, who, as a result of their labor abundance and scarcity of land and production capital, engage in labor-absorbing agricultural and fill the off-peak season with various sidelines, such as the production of handicrafts, peddling food products in the markets, and seeking out manual wage labor. Their practically unceasing search for poorly compensated labor, despite continuing, severe poverty, is made understandable, according to Scott, given the low opportunity cost of labor for the peasant and the high marginal utility of income experienced by those whose lives hover close to the level of subsistence (Scott, 1976:15).

Original statements on the theory of peasant economy also illuminate the disadvantageous position for certain workers whose families have a relatively large number of dependents. Scott's description delineates the reasons why adult workers with large families face heightened pressure to maximize their labor supply:

“For two families farming the same way on comparable small plots, the larger the family, the more disadvantageous its position...this is true even if the extra members of the family can work (because of diminishing returns to labor), but it is excruciatingly true for big families with a large proportion of nonproducing consumers. There is a period of maximum dependency in the natural history of most families, when the children are too young to add much labor but must be fed, and during which, other things being equal, the family is particularly vulnerable to subsistence crises” (Scott, 1979:21).

Extending from this view of family structure, we might expect the relatively poor resident of the Red River Delta to undertake sidelines, or ‘subsistence alternatives,’ in the forms delineated by Scott—petty trade, small crafts, casual wage labor, or migration, so as to enlarge the subsistence package and buffer the family from subsistence crises (p. 26).

Given the extremely high levels of population density that have shaped land allocation in agricultural communities of the Red River Delta, the time demands placed upon family agricultural workers are quite high so as to meet subsistence and production needs of the family. An extra hour of labor that generates economic rewards for the household is often deemed very valuable, if not required, for survival. Economic hardship, coupled with relative scarcity of opportunities for work and enterprise, place a premium on every hour of productive employment. Boserup (1970: 32) noted this pattern in her comparative analysis of agricultural systems: “...the input of labour per family in African subsistence farming can be kept at lower levels than, for instance, in the more densely populated regions of Asia, because the generally much lower population densities in Africa make it possible to stick to an agricultural system with less labour input per unit of agricultural output.” She later concludes (1970:35): “in regions of intense

cultivation of irrigated land, both men and women must put hard work into agriculture in order to earn enough to support a family on a small piece of land.” Jamieson’s (1993:34) observations on agriculturalist families in Viet Nam convey a similar way of living at subsistence’s edge—focusing on agriculture and supplementing it with sideline activities:

“Virtually every family was engaged in the exploitation of the ricefields that surrounded most villages. Most occupations, even the growing of most other crops, were things to be done when one could not be profitably engaged in growing rice. Everyone—carpenters, blacksmiths, barbers—tried to farm if it were at all possible. The specter of hunger was familiar and lurked close at hand. There could never be too much rice, and growing rice was never too much work. But many families could not make a living farming, and most villagers were perpetually short of cash. Village industries provided a means of using extra time to earn additional money. There were almost exclusively family enterprises. Labor was not considered to be a cost. An entire family would work hard all day for a very small profit.”

The presence of children, particularly those too young to contribute labor to the household economy and those enrolled in school, heightens the financial burdens faced by a household. Even the minimal expenses associated with feeding and clothing children and enrolling them in primary and secondary education are likely to pose a significant burden to poor, rural families. Upon marrying, and especially upon having children, men and women are likely to face pressure to heighten their economic security and income in order to meet their children’s needs. Guest (1984), in his research on labor allocation in rural Java, observed that peasants maximize work to meet subsistence demands. Peasants, he reasoned, “particularly those with low levels of resources, seek as much work as possible in order to ensure subsistence”(Guest 1984:169). Thus, we expect, according to the subsistence ethic and economic practices rooted in wet-rice agricultural production and informal sector, low-productivity labor, that attempts to heighten work intensity will be greater among individuals whose family composition and stage in the family life course imply relatively great financial demands.

The Context of Women's Work and the Question of Maternal Incompatibility

Conceptual and measurement difficulties often arise in adopting rational choice models of time allocation and economic participation, developed within the neoclassical economics theoretical framework, to analyses of time allocation and participation in work activities in less developed countries. In these theoretical models, developed largely within Western, industrialized, market economic contexts, household members choose or are designated to allocate their time to work in the labor force, or to perform other activities such as attending school or caring for children (Bancroft 1958; Becker 1981; Bowen and Finnegan 1969; Durand 1948). Decisions about time allocation are based upon the economic needs of the household, the relative quality of opportunities present in the labor market, and constraints upon economic participation posed by individual, family, and community characteristics such as human capital investments and the presence of young children. According to these traditional theories, women with young children are less likely than men and other women to be employed, because, "time spent in caring for children constitutes the most important, time-intensive, and employment-inhibiting household responsibility of wives with young children" (Stolzenberg and Waite 1984: 158). As children grow older and the need for childcare diminishes, or the costs of replacing mothers' care becomes less expensive, the suppressive effect on mothers' labor force participation is thought to decline, and women are able to resume economic participation.

The segmentation of the domestic and productive spheres assumed in traditional frameworks is challenged by the pervasiveness of employment in the agricultural and informal sectors that prevails in less developed countries. Without this segmentation, individuals, particularly women, may not have to choose between domestic production and production for the market (or "work" activity). Rather, the structure of work allows them to perform both types of activity continuously and simultaneously. In developing nation contexts the presence of children

may not so much suppress the amount of time allocated to labor force participation, as much as it may lead women to modify and channel their work activities to be combined with childcare. In the rural areas of Vietnam, the distance between enterprise and home, or between “productive” and “reproductive” labor, is often proximate and malleable. Similar to the scenario observed by Wolf (1972) in rural Taiwan, from the time of their child’s infancy, women may be “free” to return to productive work while carrying their children on their back, or by obtaining childcare assistance from female kin or community members. Especially where work is performed in or near the household, women’s maternal roles may be entirely compatible, albeit more difficult and physically straining, with their roles as farmers, vendors, and manual workers. By simultaneously examining multiple dimensions of economic participation we are able to ascertain whether women in different stages of the family life course and in different social locations exhibit different orientations to economic participation.

Mason and Palan’s research (1981) on women’s employment in Malaysia delineates how certain household opportunity structures influence the degree of compatibility between work organization and child care organization. This compatibility, in turn, influences the likelihood, intensity, and type of employment performed by women. Mason’s research, similar to the earlier work of Stycos and Weller (1967: 215), demonstrates that raising children and working in the labor force may be quite “compatible” in developing country contexts:

“The less the cost in transferring childbearing tasks to others or in incorporating them with the job, the greater the compatibility. Compatibility can stem from the nature of the task or from the social organization of childcare. Thus, it is relatively easy to combine maternal and occupational chores on a family farm or in a cottage industry. It is also easy to work outside the home if parental surrogates are cheaply available in the form of relatives, friends, or state agencies.”

Using the terminology of Darian (1975), commonplace jobs held by women in traditional and developing economies are often “convenient;” or in the words of Mason and Palan (1981) and

Stycos and Weller (1967), “compatible” with childcare and other domestic duties. Where social-institutional contexts are less conducive to women’s ability to combine economic participation with childcare and other tasks of social reproduction, it may be the case that women’s economic participation will be relatively restricted.

Several detailed analyses of women’s time allocation in developing countries suggest that where work and childcare organization are conducive, mothers of young children and infants continue to perform labor market work at the same time that they markedly increase time devoted to childcare and housework; this shift in time allocation is usually accomplished through reductions in leisure time. In a longitudinal analysis of changes in time allocation among Filipino men and women, following the addition of a newborn child to their family, Tiefenthaler (1997) determined that mothers experience a significant increase in total workload subsequent to the birth of their child. This increase occurs irrespective of family structure, but is most pronounced for the first birth, and the workload increase (associated mainly with an increase in childcare and housework activities) remains up to 14 months postnatal. Whereas mothers experience a significant decline in their allocation of time to labor market work, a decline that is less marked when elder children, especially daughters, are present in the household, new fathers do not experience a significant decline in their labor market activity. Fathers’ total workloads increase subsequent to the birth of a new child as well, but the increase is not statistically significant. Underlying this aggregate workload pattern, fathers slightly increase the hours they devote to childcare and housework while they decrease, slightly, the time allocated to labor market work. In the same study, Tiefenthaler also examines time allocation patterns of older siblings following a birth, thereby revealing the important role of elder daughters in providing childcare and domestic work assistance. Altogether, her analyses suggest that women, more so than men, face dramatic alterations in their time allocation patterns and much heightened workloads subsequent

to and after giving birth. Furthermore, daughters, more so than sons, tend to shift their time allocation patterns, often away from studying and school attendance, in order to fulfill familial, gender-based roles of childcare assistance.

Consistent with earlier findings in similar less developed country contexts where childcare is readily available, it is expected that the presence of young children will be a minimal deterrent to women's participation in the workforce. When young and infant children are present the amount of time mothers devote to work, as well as their ability to engage in multiple jobholding, may be constrained in part due to the performance of maternal roles. However, this seeming constraint will be counter-balanced given that families face heightened economic need when greater numbers of children are present. In families whose income lies near subsistence level, the additional costs associated with providing food, healthcare, and education for children will constitute a nontrivial portion of the family budget, in particular given that public subsidies for many services have been largely reduced in the new market-oriented economic context. Women's economic participation rates, I predict, will remain high throughout adulthood, including periods when young children are present. I surmise that fathers' intensity of participation in work activities will not be constrained by the presence of young children, especially given that traditional gender beliefs reinforce the notion that domestic tasks and childcare are "women's work." For men too, raising young children means heightened financial pressure and therefore pressure to devote greater amounts of time to economic activity relative to those without young children.

6.3 The Vietnamese Socioeconomic Context of Labor Force Participation

Research on labor force participation in developing societies demonstrates that women's and men's involvement in productive, market-based work is a product of several, layered

'opportunity structures,' that either encourage or discourage economic participation. Embodied in these opportunity structures are several structural features, such as local occupational structures, rates of un- and under-employment, family composition and role obligations, population density, and local institutions of education, childcare and other social services. Among the unique elements of historical experience that potentially shape men's and women's economic participation decisions in Viet Nam are the decades of mobilization for war, followed by a socialist revolution that emphasized achievement of gender egalitarian outcomes in economic participation, and the persistence of cultural beliefs that feature a strong demand for women's loyalty and obligation to family (Le 1995; UNESCO 1989). These developments, and the predominance of labor-intensive agricultural work as the main source of income in the countryside, contribute to a sociocultural climate in which extensive, intense female labor force participation is normative. Vietnamese women have historically been involved in many forms of activity, especially in work as merchants and wet-rice cultivators (Hy 1991; Mason 1998); the boundaries of their work expanded during the war years, due to the marked absence of male laborers from household economies.

Although Vietnamese women have long been active workforce participants, the proportion currently possessing professional skills and serving in managerial positions is low relative to men (Hoang 1994). Formal sector, and especially professional, managerial, and skilled-trade occupations, represent a relatively small fraction of the local labor structure. Agricultural employment predominates in rural areas, and in urban areas men's and women's work is concentrated in the informal sector, in trading, services, construction, and other manual labor. Contemporary rural-to-urban labor migration originating in the Red River Delta, in which migrants often seek nonagricultural jobs that are more highly remunerative than agricultural

work, involves greater numbers of men than women (Dang 1997; Tana 1996). This creates a marked sex-ratio imbalance in the local population, in which women outnumber males.

Because Viet Nam and other socialist countries have often been excluded from regional analyses of labor force participation, I suggest that exploring men's and women's economic participation in Vietnam is important for gaining an understanding of the demographic and societal processes related to economic development and transition, especially under circumstances of high population density. An extremely poor country, during the early 1990s approximately 55% of the Red River Delta population was living in poverty. Poverty rates in Vietnam's countryside are rooted in high levels of underemployment and a growing pool of labor force participants whose presence further saturates the agricultural labor market (Wiens 1998). In densely populated urban areas, potential labor force often exceeds employment opportunities, creating a sizable segment of underemployed workers whose daily income may fall short of household subsistence needs.

The pace of occupational diversification away from agriculture has increased in the Red River Delta since economic reforms began in 1986; however, diversification has not been so extensive as to enhance economic well-being for most of the population (Ronnas and Sjoberg 1991). In this context, where farming is the most widespread, yet least remunerative, economic activity, I conceptualize economic participation rates and levels of work intensity as indicators of the type and duration of employment that residents are able or required to undertake in the context of restricted economic opportunities. Nonetheless, it is difficult to attach an evaluative meaning to work intensity or duration. The threat of impoverishment may make working lengthy hours necessary for improving one's economic well-being. However, where underemployment is severe and productivity low, such that individuals are not able to locate sufficient, remunerative labor commensurate with their employment objectives, skills and human capital, lengthy work

hours may simply indicate long periods of toiling with limited economic return. Research in similar rural, densely populated areas of less developed countries (Guest 1984) suggests that work of very long duration is often necessary for households that only have access to labor-intensive jobs that offer minimal economic returns.

Viet Nam also provides an important context for studying economic participation because the country is changing from a collective, socialist economy to a mixed, state-initiated market economy. Since land reforms announced in 1988 and 1993, households have been given extensive land use and transfer rights, essentially commodifying once collectively-owned and centrally-planned land use (Liljestrom et al. 1998). In addition, Vietnamese workers faced with the loss of their jobs through the closure of many state-owned industries have had to locate or create new employment in the market economy. Within this new context, in which individual effort and allocation of labor supply make a much more direct contribution to households' economic well-being and financial security, the decision-making criteria guiding labor force participation have changed markedly. Measurements of work duration and multiple jobholding in the market-oriented economy no longer reflect state-regulated production goals, but rather the outcomes of decision-making processes and choices about the type and duration of work necessary for household members' survival and well-being.

A final comment on the social context of the Red River Delta concerns changes in the institutions of childcare and education. The crèches and kindergartens established throughout the Red River Delta during the socialist period still remain and are widely utilized. However, scaled back state subsidies for this form of childcare, and the retrenchment of state employees who would have had access to childcare facilities in their employment organizations, has occasioned a massive downturn in the number of spaces for young children in government-subsidized childcare (Goodkind 1995b). In the aftermath, more stringent user fees have been implemented, hours of

operation restricted, and placement of children into private care more widely adopted (often provided by a female family member). The costs of children's education have also risen during the *doi moi* period, as operations fees, supplies, and other required costs have risen alongside the expanding market in 'voluntary' costs for participating in extra classes, tutorial sessions, examination reviews, and enrollment in private schools. In general, the costs entailed in raising children and providing for their education are increasing, and the rising expenses are being drawn more directly from workers earnings and assets.

6.4 Variable Measures and Hypotheses

Previous research, including that outlined in chapter four, has highlighted the difficulties of measuring labor force participation in developing economies where a substantial proportion of work occurs in the informal sector, in self-employment and in agriculture (Durand 1975). Difficulties are often heightened in the case of women's work, since the work of women is more often 'invisible'—performed within the household and conceptualized as the proper "domain" of women, rather than being recognized for its subsistence and income-generating potential (Beneria 1982; Dixon 1982). These difficulties notwithstanding, in addition to the dichotomous indicator of labor force participation status, commonly used in labor supply analyses, the current research also attempts to measure the intensity or duration of economic activity. Work intensity is captured through two measures: average hours worked per week by employed respondents, and multiple job holding (i.e., 'occupational multiplicity,' which describes respondents are concurrently working in two or more jobs). This method is particularly salient for analyzing a context such as Viet Nam, where "full-time" wage employment remains exceptional rather than normative, and flexibility and diversity of time allocation to work activities is essential for developing household economic strategies. This approach is also consistent with social

scientists' suggestions that alternative measures should be explored in efforts to conceptualize work in developing economies (Durand 1975; Kain 1991).

Including both hours of work and multiple jobholding adds a layer of necessary complexity to the analyses. However, it also incorporates new complexities in definition and measurement. Estimating average hours of work per week is complicated, particularly in the informal sector where labor, "leisure" and "domestic" tasks are not clearly demarcated. Given seasonal variations in agricultural work, it may be the case that aggregating seasonal averages and hours worked in a secondary activity may inflate estimations of total hours worked per week. Defining a particular hour as being allocated to work may also suggest a false dichotomy between working hours and nonworking hours, when in actuality work and leisure may be intermingled in both time and space. The wide range of hours that respondents report devoting to work activities suggests, however, that they are able to arrive at a meaningful distinction between work and other activities.

Recognizing the complexities associated with quantifying economic participation, I construct measures of labor force participation and average hours worked per week to serve as the focal dependent variable—economic participation. These measures are described at length in chapter four. Respondents were also asked about secondary jobs they may have performed in the previous week. Particularly, the VLS asks respondents: Did you work at more than one job last week? I have defined multiple jobholders as respondents who indicated that they worked two different jobs in the previous week. I delimit the definition of multiple jobholder to include only persons working in multiple jobs in different occupational categories.¹⁰ In order to arrive at the

¹⁰ I operationalize multiple jobholding as such to eliminate the many respondents who named agriculture as both a primary and secondary activity. While some of these workers may have been undertaking two truly distinct activities, rather than simply two tasks in the rice cultivation process, the data does not provide sufficient detail to make the distinction.

measure for the duration or intensity of work, I used respondents' reported average hours worked per week in their primary activity. For respondents who did work in a secondary activity, I summed the total hours worked on average in both primary and secondary activities.

The model includes several independent variables widely viewed as influential to economic participation. Specifically, the individual-level variables included in the model are age, educational attainment, and marital status. Sector of employment is another individual trait hypothesized to influence work duration and the likelihood of multiple jobholding. Community-level variables, specifically residential location on the urban-rural continuum, which stand for the nature and level of demand for labor in the local context, are also posited to influence the labor supply contributions of men and women. Last, I consider family structure variables, specifically the presence of children and maternal surrogates in the household, as they shape men's and women's work activities.

Age is measured using three categories that represent three major life course stages: 1) Young adulthood (Age 15-24); Middle Adulthood (Age 25-44); and Late Adulthood (Age 45-65). Elaborating differences across nations in the relationship between labor force participation and the life cycle of marriage and family, Durand (1975: 42) describes certain nations in which women are engaged largely as "family farm workers or employed in cottage industries, where it is relatively easy for them to function at the same time as housewives and mothers." Women in these developing countries are posited to have a 'central peak and plateau life course labor force participation pattern;' their levels of participation peak in early adulthood, decline slightly and then plateau, persisting at these levels through late adulthood (i.e., age 65 and older). Males in societies undergoing economic development are more likely than women to experience a shortening in their work span, according to Durand (1975:94), because "the extent of their participation is diminished by delayed entry into the labor force and by earlier retirement as

development proceeds.” In light of Durand’s observations, and considering the conditions of underemployment and slow-paced economic development currently prevailing in the Red River Delta, I hypothesize that both men and women will have the highest rates of economic activity and the highest work intensity when they are “middle aged” adults, between ages 25 and 44. These years are most likely to be characterized by high levels of economic need associated with family formation and raising children. I further hypothesize that young men (i.e., men under age 25) and older men (i.e., men over age 45) are less likely to be economically active than women in the same age groups. Continued educational enrollment, informal periods of “retirement,” and physical incapacitation are likely to occur in the earlier and later years of adulthood, constraining time and capacity for labor force participation for both men and women. However, since men are more likely to access higher education and the formal sector employment opportunities that may offer the relatively privileged status of “retirement,” I expect these age-induced declines in work activity will be more pronounced for men than women.

Educational attainment is measured categorically to correspond with three major levels of schooling transition in Viet Nam. Specifically, educational attainment is categorized as: primary school completion or fewer years of education (i.e., 0 to 5 years of schooling); some lower secondary school or its completion (i.e., 6 to 9 years of schooling); and some upper secondary school or its completion (i.e., 10 or more years of schooling). Respondents who went to college, although few in number, are also included in this final category. I hypothesize that the relationship between educational attainment and work participation will be weak in the Red River Delta context. However, a relationship being observed, I hypothesize that both economic participation rates and work duration will be higher for those with low and moderate levels of education. Within the largely traditional, agrarian economic structure of the Red River Delta, individuals possessing high levels of education may be relatively high status individuals, having

attained a relatively secure resource base exceeding the subsistence minimum. Thus, they may be able to afford periodically exiting the labor force, or “retiring” earlier than others in the population. Regarding employment intensity, persons with lower levels of education may obtain lower wage and productivity returns to each hour of labor. If higher levels of education are instrumental in generating higher wages, I posit that higher levels of educational attainment will be negatively associated with work intensity. Following Durand (1975: 99), I anticipate that within the Red River Delta there will be few alternatives to intense levels of economic participation for most, especially for those engaged in agricultural and other forms of manual labor:

“Given higher wages, they [those working in formal or professional sectors] may be inclined to work shorter hours and take more time for vacations, as workers in countries of increasing affluence have done during modern times, but these individuals do not have the alternative of remaining outside the labor force.”

Variation in marital status among the economically active population of Viet Nam is quite limited, given that divorce is a rare occurrence and marriage reaches practically universal levels among most villagers by the time they reach their late-20s (Nguyen 1998). Full-time entrance into work activities may be tightly intertwined with the timing of marriage, and continued schooling will likely lead to postponement of marriage. I expect that economic activity rates will be markedly lower for single respondents relative to married respondents. Young men are more likely to extend their educational careers into their late teens and early twenties than young women, and generally may experience fewer pressures to work prior to family formation. Widowhood exists mostly among a small proportion of women in the years of middle adulthood and late adulthood. While it is difficult to anticipate the diversity of circumstances faced by women who have lost their husbands, I expect that such women will face heightened economic pressure (i.e., that of a single bread-winner, perhaps with dependent children) and thus will more

likely be economically active and laboring with greater intensity than those having living husbands with whom to pool resources.

The employment sector in which one labors is another characteristic influential to the time demands and organization of work activities, and thereby underpins duration of work and the likelihood of multiple jobholding. I measure employment sector by categorizing workers broadly according to their industry of work and whom they work for. According to this designation, employment sectors consist of: family agriculture (i.e., workers whose primary activity is agricultural, and who are self-employed or working in a family farm); family nonagriculture (i.e., workers, also self- or family-employed, who are engaged in manufacturing, services, trade, or manual labor); private or state sector employment (i.e., workers who labor as employees for either a non-relative, private employer or the government. Nearly all of these employees are engaged in nonagricultural work).

I hypothesize that informal sector workers, or those who are self-employed or work in family farms or businesses, will work more hours than formal sector workers who work for the government or businesses. I expect this will be so because, absent of state regulations and work schedules determined by formal sector employers, self-employed workers and farmers facing great economic difficulty and insecurity will labor with relatively greater intensity, in order to ensure subsistence level income, than their counterparts employed in more stable, highly remunerative formal sector work. It is also plausible, however, that holding a formal sector position may make a particular individual especially well-situated to engage in multiple jobholding, and thusly enhance his/her work duration. Although agricultural workers may face relatively higher levels of economic need and insecurity in obtaining family subsistence, employees of state or private firms may work under conditions most conducive to multiple jobholding. That state employee salaries remain moderate for most workers in the Red River

Delta is indicative that even this class of workers likely perceives a great incentive to multiple jobholding. These data analyses will clarify how sector of primary employment constrains or facilitates multiple jobholding.

Respondents' place of residence serves as an indicator of the local labor market context and site of employment. The position of respondents' residence on the rural-urban continuum is measured according to whether respondents live in an urban, "proximate" rural, "intermediate" rural, or "isolated" rural location (as described in the research methods chapter). Guest (1984: 155), in his analysis of household labor allocation efforts, pointed out: "the economic structure of villages are of major importance in determining if local work is available." Especially in the context of Viet Nam's recent economic diversification, the extent of sectoral diversity (i.e., the mix of traditional, agricultural work in addition to opportunities in manufacturing, services, and trade) is likely to vary extensively across villages, thereby creating variation in local employment opportunities. The analyses of occupational structure features in three Red River Delta commune/districts, presented in chapter five, substantiate this view. In addition, differential access to transportation and communication infrastructure across villages will likely generate variation in employment opportunities. Over the course of rural development, especially with improved transportation developments allowing access to urban markets, it has been said that "dualistic aspects of the national economy...are less and less coincident with either rural-urban or agriculture-nonagriculture sectoral divisions" (McNicholl and Kain 1990: 14). Based upon this notion of blurring distinctions across urban and rural areas, and the notion that some rural areas will have more extensive employment opportunities than others, I hypothesize that intermediate rural areas will offer employment opportunities linked to urban places, as well as traditional agrarian production. This relative abundance of opportunities will manifest itself in higher levels

of economic participation and multiple jobholding than appears in more distant, relatively isolated, rural areas.

Family structure is thought to be centrally important in defining household needs and resource constraints as they impact labor force participation and its intensity. I explore the influence of family structure through three sets of variables. For men and women in the “expansion phase” of the family life cycle, in which the number of young, dependent children in the household is at its highest point over the family life course, the presence of children may influence both the ability and necessity for women and men to participate in the labor force (see, for example, Soonthorndhada et al. 1987). The presence of young children, and the assumed costs of their care, education, and other needs, will pose a greater level of financial need for parents, relative to being childless or having grown children. Male respondents who are fathers of greater numbers of children, including those who have entered formal schooling (and thus have less time to contribute to household economic activities) and those who are under the age of six, will face higher levels of economic constraint, and therefore heightened pressure to respond with higher levels of work intensity than those with fewer or no children. Thus, I hypothesize that labor force participation and its intensity will increase for men, the greater the number of children they have. Additionally, where conditions allow, I hypothesize men with young children will be more likely to undertake multiple jobholding as a route to enhancing their labor supply—an alternative route to maximizing economic participation to meet increasing household resource demands.

The relationship between labor force participation and presence of children is different for women, I expect, given women’s greater involvement in childcare duties. Although the presence of children in greater numbers does heighten financial needs for the family, in the case of mothers the presence of young children may constrain allocation of time to labor force

activities. This pattern is supported in some earlier research. Tiefenthaler's (1998) research on the Philippines, for example, and Gronau's (1976) finding that among Israeli women having children below the age of school enrolment lessened participation, whereas the presence of older children actually had a positive effect on mothers' labor force participation. I do not anticipate that overall participation rates will be substantially lower when young children are present. I do hypothesize, however, that hours worked will be more flexible and responsive to the presence of children and childcare duties, and thus will be lower among women with children under age six.

Given the importance of cooperative labor strategies in household economies of the developing world, and Viet Nam in particular, and given the importance of brief durations of patrilocal residence in Viet Nam after marriage, and elder parents' co-residence with their adult children, I consider the presence of adult females, in addition to mothers, as influential to women's labor force participation. A wide range of research has commented upon the presence of maternal surrogates as potentially enabling mothers' levels of labor force participation (Jaffe and Azumi 1960; Stycos and Weller 1967; Mason and Palan 1981). Margery Wolf (1972), in her research conducted with rural Taiwanese families, commented on the important role of women's communities in organizing childcare and tending one another's children. I posit, then, that the presence of women in the household between ages 15 and 65 (in addition to the respondent herself) will enhance labor force participation of women, particularly those with young children who require assistance with childcare and supervision. Thus, I expect that the effect of the presence of young children upon women's labor force participation will be conditioned by the presence of adult women (i.e., potential maternal surrogates) in the household. I test this final proposition by including an interaction term within the model predicting women's economic participation.

6.5 Results

Table 6.1 presents descriptive statistics demonstrating that men's and women's economic participation rates are very similar in the Red River Delta. Among persons age 15 to 65, women's rate of participation is only about one percentage point lower than men's. Examining differences across three major age groups, we see that men's and women's economic activity rates diverge most strongly among married respondents age 15 to 24; however, men's rate of economic participation is still only about 12 percentage points greater than that of women. While unmarried males and females age 15 to 24 experience the lowest rates of economic activity, due largely to school enrollment, the relatively small proportion of men and women in this age group who are married experience substantially higher rates of economic activity. For most adults, particularly those who have married and have started having children, economic participation is nearly universal—around 90% for both men and women. Table 6.1 also reveals that women's economic participation rates remain high even during the prime ages of childbearing and childcare. The fact that economic participation rates remain relatively high for women in their mid-20s to mid-40s suggests that few women in the Red River Delta, even those facing the responsibilities of childcare, discontinue working until they reach their elder years.

Comparing descriptive statistics for the full VLS sample and for working respondents as displayed in Table 6.2, we can see that the Red River Delta residents who constitute the VLS sample have average levels of education, reside predominantly in rural locations distant from regional highways, and labor predominantly in family agriculture. Most of the adult respondents are currently married, and about 50% have at least one child currently enrolled in school.

The results shown in Table 6.3 and Figure 6.1 further illustrate the relationship between stage in the life course and economic activity rates, as conditioned by the presence of children in

the household. These cross-tabulations demonstrate that in every age category, men with one or more children between ages 0 and 5 have a higher economic activity rate than their counterparts without young children. This is also true for men with children currently enrolled in school (excepting the case of middle-aged men, ages 25 to 44, who work at approximately the same levels, regardless of children's presence). Although differences across groups are small, given that employment is nearly universal, especially among married respondents, the consistency of results supports the position that men's employment is responsive to the presence of children. Women with young children also exhibit higher rates of economic activity than those without young children. For women most likely to be facing time-consuming maternal responsibilities (i.e., women between ages 25 and 44), the group that has children between ages 0 and 5 has an economic activity rate slightly lower than that of women without young children. This difference, though small, suggests that the presence of young children may have a slight inhibiting effect on economic participation. However, for older and younger women (i.e., those younger than 25 and older than 45) the rate of economic activity is markedly higher among women with young children relative to those without young children. It is important to note, however, that the very high peak activity level of 100% economically active in Figure 6.1 represents a single woman over age 45 with a child under age six. Nonetheless, these bivariate data suggest that where full participation in economic activity may have yet to begin, or may have started an age-induced decline, the presence of young children may induce women to extend or initiate their participation in the workforce. In addition, we observe that women with young children are very likely to remain economically active. Greater than 90% of women with children under age six are currently economically active. Overall, these findings are consistent with the view that there is strong pressure on all adults to be economically active.

Previous research on labor supply has suggested that the number of hours worked per week is an important indicator of labor supply (Bowen and Finnegan 1969; Sweet 1973). Average hours worked per week approximates intensity of work and thereby taps a different dimension of participation compared to the dichotomous in-versus-out participation measure. Table 6.4 disaggregates hours worked per week across different social groups and demonstrates a marked degree of variation in reported average hours worked per week and involvement in multiple jobholding across subgroups of the VLS working population. While the forgone conclusion, that labor force participation is nearly ‘universal’ in the Red River Delta is not contested, it is clear that individuals are not identical in their contributions of labor supply. Several important patterns emerge in Table 6.4. First, mean hours worked per week is very different for those working in just one job versus those working in two or more jobs. On average, respondents who report having just one job work 50 hours per week, compared to more than 65 hours per week for women and 68 hours per week for men working multiple jobs. While these very long hours of work might appear to reflect an overestimation on the part of respondents, they are consistent with in-depth interview results (see discussion that follows). Thus, we learn that being able to work in multiple jobs leads to marked increases in labor supply. This is especially significant given that more than 15% of VLS respondents report holding two jobs.

The important influence of multiple jobholding on labor supply, as measured by average hours worked per week, is clearly illustrated in the case of working hours in proximate rural locations. Single jobholders in these areas work an average or below average number of hours relative to workers residing in other locations on the rural-urban continuum. However, multiple jobholders in these intermediate rural-urban locations work longer hours per week—nearly 75 hours per week for men—compared to workers in all other locations. In general, multiple jobholding appears to provide an important route to enhancing labor supply. Further analyses

will reveal which characteristics of individuals, families, and communities lead individuals to undertake this route of working in multiple fields of employment.

The relationships revealed in these bivariate analyses are further examined using OLS linear and logistic regression analyses in order to clarify the unique effects of family structure, human capital traits, family and community contexts on hours worked and multiple jobholding. Table 6.5 shows the results of three logistic regression models assessing the economic activity status of men and women ages 15 to 65. I analyze men and women separately in order to ascertain whether the independent variables in the model operate differently for men and women.¹¹ Given women's disproportionate responsibility for performing childcare and domestic, "nonproductive" labor, I hypothesize that family structure, in particular, will have disparate impacts upon men's and women's economic participation.

Considering first the individual-level variables, the hypothesis that economic participation will be most prevalent among middle-age adults is clearly supported for both men and women—both young adults (i.e., 15-24 year-olds) and older adults (i.e., 45-65 year-olds) are less likely than middle-age adults to be currently economically active. This result shows that even in a labor-intensive context such as the Red River Delta, where individuals struggle to maintain subsistence-level incomes, as men and women age they may enter statuses that preclude (e.g., physical inability to work) or protect them from employment responsibilities (e.g., financial support from children and in-laws).

The hypothesis that individuals with higher levels of education will be more able to afford ceasing work activity periodically and thereby are less likely to be economically active does not receive strong support in these analyses. Once we control for urban-rural residence, we

see that the likelihood of economic participation is approximately the same across educational categories. This finding appears to represent a ceiling effect, given that many respondents are close to the maximum level of education and there is not full, extensive variation across the educational spectrum among adults in the Red River Delta. While coefficients are in the hypothesized direction, differences across groups are not statistically significant. One exception is that women with average levels of schooling are significantly more likely to be economically active than those with higher levels of schooling. In general, these findings suggest that in the Red River Delta economic participation is not highly stratified by educational attainment. The ability to locate work, and the financial pressures to persist working, appear to be experienced across all educational attainment groups. The extent to which educational attainment translates to occupational attainment, and the ability to access employment in higher prestige formal sector occupations will be assessed in the next chapter.

The logistic regression analyses illustrate that single men and women are less likely to be economically active than their married counterparts. This relationship is much stronger for males than for females. That is, single men are significantly more likely to be in nonworking statuses than single women. In fact, when we control for the presence of children among married women, single and married women are not significantly different in terms of their economic participation. Age and marital status are both telling indicators of one's stage in the life course, their significant correlation with economic activity status suggests that in this context of nearly universal employment, movement of individuals in and out of the labor force is linked strongly to achievement of adult status on one end of the spectrum, and entering into elder status, on the other end. That young men are more likely to be enrolled in schooling and for longer periods of

¹¹ This separation of men and women is warranted given that their joint analysis revealed a significant gender difference for economic participation rates and hours worked per week, as well as significant

time, and to marry at slightly later ages than women, suggests that women tend to achieve the status of full-time worker at an earlier period in the life course than men.

In Model 2 we see that the urban-rural continuum variables operate slightly differently for men and women. This suggests that expectations for economic participation and opportunities to access work may be structured differently for men and women, depending upon their geographic location of residence. Women and men residing in urban areas are less likely to be economically active than men and women residing in more distant, rural contexts. It may be the case that living and working in urban areas affords greater resources and thereby opportunities to periodically leave the labor force. Alternatively, the greater prevalence of formal sector employment in cities may require individuals to exit the labor force when their participation is constrained by circumstances such as physical ailment, family needs, or shortages of employment opportunities. The finding that women living in intermediate rural locations are more likely to be economically active than women residing in either urban areas or more isolated rural areas may represent an especially high demand for women's labor, and a predominance of compatible jobs for women in intermediate rural areas--areas likely accessible to both traditional agricultural activities and more modern, market-based activities. In addition, if the local economy offers a diverse set of employment settings women may find it more feasible to continue working even when they are the mothers of young children or have grown older and more physically frail. Further information regarding employment opportunities across and within different communes will help clarify the social ecological traits that heighten economic participation by women in intermediate rural locations.

The results in Model 3, which add family structure variables to the model, further demonstrate that having children is influential to both men's and women's economic

interactions for gender and family structure variables and gender with residential location.

participation. The hypothesis that having more children present in the family is associated with greater economic need and thereby acts as a pressure upon men to participate in the labor force is clearly supported in these analyses. The regression coefficients demonstrate that the greater the number of children a man has, including children under age 6 and children enrolled in school, the greater the likelihood that he is currently economically active. Hypotheses regarding the presence of children and women's labor force participation are also supported by these results. That is, the likelihood of economic participation does not increase significantly for women the more children they have under age six. We do observe that mothers' likelihood of economic participation is greater, the greater the number of school-enrolled children in the household. This relationship suggests that once children have entered school their mothers are more capable of responding to increased family economic need through economic participation.

Contrary to expectations based upon previous research and hypotheses outlined above, the presence of potential maternal surrogates living within the respondent's home does not have a significant impact on women's economic activity, nor is the effect of young children on mother's economic participation conditional upon the presence of maternal surrogates. The absence of such an effect suggests that the informal nature of work and the nature of relationships in the village context may be especially conducive to women's labor force participation, irrespective of the presence of maternal surrogates within the working mother's household. These relationships will be further explored in the discussion of qualitative results.

It is important to recall that both men and women have relatively high levels of economic participation. In other words, the logistic regression models presented in Table 6.5 actually only predict a small degree of variation in economic participation. Thus, I next analyze average hours worked per week, a second component of labor force participation. These results are shown in Table 6.6. The dependent variable in these analyses is total hours worked per week, a summation

of hours worked in the respondent's primary economic activity, and their secondary economic activity if the respondent indicates he/she is a multiple jobholder. The predictor variables are grouped into individual, community context, and family structure variables. In the fourth model, I assess the independent impact of multiple jobholding upon total hours worked to examine whether heightened labor supply occurs through two distinct paths—by increasing work within a single job and/or by undertaking multiple jobs.

Considering the effect of respondent's age on hours worked, we see that for males there is a decline in working hours with age; young adults work significantly more hours than those in the middle-age years once we control for the presence of young children, and elder males work fewer hours per week on average than younger males. Men with young children, irrespective of their ages, work more hours than those without young children. A different age and work intensity pattern emerges for women; we observe only a slight, trivial decline in work intensity among older women, age 45 to 65. The statistical significance of this relationship disappears when we control for the presence of young children, thereby suggesting that if women still have young children when they enter the late years of adulthood, they are more likely to continue working long hours. The respite from intense work activity that may occur as women enter the later years of adulthood may be limited among those who are continuing to raise and financially support young children.

Single men work significantly fewer hours than married and divorced men, however this relationship does not hold for women. That being single and male is associated with approximately four fewer hours of work activity per week suggests that young, working men who have yet to marry are relatively more free from work obligations than married men, and both married and single women. While only suggestive, these data may indicate that before they

marry, young men and women face different expectations for contributing to the household economy and occupying their time with work activity.

Educational attainment is not significantly correlated with work intensity for either men or women in the Red River Delta. However, we do see that especially for women, the sector of one's primary employment does correlate significantly with average weekly hours worked. Women who are employees of the state/government sector or who work in private sector enterprises report markedly longer working hours than women workers in family agriculture and enterprise. It is telling that this significant result only emerges after we control for multiple jobholding. This suggests that individuals, and especially women, who work primarily for a state or private sector organization, work markedly longer hours than other workers by working in secondary activities. Thus, an "advantage" of sorts may emerge for persons able to find work in the state and private sectors. These people may be well-situated to work additional hours in secondary jobs, thus enhancing their labor supply, and perhaps their income-generating potential.

Residential location is influential to work intensity for both men and women. Residing in the most isolated rural areas is associated with low levels of working hours for both men and women. The strength of this finding suggests that employment opportunities are relatively restricted in these areas and workers are inhibited from laboring to the extent possible in regions closer to transportation routes and market activity. Initial fieldwork in these commune-villages demonstrates that many areas have very limited access to employment outside of agriculture. In addition, labor migration is high in certain distant rural locations, suggesting that additional work, if required to meet household economic needs, must be sought outside one's home village. Support for the hypothesis that residing in a region well-positioned for transportation and market activity serves as a route to enhancing labor supply is substantiated by the very high levels of work intensity observed among men and women living in intermediate rural areas between three

and ten kilometers from regional highways. Men living in intermediate rural areas work about eight hours longer per week than those residing in more isolated rural areas; women work an even greater number of additional hours per week—approximately 11—compared to women in isolated rural areas. Men and women in the intermediate areas also work significantly more hours than those living in urban areas. This finding lends credence to the view that there are important differences across villages in terms of employment opportunities and these differences may eventuate in markedly different work intensity levels.

Turning to family structure variables, we see that having young children is associated with markedly higher working hours for both men and women. Most likely reflecting a response to heightened financial constraints in the household, men work significantly more hours the greater the number of children they have, both children under age six and children currently enrolled in school. Women, too, work with greater intensity, the more children they have under age six, and the more children they have whom are currently enrolled in school. However, a statistically significant increase in working hours associated with greater numbers of children is only observed among women with children enrolled in school. These results indicate that women with young children are not responding to maternal role incompatibility by reducing the number of hours they work per week. Rather, women, like men, appear to be responding to the financial pressure of raising children by working greater numbers of hours the more children they have. Again, we see that the presence of a mature female in the household who might act as a maternal surrogate is not significant to the intensity of women's economic participation. In the following discussion section, women elaborate upon the diverse methods of childcare that they undertake which preclude the need for live-in surrogates in order to persist working with small children. These methods allow women to participate in the labor force, often performing extensive hours of participation, irrespective of the presence of a maternal surrogate in their home.

The final model presented in Table 6.6 demonstrates the very significant impact that working a secondary job has upon total working hours. Clearly, the hours associated with undertaking a second job accounts for a large proportion of the total hours worked by both men and women. Residing in a context, both a local labor market and family environment, that allows one to locate and perform a second job makes it possible for men and women to vastly increase their working hours. Furthermore, by comparing Models 2 and 3, we see that total hours worked per week, or labor force participation intensity, derives largely from efforts to combine multiple jobs and diversify one's occupational activities.

Because multiple jobholding is pivotal to the overall intensity of labor force participation among VLS respondents, I include a logistic regression analysis to estimate the factors predicting multiple jobholding. The logistic regression coefficients shown in Table 6.7 indicate that multiple jobholding is facilitated largely by the residential location and sector of respondents' primary work activities, and is correlated with educational attainment and respondent's age. We do not observe that multiple jobholding is significantly impacted by the number of children present in the household. In the case of multiple jobholding, parallel to work intensity, we see that living in intermediate rural areas is most beneficial to enhancing labor force participation, further indicating that communities bridging the rural-urban divide may be especially equipped to enhance residents' labor supply. A structure of work opportunities is present in the local environment that boosts economic participation levels to a greater level that exists in either urban or remote rural areas. Furthermore, being employed in certain sectors also heightens the likelihood of multiple jobholding. Working primarily in the nonagricultural sector or as an employee for the government or private business is associated with a greater likelihood of multiple jobholding. Another way to read this is that even those persons who are working in a family business or for the government are still required to engage in their family's agricultural

production—it is just that this agricultural production has become secondary in their time allocation. Women working as employees for the government or for private, nonfamily, businesses have the greatest likelihood of multiple jobholding. The probability of multiple jobholding is not nearly so strong for men whose primary activity is in the government or private sector. This finding may be indicative that women are more inclined (or expected) than men to maintain work obligations in family agriculture or nonagricultural tasks once they have moved into formal sector jobs.

6.6 Discussion and Interpretation through Qualitative Results

Several themes and patterns that emerge in the regression analyses described above can be usefully elaborated and elucidated through the words of men and women living in the Red River Delta as they describe changes in their work activities across the life course and the decisions that they have made regarding the obligations to fulfill both family and worker roles. Given that a central objective of this chapter is to comprehend the high intensity and nearly universal economic participation among women, in particular mothers of young children, I highlight the responses of women in this section in order to depict the patterns of activity and economic decision-making that underlie the preceding quantitative findings. As in previous chapters, I have used pseudonyms in all cases in order to protect the confidentiality of the interviewees.

An important pattern that emerges in the quantitative analyses--the extensive hours devoted to productive work activities (i.e., work for profit or financial gain) and frequent multiple jobholding—is made more comprehensible when women discuss the persistent economic difficulties faced by their families and how they respond to said economic pressures. Much employment available in the Red River Delta, particularly in rural areas, is of very low

productivity and provides limited monetary returns. Many women in the rural villages describe lengthy workdays devoted to working in handicraft production, sewing, light construction, and rice transplanting. The wages or returns to self-employment are very low, and the work available in one particular activity is bounded by local demand or the amount of agricultural land, such that work in an additional, low productivity, activity is often undertaken in an attempt to better meet household expenses.

The work of women who undertake two jobs often requires so many hours that finding time for leisure or rest is very difficult. The words of Ms. Quyen, a 26 year-old woman whose primary job is teaching in the local kindergarten in this rural village, and who equates her “free time” with the time that she spends feeding the pigs and chickens and raising vegetables once she has returned home, demonstrates the all-encompassing nature of work when multiple jobs are undertaken. When asked how she occupies her free time, she comments:

“I do washing and go to give the pigs food, grow vegetables, there are several hours that the children go to kindergarten but I am still not able to take a rest, I still have to work...In the afternoon we go to school, when we return we are still not able to rest.”

The next exchange took place with Ms. Hue, a 22 year-old woman, the married mother of one young child, as she described the time that she worked long hours producing enamel floor tiles. Ms. Hue’s responses in the following exchange suggest that the long hours, coupled with low pay, and the arrival of her child, have made her reluctant to continue in this line of activity:

“I only have done farming most of the time from when I was small and growing up. In 1997 my older sister called for me and asked me to go to work making enameled tile but I stopped doing this job after several months. If the enameled tile sold quickly this time, I would go to work again because I could earn a little extra by selling miscellaneous items in the market,” ... “How much you could earn by making enameled tile each month?” ... “About 10,000 to 15,000 dong per day (translator’s note: this represents 70 cents to one dollar per day)” ... “How many hours a day did you have to work?” ... “10 hours usually, but also sometimes 11 to 12 hours a day.”

A substantial portion of economic demands within the family economy are often shouldered by young, single women, after they have ended their formal schooling. The quantitative data reveal that young adult males are more likely to be enrolled in school than young females of comparable ages. As such, women tend to attain the status of worker at an earlier age than males, and as a result subsume the responsibility of contributing income to the household economy or at least covering their own expenses. Women may leave school early, without completing upper secondary school, or devote little time to studying, because they perceive a need to help alleviate economic difficulties within their family (See Figure 6.2). The following conversation with Ms. Tuyet, a young, single woman, 21 years of age, captures the disparity in the work experience between her brother and herself, and her sense of duty in caring for family members:

"What about your younger brother? Does the 17 year-old schoolchild help your family at all?" ... "No. He just studies. He does nothing to help our family. At this time, his job is to study only." ... "What about the 12-year-old schoolchild who is in the 6th grade? Does he do anything?" ... "Beside his time in school and the time spent studying at home, he goes to the church in the evening and returns to watch TV." ... "Do you feel you worked harder than your younger brothers when you were at the same age as they are now?" ... "Yes, I do." ... "Why?" ... "Because they are so young at that age. They don't have to worry about anything. My parents worked so hard when we were still young. My older sister is only 2 years older than me. She was busy all the time with working the farmland. My mother was ailing the whole year. My father had to go away to work. In addition, my parents used to have a child who was paralyzed. I had to stay away from school to take care of him."

While many young women remain at home and combine small amounts of work with school attendance and studying, others undertake lengthy working days in order to contribute to their birth family's economic situation or to save for their own expenses. Ms. Tuyet's experiences again are illustrative. Here she describes the intense, though irregular, demands placed on her time when she goes to work as a tailor in a nearby town:

"What time do you often get up in the morning for work?" ... "It's about 6 am. I get up at 8 am if we worked until 1 or 2 am the night before," ... "When do you often start working in the morning?" ... "I get up half an hour before working time." ... "Are you allowed to

leave work on Saturday and Sunday?" ... "No. " ... "Do you bind yourself by any contract?" ... "No. It follows the work. I work more if there's more work and less if there's less work. " ... "Do you have free time in the evening?" ... "No. We don't have time to do any thing, including watching TV. " ... "When do you finish working in the evening?" ... "Sometimes we have to work until midnight if the customers want to get products quickly. We work so hard but the income is not worth mentioning. Any way, we have to be pleased with it because we are the girls who have nothing else to do." ... "Do you feel that the work is beyond your energies?" ... "Yes, it's beyond my energies. To tell the truth, I feel more suitable with working 9 or 10 hours a day," ... "Which month is the hardest time during the year?" ... "November and December." ... "How many hours a day do you have to work?" ... "It can be up to 14 or 15 hours a day."

Many women and men described in straightforward terms the rationale that drives their high levels of economic participation—the absence of adequate, remunerative employment in the local environment in the face of mounting economic difficulties in the household economic situation. One woman living in the countryside, Ms. Ly, summed up the situation succinctly:

"It is the truth that we have to try our best to work only because of the economic situation. We are short of money but we spend a lot. The paddy [price] is not worth mentioning so we are forced to work in addition in order to have enough money for the family's expenditures."

That the amount of hours devoted to productive work activities is very high, often greater than 10 hours per day and seven days per week, it is particularly remarkable for women, given that both men and women admit that women perform a disproportionate amount of domestic tasks and childcare duties. Women, then, not only experience heightened pressure to labor for economic benefit when they face the expenses associated with feeding and educating children, in addition their work in domestic tasks also expands when young children and elder household members, such as parents-in-law, require their care and attention.

The lengthy toiling involved in an agricultural working day is captured in the words of Ms. Thi, now age 25, who describes her experience as a teenager who had just left school after finishing 8 of 12 grades of schooling:

"At the time I stopped going to school, if we were doing farm work we would go out 4 km and so we had to wake up at 4 in the morning in order to prepare, such as pack the seedlings in bags, drive, separate seeds, and travel to the field at around 5:30 or 6:00 in the morning. At that time, in general, we worked later, people with family worked until around 5:00, but if we did not have family then we worked until around 6, then we would go home."

The lengthy day that Ms. Thi describes helps us to understand why many young women leave school early. She comments further:

"Generally speaking it did have an influence [on my schooling] because in an agricultural family you do the same work as your parents, but I was still studying, but I was studying in a way that was without heart, but I felt that I should also help my parents with their work."

The efforts and capacity to expand working hours and working tasks among women appears practically boundless as young women whose husbands, parents, or adult siblings have migrated from the home village in order to work far from home, speak about the work that they undertake. Often under these circumstances women are left to perform the agricultural work that had previously been performed by siblings, as well as tasks that constitute "the domain of men," given the strenuousness and physical conditions associated with the work. Women, often young, unmarried women who still reside in their parents' homes, thereby are left to cultivate two agricultural plots, and, when hiring labor exceeds the capacity of the household economy, end up doing such strenuous work as hauling loads of fertilizer and spraying pesticides. Thus, women like Ms. Thuy (single, age 25), whose brother and his family migrated to South Viet Nam several years ago, become the primary or sole laborer on the family's agricultural land:

"I find it hard during the harvest time. My elder brother goes out to work [in the city] so that I have to transplant rice seedlings on his farmland. I, myself, have to dry the paddy in the sun, put it into a sack and carry it on my head to go up stairs and to the roof. If my two brothers helped me, I would work hard no longer. I am the only one who stays at home so I have to ask my neighbors for their help, I am often reluctant to do that."

Conversely, where young women have migrated to Hanoi and other locations in order to labor as collectors of recyclable scrap material or as housekeepers, there are fewer instances in which young men compensate for their sisters' and wives' absence by performing additional housework, rice transplanting, or other duties that are culturally defined as the "domain of women." Young women's sense of familial obligation and attachment to family and village are conveyed in their more frequent home visits, especially during the labor-intensive rice harvest seasons, and their greater inclination to give up work in the city when sickness, economic hardship, and other difficulties occur in their home village.

Many individuals in the Red River Delta describe the hardships they have experienced in attempting to pay for family expenditures, even when they work long hours and resort to taking loans from relatives, the government, and rotating credit associations. Men and women did elaborate extensively, however, on the differential experience of economic hardship and variations in expenditures across the life course. Financial pressures mount in response to particular events and life course transitions. Occasionally, financial pressures are heightened as a result of sudden, periodic shocks or crises, such as the death of a close family member, or natural disaster that bring crop failure. More frequently men and women point to the times when children enroll in schooling, especially as they prepare for higher education and enroll in colleges or universities. Schooling expenses are costly, especially when children get older, and even more so when they have aspirations to attend beyond secondary school. Prior to paying for college and university tuition, as well as maintaining housing outside of the home village, many young people and their parents spend money for extra classes and college entrance examination reviews. College-bound children are also less likely to contribute to the household economy by undertaking paid employment. Many women commented that they perceived their own families experienced the greatest economic difficulties when they, themselves, were enrolled in school,

these difficulties being compounded when more than one child was enrolled in school at the same time. The comments of Ms. Phuong, a woman who left school after the ninth grade, and who has worked as a farmer, mason's assistant, and migrant scrap-collector all before reaching her 20th birthday, suggest that even modest education expenses are difficult to meet under conditions of severe poverty:

"Do you have enough rice to eat?" ... "Yes, we do." ... "So you only have meals with salt and vegetables?" ... "Yes, we do." ... "When do you have meals with meat or fish?" ... "Occasionally." ... "When did your parents spend most of their money for their children?" ... "It was when we went to school." ... "What is the hardest thing to you now?" ... "It's unemployment."

An 18 year-old woman, Ms. Huong, who has remained in her home village to assist with agricultural labor while her elder brother has enrolled in an intermediate college in a provincial town, confirms that her parents do have to work more now in order to send him money each month to support his education. Depending on the location of the college or university, whether the school is public or private, and whether the students receive a partial fellowship, the costs for tuition and living expenses vary markedly. A 20-year old woman from a relatively well-to-do family in the provincial town of Ninh Binh, whose parents had just provided more than 100,000 dong for her to enroll in a preparatory course for the university entrance examination, comments that the expenses for university enrollment are not very costly, only about "120,000 dong per month" (translator's note: this is equal to approximately \$8.50 per month). It should be recalled that a woman brick-maker living in the rural village of Xuan Thanh, working 10-hour workdays, 7 days per week, was only able to make between 10,000-15,000 dong per day, or about 300,000 dong per month. This amount is representative of an average income for a full-time, manual laborer in the rural areas of the Red River Delta. Ms. Huong again voices the perspective of the rural poor on educational expenses when she admits that there are "many people who do not have the money" to send their children to the college or university.

Facing increasing household expenditures associated with children's schooling, the quantitative results indicate, and qualitative results further suggest, mothers and fathers with children enrolled in school attempt to respond to rising costs through their orientation to work activities. Where current and anticipated expenses are increasing, there is pressure to raise one's income to meet these expenses through greater involvement in work activity. Greater levels of economic participation can be undertaken when employment conditions and family structure are conducive to changes in work activity. The quantitative results indicate that the greater the number of young children a woman has, the greater the intensity of her economic participation. This relationship holds for women with children under age 6 and is even more marked for women whose children are enrolled in school. Considering these results, especially in light of inquiries into the concept of maternal role strain and role incompatibility, it is important to inquire into the organization of work activity and childcare activity that allows for continuing economic participation on the part of mothers with young children.

In in-depth interviews women described a variety of responses and solutions regarding childcare and whether they experienced role strain in combining the roles of mother and laborer. First, few if any women suggested that childcare was difficult to find in either the rural village or the urban district, given that parents-in-law commonly live nearby or co-reside, and where this is not the case, the long-term presence of commune-level nursery schools and kindergartens makes enrollment normative and relatively affordable. Few young women ceased working in the fields, the market or at their waged jobs for periods longer than 3 to 5 months after giving birth. They often rely on elder relatives or the local nursery school to look after their children for at least a portion of the day. The nursery schools and kindergartens demand only a small fee (sometimes paid in rice), so the costs are not very prohibitive, but in the rural areas they may constitute a noticeable portion of the family budget. While childcare by adult relatives is technically free-of-

charge, it poses an opportunity cost to the maternal surrogate who must also sacrifice work time for childcare. Furthermore, the prevalence of temporary migration in certain Red River Delta villages means that families are often incomplete, and potential maternal surrogates may leave the home village for work at different times, thus making the location of reliable childcare more challenging.

Ms. Quyen, who is 26 and has 2 children under the age of 6, and who lives in the remote rural village of Xuan Thanh where farming is the predominant local activity and the majority of families have a member who is a labor migrant, articulates the unrelenting pressure to continue working despite the temporary absence of her husband:

"When he is away then I have to arrange the work in some way, there is no limit, if today I intend to do something then I have to wake early and make preparations for the children to go to kindergarten, if it is very early then I send the children to their grandparents, I ask grandma and grandpa to carry them, or I have them follow me [in my work]."

She confirms this work ethic in her work behavior, reporting that she continued to work in the rice fields throughout the duration of her pregnancy. After returning to work following a brief "maternity leave" she completed the work of spraying pesticides (which locals are educated is a harmful substance that women should avoid) because her husband was absent and she feared spending the money that would be lost on hiring labor.

The qualitative data generally confirm a key pattern revealed in regression analyses; that, regardless of family composition, women continue to work when they have young, even infant, children. Women's economic participation is rather impervious to changes in family structure; they find ways to shoulder the burden of performing both domestic chores and productive labor. Women's descriptions of their approaches to work and childcare makes it apparent that childcare arrangements are adapted based upon demands for work, rather than vice versa. A typical pattern for securing childcare emerged across many interviews with mothers: First, most women would

take a brief period of rest after giving birth, lasting approximately three months. Upon returning to their work activities, sometimes in a reduced capacity, they would request the assistance of a mother-in-law, sister-in-law or other female relative, to care for the child. Often this relative would temporarily move into the home of the new mother. The performance of childcare by a female relative would last for a short period of time, usually less than a year. After this brief period of time, most women would begin taking their child to the local nursery or crèche, to be cared for during the working day. There were important variations in this pattern—some women did not have female relatives to call upon because their parents-in-law were very elderly or lived far away. Others preferred to rely upon live-in relatives for longer periods of time, rather than handing their children over to the care of the nursery. Thus, there are women, such as Ms. Hoa, whose memories of the work she did as a young woman includes caring for younger siblings:

“When did you start working on the family’s farmland?” ... “When I was studying in the 5th grade at school.” ... “What did you use to do?” ... “I pulled grass, handed my mom the rice seedlings, carried the baby on my arm, and other tasks.”

There are also women, such as Ms. Phuong, now 56 years old, who in a sense, created a family member in the process of securing a caregiver for her four children. Asked who cared for her children after her two months of maternity leave, Ms. Phuong replied:

“After I had my baby then I invited an old woman to stay here, she did not have a husband and did not have children, this old woman remains here until the present time because my parents have both died already. This old woman has brothers and sisters but all of them are very old already, this woman has stayed from when the children were small, she has stayed with us more than 20 years. Now she is 90 years old...In those days my husband worked as a tailor, this older woman did all the work, my husband did not have to do anything...”

Asked how she met this woman, Ms. Phuong recalled,

“In the past I worked in the candy-making enterprise with one girlfriend, this old woman was my girlfriend’s aunt, but the husband of this woman had died and they did not have any children at all... after marrying she went with her husband she went with him to Yen Khanh [his homeland] but his family would not have her after he had died. I went up there to visit, and for convenience sake I asked the woman, I invited her to return home

with me, to come here and bring up the children. I said, "if you stay with me to care for my children then I will care for you, when you have died then I will treat you as my parents. So she stays here until now, 24-25 years already."

The diverse and flexible approaches individual women have undertaken to care for their children while they work demonstrates how women, collectively, are able to maintain such high levels of labor force participation across the life course, including the times when they have very small children. Networks of care extend beyond female kin, such that mothers rely on the assistance of young women from the village who staff the nurseries, as well as women of the community who may not have children of their own (See Figure 6.3). This does not mean that women are able to labor at their fullest capacity, nor does it mean that they do not encounter risks and difficulties in continuing to work while their children are under the care of others. At times they labor in ways that may be detrimental to their own health (i.e., when they spray pesticides) and that of their children (i.e., when they labor in the fields through the ninth month of pregnancy, or place their child in the care of an individual whose capacity for caregiving is unknown). Women often may have to make sacrifices in both roles—that of mother and that of worker—as a result of being required to fulfill both roles in a context of economic hardship. Handing one's children over to childcare workers and cutting back on one's work schedule in order to return home when children must leave the nursery or kindergarten are just two events that may occur when the maternal role and laborer role impinge upon one another, diminishing a woman's capacity to fulfill either role to her fullest expectations.

To what extent is participation in economic activities a gendered phenomenon? Overall, the results presented in this chapter suggest a relative absence of gender differentiation in rates of economic participation, hours worked and prevalence of multiple job holding. However, an important gender-specific pattern emerges when we examine men and women whose primary occupation is in the high status professional, managerial and clerical field. Women working in

these occupations are significantly more likely than similarly situated men to be employed in multiple jobs. This finding suggests that even the small group of women whom are able to achieve relatively high status occupational positions are expected to continue working in the household sector, especially in agricultural tasks. Men, on the contrary, more fully 'escape' from the demands of traditional and agricultural production activities when then obtain wage work or government work. This finding demonstrates that even where women increasingly seek labor in sales, manufacturing, and even professional work, they are more often called upon to perform subsistence labor compared to—especially working the fields and doing other agricultural production activities. Incorporating a measure of multiple jobholding also acknowledges a relatively hidden degree of feminization in agricultural work. That is, women in the Delta who work in textile factories, who sell goods in the market, who labor as teachers and nurses, also often return to the fields, especially when the demand for agricultural labor is high. Men, especially those working in professional positions and government organizations, are not so commonly engaged in these dual roles.

Ms. Hoa, who works as a medical assistant in the commune medical center elaborates upon the extra jobs that she does, making house calls in order to deliver vaccines to children and medication to old and infirm patients, in addition to the fulltime work that she performs at the medical center. Her husband, however, lost his job when the state enterprise that employed him was disbanded in the late 1980s. Since that time he has stayed at home, contributing minimally to the household income by repairing bicycles and motorbikes. Ms. Hoa's family also maintains agricultural land and cultivates rice, yet despite her husband's restricted economic participation, they hire labor for planting and harvesting the crop. While she is generous in pointing to the assistance that her husband provides in cooking and taking care of household responsibilities, she also eludes to his shortcomings in this realm, such as the time that he left their young child at

home without supervision and went out to socialize with friends while she was working extra hours, making evening housecalls. We observe, in this scenario, a potential case for the emergence of conflict between family members as they make attempts to provide for family members. The analyses suggest that both men's and women's economic participation is responsive to changes in the family life course, specifically the rise in child-related expenses such as schooling costs. Another fruitful question for analysis, beyond the scope of the current chapter, would address how husband and wife in a specific couple each alter their work efforts to meet household expenditures.

6.7 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter I have undertaken a descriptive analysis of labor force participation in the Red River Delta and have begun to assess the ways that family structure and local labor market context shape men's and women's economic participation. The following conclusions can be outlined thus far: First, labor force participation is practically universal among adults, particularly when we consider participation rates as a dichotomous, in-versus-out status. Taking into account two constituents of labor force participation, measured as average hours worked per week and multiple jobholding, we observe marked variation in economic participation across residents of the Red River Delta. By supplementing the commonly-used, dichotomous indicator of economic activity, we learn not only that residents of the Red River Delta work extensive hours, but also that this is frequently accomplished by combining work in several occupations or industries. Multiple jobholding is a quite common occurrence in the Red River Delta, especially for men and women residing in intermediate rural areas, where residents are well situated to draw upon both modern, urban infrastructure and market activities, as well as traditional, agrarian resources, in order to increase their labor supply. Thus, there are essentially two routes to achieving a high

level of labor supply, that is, both by working lengthy hours within one primary occupation, and by expanding one's work patterns and performing two or more activities. Many residents are adopting various strategies of either working longer hours in their primary job, and/or combining work in different occupations in order to secure income and a sense of financial security for their households. The variation in patterns of multiple jobholding and hours worked per week across communities of the Red River Delta suggests that the relationship between multiple jobholding and local labor market context, as they facilitate heightened labor supply and potentially greater earning potential, warrants further examination. There is a high incidence of multiple jobholding in intermediate rural areas, or areas that straddle the divide between modern economic activity in urban centers and traditional, agricultural work in rural villages. This relationship suggests that areas with access to more modern and traditional forms of work present their residents with a greater diversity and abundance of employment opportunities compared to the purely urban and more isolated rural areas.

A second broad conclusion drawn in this paper is that the sector of men's and women's employment is an important determinant of their labor supply and the total hours they are able to work. To a certain extent, the nature and location of one's employment imposes limits upon one's work duration, however it would seem that shopkeepers and merchants in the formal sector, as well as agriculturalists, may be able to heighten the hours spent in the field, or behind their market stall, in an attempt to increase the income they generate. Men and women whose primary occupation is in a state-sector or private-sector organization report working more hours, largely as a result of multiple jobholding, compared to informal sector, self-employed workers. While there are multiple interpretations to be drawn from this finding, we might conclude that individuals who secure work in the state or government sector, or a private sector enterprise outside of their family, have a privileged position with respect to accessing two unique economic spheres—the

traditional, family-based sector, and the more formal, private- and state-sector. They also might use their professional skills as teachers, nurses, accountants, outside of the government office and in 'private practices' they operate from their homes. Men, and especially women, are likely to work in multiple jobs if their primary employer is a private sector firm or government office. That more women than men state employees are holding down multiple jobs suggests that women face greater obligations to attend to the family farm, and to secure securing additional work, alongside their regular employment.

Third, returning to the question of gender and family structure, these analyses have shown that women, like men, maintain high levels of labor force participation even when young children are present in the household. The results thereby suggest that maternal role incompatibility is not frequently an issue, as lower rates of labor force participation are only observed among women with children under age six. In general, the results suggest that both men and women are able and do respond to the increased economic need posed by the presence of young children by increasing their labor force participation—by undertaking a second activity and/or by increasing working hours devoted to their primary activity. Importantly, women's participation in productive work is nearly ubiquitous, and seemingly impervious to family structure. Women often either send their children to a nursery school at an early age, or they recruit elder, female kin to perform this work. The enduring participation by women is enhanced by the abundant and diverse sources of childcare in both rural and urban contexts.

Finally, the joint inclusion of labor force participation status, intensity of labor force participation, and multiple jobholding has demonstrated useful for understanding the various dimensions of labor supply. While keeping in mind the difficulties that surround attempts to examine labor force participation via methods and measures developed largely to describe employment in Western, advanced capitalist economies, the current paper has shown that use of

multiple measures for the same concept, specifically economic activity or labor supply, can address more clearly and thoroughly the questions at hand than approaches relying upon a single measure that has traditionally been applied in very different socioeconomic contexts.

Table 6.1 Participation Rates in Economic and other Primary Activities among All Persons Age 15-65, by Age and Gender, Vietnam's Red River Delta, 1995

	Economically Active	Other Activity	Of those not economically active, primary activity reported:				(N)
			Keeping House	Attending School	Unable to Work	Retired	Other
Total	86.9%	13.1%	4.7%	4.3%	1.7%	1.5%	0.7%
Men	87.6%	12.4%	2.2%	5.3%	1.6%	2.4%	0.8%
Women	86.2%	13.8%	7.0%	3.5%	1.9%	0.8%	0.5%
Unmarried, Age 15-24	69.3%	30.7%	2.6%	26.0%	0.8%	0.0%	1.2%
Men	67.2%	32.8%	1.1%	28.3%	1.6%	0.0%	1.6%
Women	71.4%	28.6%	4.2%	23.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
Married, Age 15-24	87.9%	12.7%	7.6%	0.0%	4.0%	0.0%	1.1%
Men	87.0%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Women	88.2%	15.8%	10.0%	0.0%	4.3%	0.0%	1.4%
Age 25-44	87.1%	5.3%	2.7%	0.2%	1.6%	0.3%	0.4%
Men	86.5%	3.5%	1.1%	0.4%	0.9%	0.5%	0.4%
Women	88.1%	6.9%	4.1%	0.0%	2.2%	0.1%	0.5%
Age 45-65	81.2%	18.1%	9.8%	0.0%	2.1%	5.6%	0.7%
Men	82.5%	17.5%	5.3%	0.0%	2.7%	8.2%	1.3%
Women	81.3%	18.7%	14.1%	0.0%	1.4%	3.0%	0.2%

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

Table 6.2 Descriptive Statistics, All Respondents and the Economically Active, Men and Women, 1995 VLS Survey

Individual Characteristics								
Age								
15-24	441	21.1%	566	22.6%	316	17.3%	431	21.0%
25-44	1,296	62.0%	1,422	59.9%	1,236	67.6%	1,315	64.2%
45-65	352	16.9%	387	16.3%	277	15.1%	302	14.7%
Marital Status								
Currently Married	1,661	79.5%	1,819	76.6%	1,533	83.8%	1,625	79.3%
Never Married	417	20.0%	437	18.4%	287	15.7%	331	16.2%
Widowed/Divorced	11	0.5%	119	5.0%	9	0.5%	92	4.5%
Educational Attainment								
No schooling or Primary School (0 to 5 years of school)	261	12.5%	525	22.1%	229	12.5%	442	21.6%
Lower Secondary School (6-9 years of school)	1,268	60.7%	1,395	58.7%	1,135	62.1%	1,240	60.5%
Upper Secondary School 10 or more years of school)	560	26.8%	455	19.2%	465	25.4%	366	17.9%
Sector of Primary Employment								
Family Agriculture	1,008	48.3%	1,333	56.1%	1,008	55.1%	1,333	65.1%
Family Nonagriculture	470	22.5%	432	18.2%	468	25.6%	429	20.9%
Employee for State or Private Sector	330	15.8%	277	11.7%	330	18.0%	276	13.5%
Community of Residence								
Urban Area	393	18.8%	437	18.4%	300	16.4%	338	16.5%
Rural Area-Proximate	362	17.3%	398	16.8%	323	17.7%	353	17.2%
Rural Area-Intermediate	401	19.2%	478	20.1%	369	20.2%	435	21.2%
Rural Area-Distant	933	44.7%	1,062	44.7%	837	45.8%	922	45.0%
Family Structure Characteristics								
Number of Kids Age 0 to 5								
1 or More	744	35.6%	814	34.3%	725	39.6%	743	36.3%
Zero	1,345	64.4%	1,561	65.7%	1,104	60.4%	1,305	63.7%
Number of Kids Currently Enrolled in School								
Zero	1,129	54.0%	1,336	56.3%	931	50.9%	1,083	52.9%
One or More	960	46.0%	1,039	43.7%	898	49.1%	965	47.1%
Number of Maternal Surrogate-Figures in HH (Females over Age 15, not incl. R)								
Zero	1,396	66.8%	1,422	59.8%	1,226	67.1%	1,240	60.6%
One or More	693	33.2%	953	40.2%	603	32.9%	808	39.4%

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

Table 6.3 Labor Force Participation Rates of Persons Age 15-65, by Age, Gender, and Presence of Children, in Vietnam's Red River Delta, 1995.

Respondent Age	Men					Women				
	Total	With Children Age 0-5	No Children Age 0 to 5	With Children Enrolled In School	No Children Enrolled	Total	With Children Age 0-5	No Children Age 0 to 5	With Children Enrolled In School	No Children Enrolled
15 to 24 (N)	71.7% 441	100.0% 34	69.3% 282	— 0	71.7% 316	76.1% 556	88.7% 134	71.6% 297	100.0% 1	76.1% 430
25 to 44 (N)	95.4% 1,296	97.6% 682	92.8% 554	95.1% 773	95.9% 463	92.5% 1,422	91.8% 608	93.0% 707	93.3% 893	90.8% 422
45 to 65 (N)	78.7% 352	81.8% 9	78.6% 268	85.0% 125	74.1% 152	78.0% 387	100.0% 1	78.0% 301	87.7% 71	75.5% 231
Total (N)	87.6% 2,089	97.4% 725	82.1% 1,104	93.5% 898	82.5% 931	86.2% 2,365	91.3% 743	83.6% 1,305	92.9% 965	81.1% 1,083
Age of Youngest Child										
No Children (N)	71.6% 461	x	x	x	x	76.9% 485	x	x	x	x
0 to 5 (N)	97.2% 790	x	x	x	x	88.9% 870	x	x	x	x
6 to 11 (N)	93.0% 399	x	x	x	x	95.9% 435	x	x	x	x
12 to 17 (N)	89.2% 260	x	x	x	x	90.5% 295	x	x	x	x
18 and Older (N)	71.5% 179	x	x	x	x	75.2% 290	x	x	x	x
Total (N)	87.6% 2,089	x	x	x	x	86.2% 2,365	x	x	x	x

SOURCE: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

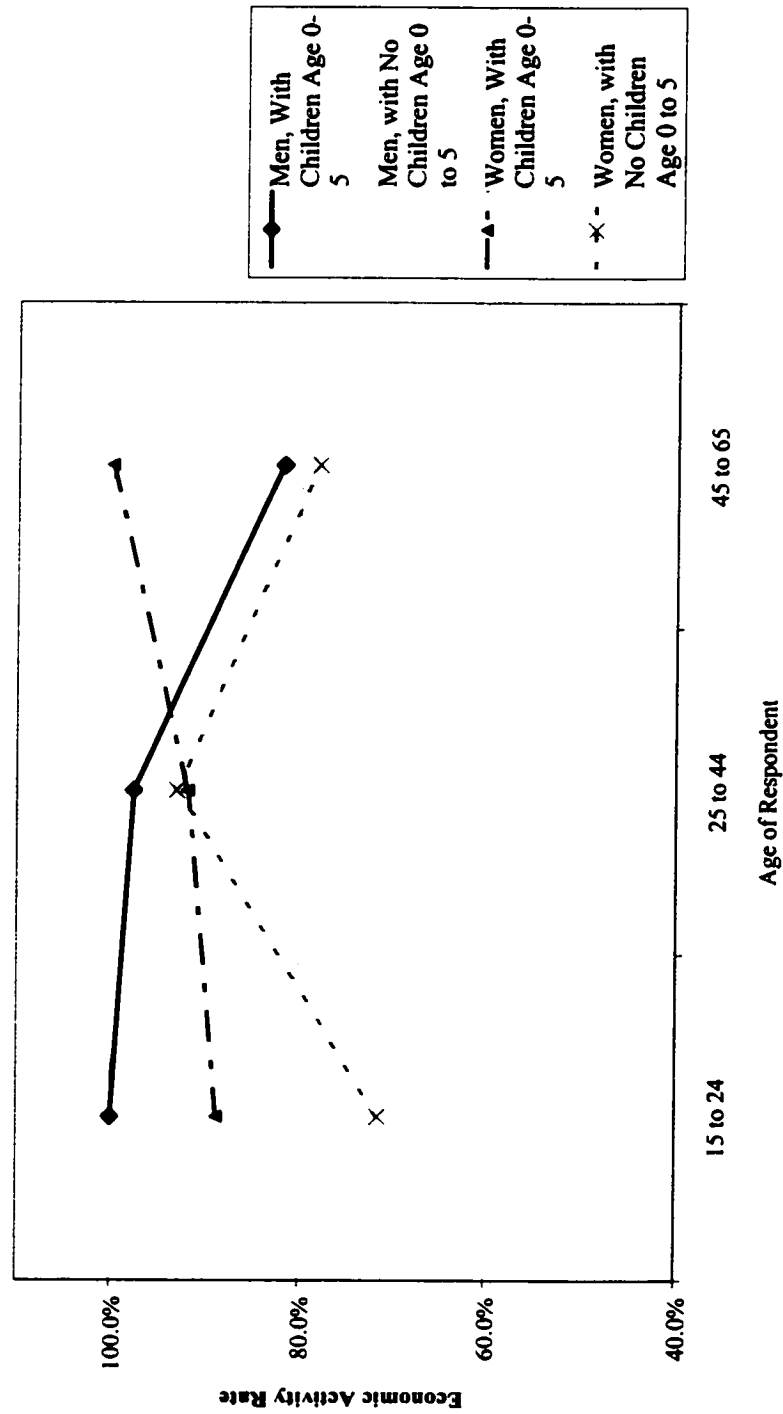


Figure 6.1 Economic Activity Rates by Gender, Age and Presence of Children, Vietnam's Red River Delta, 1995

Table 6.4 The Components of Work Duration: Multiple Jobs and Hours Worked by Employed Persons, Vietnam's Red River Delta, 1995

Independent Variables	Proportion Multiple Job Holders ^a		Mean Hours Worked if Single Job Holder		Mean Hours Worked by Multiple Jobholders		Men-Primary Activity is Working	Women-Primary Activity is Working
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	(N)	(N)
TOTAL	0.175	0.156	50.3	49.2	68.6	65.3	1,395	1,639
Age 15-24	0.12	0.15	46.2	44.5	75.0	62.4	316	431
Age 25-44	0.21	0.19	52.6	51.2	68.5	66.9	1,236	1,315
Age 45-65	0.13	0.10	45.2	47.5	65.4	61.6	277	302
0-5 years of schooling	0.17	0.11	46.0	46.5	69.0	65.6	229	442
6-9 years of schooling	0.20	0.17	50.7	50.0	70.2	65.5	1,135	1,240
10+ years of schooling	0.14	0.17	51.3	50.0	63.0	64.5	465	366
Married	0.19	0.16	51.3	50.3	68.7	66.3	1,533	1,625
Widowed/Divorced/Separated	0.11	0.14	52.4	47.7	70.0	60.0	9	92
Single	0.09	0.17	44.7	43.7	67.5	62.4	287	331
Urban	0.07	0.11	50.8	50.5	63.4	67.4	300	338
Proximate Rural	0.25	0.24	48.6	47.7	74.7	70.7	323	353
Intermediate Rural	0.25	0.22	58.0	59.0	67.7	64.3	369	435
Distant Rural	0.15	0.11	47.4	44.9	66.1	60.8	837	922
Family Agriculture Worker	0.14	0.09	50.6	49.8	69.9	67.1	1,008	1,333
Family Nonagricultural Worker	0.27	0.25	49.1	45.9	64.7	59.8	468	429
Nonfamily Worker	0.16	0.33	50.9	51.4	74.1	69.5	330	276
Kids 5 and Under								
0	0.15	0.16	47.2	48.0	69.0	63.8	1,104	1,305
1 or more	0.21	0.16	54.0	50.8	68.3	67.4	725	743
Kids Enrolled in School								
0	0.16	0.14	48.6	47.2	69.7	63.6	931	1,083
1 or more	0.20	0.18	52.0	51.4	67.7	66.9	898	965

SOURCE: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

NOTE: Mean calculations based only upon persons currently employed

a. Multiple Jobholders are persons who indicated that they worked in both a primary and secondary work activity in the week prior to the survey, and these activities were in 2 different occupational/industry categories (i.e., an individual who reported working in two agricultural activities, such as raising rice and livestock, is not considered a multiple jobholder).

Table 6.7 Binary Logistic Regression: The Log-Odds of Multiple Jobholding by Employed Persons Age 15-65, Vietnam's Red River Delta, 1995

	Men										Women									
Age	Age 15-24	1.01	0.3	0.95	0.3	1.05	.32	.77	.21	.70	.21	.85	.23							
	Age 25-44 (Omitted)	1.00	--	1	--	1.00	--	1.00	--	1.00	--	1.00	--							
	Age 45-65	.56***	0.17	.67*	0.18	.71	.20	.53**	.21	.65	.22	.70	.25							
Educ- ation	0-5 years of schooling	1.65*	0.25	1.14	0.26	1.15	.26	1.74*	.26	1.19	.27	1.17	.27							
	6-9 years of schooling	1.65**	0.17	1.34	0.18	1.34	.18	1.92**	.18	1.49*	.19	1.41	.19							
	Omitted (10+ years of schooling)	1.00	--	1	--	1.00	--	1.00	--	1.00	--	1.00	--							
Marital Status	Single	.37**	0.35	.38**	0.35	.41**	.36	1.02	.22	1.02	.23	1.09	.27							
	Married (omitted)	1.00	--	1	--	1.00	--	1.00	--	1.00	--	1.00	--							
	Widowed/Divorced/Separated	0.46	1.08	0.49	1.11	.46	1.13	1.21	.34	1.01	.36	1.09	.36							
Work Sector	Family Nonagriculture	2.26***	0.15	3.23***	0.16	3.25***	.16	3.59***	.15	6.57***	.17	6.67***	.17							
	Family Agriculture (omitted)	1.00	--	1	--	1.00	--	1.00	--	1.00	--	1.00	--							
	Nonfamily Employee	1.33	0.19	2.07***	0.21	2.11***	.21	5.78***	.18	12.35***	.21	12.74***	.22							
Type of Place	Urban																			
	Proximate Rural: Less than 3 km from hwy			.24***	0.28	.24***	.28			.25***	.24	.24***	.25							
	Intermediate Rural: 3-10 km from hwy			1.49*	0.18	1.50*	.18			1.45*	.19	1.48*	.19							
	Most Rural: 10+ km from highway (omitted)			2.01***	0.17	2.01***	.17			3.16***	.18	3.16***	.18							
Family Structure	Kids Age 0 to 5			1	--	1.00	--			1.00	--	1.00	--							
	Kids Enrolled in School					1.05	.11					.92	.13							
	Maternal Surrogates					1.10	.07					1.21**	.08							
Childcare	Maternal Surrogate * Kids Age 0-5					xx	xx					1.04	.11							
	CONSTANT	.14***	.18	.12***	0.21	.10***	.26	.07***	.20	.05***	.23	.04***	.29							
	Model Chi-square	69.50		141.50		143.72		145.29		263.82		273.24								
	DF	8		11		13		8		12		15								
	-2 Log Likelihood	1519.87		1447.86		1445.65		1551.37		1432.84		1423.43								
	Model N	1697		1697		1697		1946		1946		1946								
	R-square (Cox and Snell; Nagelkerke)	.04, .07		.08, .13		.08, .13		.07, .12		.13, .22		.13, .23								

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey (Employed persons working last week)



Figure 6.2 Teenage Girl Selling Foods and Watching her Younger Sibling, Loc Hoa Commune, the Red River Delta



Figure 6.3 A grandfather watching his grandchild,
and a market stall, Ninh Binh town

Chapter 7. Men's and Women's Economic Roles in Recent Northern Vietnamese History: An Analysis of Four Marriage Cohorts.

7.1 Chapter Introduction

It is widely recognized that changes in the demand for labor are intricately linked to historical events, such as engagement in military conflict and economic recession, as well as processes of economic development, and that these processes and events have a significant impact upon women's incorporation into the paid labor force. The demand for women's labor, and hence women's economic participation, may increase as those economic sectors dominated by women workers and deemed 'women's work,' becoming increasingly dominant in the occupational structure (Oppenheimer 1973). Conversely, the demand for women's labor to fulfill traditionally 'male' occupations may accompany unique historical processes—such as large-scale male-dominated migration or military engagement. The large-scale military mobilization of U.S. troops during World War II and concomitant recruitment of women workers into the paid labor force, and particularly into male-dominated skilled-trade and blue collar occupations, demonstrated the flexibility in gendered work roles that may emerge when societies are faced by extraordinary socio-historical circumstances. This chapter will assess a similar, although more pronounced and severe, set of socio-historical circumstances in northern Viet Nam. Specifically, I examine men's and women's shifting economic roles over recent Vietnamese history in response to major socioeconomic changes in the society that have occurred as a result of wars and the implementation of socialist production policies.

Although numerous studies have been conducted on the war's impact within Vietnamese families and villages, and there have been important analyses of men's and women's experiences during wartime—both in military and civilian life—there have been few analyses examining

men's and women's economic roles that utilize a historical perspective and demonstrate how economic participation was altered as a consequence of the war effort and socialist economic organization and development planning. Wiegersma (1988) provides an in-depth, critical overview of women's changing roles across the revolutionary and socialist periods, and during the early stages of market reform; however, her descriptions of women's roles are drawn from eclectic sources and do not feature systematic analyses of data that allow for historical comparisons. Ungar (2000), too, has elaborated upon women's shifting economic roles in response to market reforms, making reference to broad historical gender patterns. The current research complements existing studies such as those which illustrate broad historical trends in women's and men's economic roles, by demonstrating how occupational structures in a particular setting changed over a brief span of history, and in turn, how socio-historical changes altered men's and women's positions within these structures.

In this chapter I examine young women's and men's economic roles across several recent historical phases in the Red River Delta. Specifically, I focus on how historical changes in Vietnamese society shaped labor force demands, and in turn shaped occupational outcomes for youth who were entering the labor force and the life course stage of family formation. I analyze changes in the characteristics of workers in occupational categories over distinct historical periods in order to demonstrate how occupational outcomes are a reflection of the human capital, social capital and other traits that individuals bring to the labor force. The analyses demonstrate how concerns of the day, frameworks of economic organization and policy, and the institutional contexts of one's immediate environment are key features of great consequence to occupational outcomes.

7.2 Review of the Literature

Many scholars have written upon the massive social and economic upheaval that Vietnamese people endured through decades of war and then the socialist re-organization of workers into production cooperatives and collectives. Mobilization for the war effort encompassed all social groups, such that men and women from diverse social class backgrounds were recruited to participate in the armed forces (Turner 1998). Merli (2000) demonstrates in her analyses of the VLS data that the burden of the American War in Viet Nam was experienced across diverse social class groups, with the sons of relatively highly educated fathers being disproportionately represented in terms of military service, combat fatalities and casualties. The toll of fatalities and casualties visited upon the Vietnamese, both among combatants and civilian victims of aerial bombings and other deadly tactics, was immense, with an estimated one million war-related deaths having occurred during the 1965 to 1975 decade (Hirschman et al. 1995). According to some estimates, enumeration of deaths during the First Indochina War era (against French occupying forces) raises the toll to approximately two million deaths. Such an enumeration of war-related military deaths represents the most devastating results that arose during a lengthy decade of intensive mobilization for war. In addition, military engagement persisted into the 1980s, as Vietnamese troops were engaged in battles with Cambodian and Chinese forces. While the immediate threat of wartime devastation to village life may have retreated, a relatively large proportion of men were still engaged in military service. The effects of war, therefore, continued to be realized in the organization of village and family life, given that a significant proportion of the potential male labor force was employed in military service.

The experience of war in Viet Nam endured for decades and drew heavily upon the labor force; at the same time production had been organized into agricultural cooperatives and workers'

brigades—efforts which first brought women's work into the realm of publicly recognized, state remunerated employment. With work remunerated through the workpoint system and subsidized childcare widely available in the collectives and government enterprises, the demand for women's work and the conditions of their employment were markedly different than they had been in previous times. The implementation of socialist work brigades and cooperatives that relied upon female labor, socialist childcare institutions that removed many social reproduction tasks from the shoulders of young mothers, and mobilization for vigorous war efforts, are thought to have culminated in a unique set of historical circumstances that produced an unprecedented demand for women's labor in roles outside traditional, 'female' roles.

Research on women's labor force participation in industrialized countries has explored and debated whether a parallel set of circumstances surrounding World War II mobilization in the United States was accountable for the upswing in married women's labor force participation, beginning in the 1940s. Various scholars have critically examined whether the World War II wartime production effort served as a 'watershed event' that 'marked a break with the past,' and 'redefined women's roles' (Goldin 1991: 747); contained in these explanations for increased married women's employment are factors that were likely influential in Viet Nam during the 1960s and 1970s:

“Women may have been drawn into the wartime economy through a variety of mechanisms. A husband's absence often meant that his wife had less to do in the home and that the family's labor income dropped considerable; for others, patriotic duty was reason enough to join the war effort. Once in the labor market, various investments women made during the war, such as job training and alternative housekeeping arrangements, decreased the costs and increased the gains to postwar work.”

Goldin's work also points to the relaxation of constraints upon women's employment, such as the diminishment of marriage bars to employment and increasing employer acceptance of women's taking jobs in traditionally male domains, and to women's often healthy acclimation to

employment which 'whetted' their appetite for a lifetime of employment outside the home in occupations outside the 'pink-collar ghetto' of unskilled services and clerical sectors. While U.S. women's employment proved to be relatively fleeting for those women who first entered the workforce during the war and after their husbands had entered the armed services, for most women who had already entered the paid labor force prior to post-Pearl Harbor mobilization, their participation was remarkably persistent, suggesting that a long-term trend in demand for women's labor had already taken shape in the U.S.

Goldin's analyses (1991, 1990) emphasize that although the demands of production to support the wartime economy and the draft moved married women from their traditional, domestic-based roles into paid labor force participation, this movement represented a continuation of trends that had begun prior to WWII mobilization. Women who entered the labor force prior to heightened wartime demand were more concentrated in clerical, sales and select 'pink-collar' professional jobs, whereas those entering during 1944 (i.e., the "Rosie the Riveter" war industry workers) were more likely to be employed in occupations directly related to wartime industry, such as operative and service occupations, thereby suggesting that wartime demand did affect the occupational structure of women workers. As wartime demand subsided and working class males returned to their former employment roles, only a small proportion of women continued to work in war-industry jobs into the 1950s, thereby suggesting that WWII era employment was somewhat anomalous and that women's more permanent gains in economic participation are more aptly conceived as part of a long-term trend associated with women's rising levels of education and the rise of the clerical sector. Schweitzer (1980:90) comments on the historical-specificity of women's gains:

"While more women were in the labor force in 1950 than in 1940, they still worked primarily in those industries that had always employed women. The barriers to women

had been breached temporarily, but the return to peacetime conditions left women pretty much where they had been before 1941.”

Economists’ grappling attempts to compare war and nonwar sectors of the economy in estimating economic growth and prosperity, ultimately deeming the two ‘inherently noncomparable,’ are symbolic of the problems that arise in estimating women’s gains in economic participation, and hence economic power, by referring to relatively ‘deviant’ periods of wartime mobilization and stepped-up production (Higgs 1992). It is especially important to recognize that women’s gains during anomalous historical periods of economic demand perhaps reflect temporary period-effects that may be reversed or weakened in the course of subsequent economic development. For many women stepping out of traditionally female roles in response to wartime demands or to the relative absence of men contributing to the household economy, their newfound economic roles may be accepted out of dutiful fulfillment of filial or patriotic obligation, rather than envisioned as welcome opportunities. Thus, we are led to question whether Vietnamese women—in the context of demobilization and retreat from socialist, redistributive policies, and hence a period of rapid change in the demand for female labor—have achieved lasting changes in their economic roles or have returned to traditional economic roles.

Oppenheimer (1973), too, has pointed to the importance of *long-term* demographic shifts as underlying women’s changing social roles in the U.S., in particular their adoption of roles in the paid labor force. Paid employment only became a central, enduring aspect of women’s roles, Oppenheimer demonstrates, as a result of the increasing importance of female sectors of employment that arise in advanced industrial societies. The industrialization process, itself, features a growing numerical importance of female occupations that cannot be effectively filled while restricted utilization of women in the labor force continues:

"The major reason for the rapid rise in the demand for female labor is that by the early 20th century women workers had monopolized several occupations which were destined to expand enormously with the continued industrial growth of our society, particularly in the economic surge after 1940 (Oppenheimer 1973:950)."

Furthermore, Oppenheimer's analyses demonstrate that, historically, it has been at times when the demand for women workers outstripped demand among young, single women that married and older women were drawn into the labor force. Normative restrictions are relaxed, accordingly, where job opportunities for women expand and the occupational structure generates a demand for their contributions in paid work.

Comparing subgroups of women workers who joined the U.S. labor force during WWII, Schweitzer (1980:93) comments that certain limitations to women's economic participation arose due to their continued pressure to meet familial obligations. Irrespective of wage returns, there was a clear limit to the number of hours women with young children were willing and able to devote to labor force participation. This barrier to mothers' participation was largely the product of unmet needs for childcare and continued pressure upon women to perform household chores. As a result, illustrating the practically inexhaustible demand for women's labor in certain industries such as shipbuilding, many owners of businesses implemented their own childcare plans in lieu of federal assistance. For married women with children facing the call to become labor force participants, and to labor outside the home for extended periods of time, "wages and homemaking burdens together determined whether married women worked" (Schweitzer 1980:95). We may reason, based upon such findings, that provision of childcare and other social services is an important feature of the social-institutional context that more or less constrains women's propensity to respond to increased demands for their labor.

Turning Points in Vietnamese History and Economic Development Relevant to Women's Economic Roles

There are several pivotal events and processes in recent Vietnamese history that impacted macro-level organization of production activities, and thereby potentially shaped men's and women's economic roles. In this section I provide a brief, and by no means exhaustive, summary of these events and processes. To begin, members of the earliest marriage cohort in the analysis, those married between 1945 and 1964, experienced the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam's (DRV) August Revolution in 1945, subsequent years of continued struggle with French colonial occupation and eventual Vietnamese victory and tentative independence after the defeat of French forces at *Dien Bien Phu* in 1954. Also significant, young adults married during this period witnessed the acceleration of land reforms by the government of the DRV beginning in 1955, as well as efforts undertaken to restore the economy of northern Viet Nam. Under the land reform policies, cadres, assisted by local, middle peasants, extracted landholdings from landlords and middle-peasants and reallocated this land to poor peasants in an attempt to provide widespread, egalitarian ownership. The land reform process often escalated class tension and vengeance to violent levels, with an estimated 5,000 landlords and their family members killed during the period. In addition, implementation of the land reforms may have exaggerated certain class distinctions, as so-called 'middle peasants' were allowed to keep landholdings substantially larger than those granted to poor peasants in exchange for their assistance in confiscating lands of prominent landlords (Wiegersma 1988:139).

Despite the inequities in implementation and rural social upheaval that occurred during the late 1950s, through land reforms the peasantry had been granted shares of agricultural land that formed the foundation of rural household economies. Land collectivization efforts were undertaken soon after, and in 1961 the first five-year development plan was announced—

emphasizing the development of agrarian cooperatives. Proceeding through stages of small-scale and large-scale cooperatization, thousands of rural cooperatives were formed from existing, privately owned estates. Eventually, large-scale cooperatives would subsume ownership of all means of production and redistribute a share of product to cooperative members based on their labor contributions (Sar Desai 1992:70). However, the family economy was not entirely eliminated by collectivization efforts, but rather remained as an important 'sub-economy' in many areas, wherein households continued to produce about 50% of their consumption resources (i.e., mostly supplementary items such as livestock, garden vegetables and handicrafts) outside of the collective sphere (Wiegersma 1988:148). Under the collective system, men and women were allocated work tasks and were remunerated for performing these tasks. The allocation of work in the public, collective economy in essence 'guaranteed' a form of employment to rural workers. While critics have noted that the collective allocation of labor maintained the existing gender division of labor, and hence the gender gap in wages (Wiegersma 1988; White 1989), others have pointed to the rise of female plowing brigades and diverse teams of female manual workers that emerged as rural men were increasingly recruited for military service.

The Vietnamese socialists quickly attempted to re-establish the shell of an industrial base that had been left after the departure of the French in 1954. Relying upon Soviet and Chinese aid, economic planning in the late 1950s emphasized state direction of industrial development. Formerly French-owned industrial and commercial establishments were nationalized. Two three-year plans (1955-1957, 1958-1960) aimed to restore DRV industrial production in tin, cement and coal, and to institute new national industries in light manufacturing of alcohol, tobacco, textiles and other products. With the exception of handicraft production, which was not subsumed under state direction, private industry was transformed to state, regional or state-private industry (Wiegersma 1988). Industrial production increased markedly in the North during the first five

years of nationalization; and, under the country's first five-year plan (1960-1965) a greater emphasis was placed on developing heavy industry to form a foundation for socialist industrialization. The majority of state investment (mostly from foreign sources) at this time was directed toward development of heavy industry. As such large-scale factories arose rapidly in the vicinity of Ha Noi and were scattered throughout the Red River Delta. A second five-year plan would be delayed by ten years, as the war effort picked up and U.S. bombing raids of the DRV way-laid many industrial production efforts. Industrial production, especially within arms factories and other war-related industries, would continue at a moderately reduced pace during the war years, with many production facilities having been relocated to the countryside—out of harm's way from bombing targets (Wiegersma 1988:145). Agricultural production increased during the early years of collectivization, and in the private production sphere; however, production fluctuated markedly due to climatic variation and wartime damage to dykes and other production infrastructure.

During the mid- to late-1960s, the labor force of northern Viet Nam villages featured a predominance of women; approximately 60% of workers were female, as large segments of the male, working age population had moved from their households to serve in the military or to labor in distant manufacturing industries or branches of government administration (Wiegersma 1988). Given this deficit of males in the local economy, women emerged to take over male-dominated occupations, such as work on ploughing teams and in other manual labor activities (Le Thi Nham Tuyet et al. 1996). However, this shift in activities was assumed by many to be a fleeting, temporary response to the dire circumstances of war. As Wiegersma maintains (1988:162):

“There was, nevertheless, little change of this temporary work assignment permanently affecting the division of labour in the countryside. When the men returned home from

war and the young women married, they would be given easier tasks because of their child-bearing status.”

As the war progressed in the north through the mid 1970s, cooperatization of labor proceeded as well, keeping pace with rebuilding damaged infrastructure and maintaining irrigation and drainage projects. Local industries of the state sector were increasingly located in rural areas, employing workers in manufacturing, production and sales occupations; handicraft production, too, was subsumed by local production cooperatives during this period. By the time six years of U.S. strategic bombing had subsided in 1972, a great deal of northern Viet Nam’s infrastructure had been damaged or completely destroyed. Railroad lines, bridges, dike systems were among the major bodies of infrastructure in need of repair. Government efforts picked up in the early 1970s (following the 1972 ceasefire) to make reparations to basic infrastructure and to rebuild major government enterprises in glass, cement, chemical and other production sectors. This massive rebuilding effort, to restore normalcy to a countryside in which thousands of villages were damaged, continued to fuel war-related economic activity over and above demand for labor in peacetime. Furthermore, efforts to conduct war and collectivize the economy through the formation of workers’ organizations and implementation of socialist programs brought forth an expansion of administrative and managerial occupations, many of which were filled by women, while men were engaged in military service or working in higher levels of administration (Wiegersma 1988:170). Thusly, a temporarily expansive system of administrative positions arose during the 1960s that would provide a boost to professional employment for the period, but would be diminished over time, and especially with the large-scale dismantling of production cooperatives and state-owned enterprises. As the heightened levels of wartime production subsided, low productivity in agriculture reached crisis levels by the late 1970s. Many Vietnamese were employed in agriculture; however, production fell short due to rapid post-war

population increase, and most importantly due to mismanagement of collective infrastructure, which damaged and wasted land and technological inputs.

The end of the American War and reunification of northern and southern Viet Nam as the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam in 1975 did not bring a cessation to military mobilization. To the contrary, tensions with China flared in the late 1970s, and Viet Nam's invasion of Pol Pot's Cambodia in 1979 fueled regional hostilities and maintained the size of Vietnamese fighting forces. Cambodia was occupied by Vietnamese forces and a high state of military preparedness was maintained at the border; thus, the continued militarization of the economy kept thousands of soldiers enlisted and maintained defense expenditure levels at nearly half of the SRVN's budget in 1979 (Sar Desai 1992:103). At the same time, Viet Nam's economy, floundering due to poor crop yields and cutbacks in foreign assistance, was being propped up almost solely through aid and favorable trade arrangements with the Soviet Union. At the close of the 1970s both the industrial and agricultural sectors of Viet Nam were thoroughly weakened. In this state of economic malaise and deepening impoverishment, the Communist Party of Viet Nam began to encourage growth in the private family economic sector.

The early stages of socialist transformation followed from these initial pronouncements and restrictions on private household production were relaxed during the early 1980s. By 1981 a contract quota system of production was introduced to replace the workpoint system of remuneration for labor inputs. Under this system farmers were paid for delivery of produce to the cooperative and were allowed to keep over-quota production for their own consumption or sale on the market. As discussed in chapter three, the official announcement of *doi moi* in 1986, and the cumulative effects of the 1988 and 1993 Land Laws further eroded socialist organization of agriculture and returned decision-making about labor allocation, investment, and income-generating strategies to the household unit. Agricultural production has risen markedly in the

wake of these liberalizing reforms; national shortages in rice production have been reversed and Viet Nam has become the world's third leading exporter of rice.

Besides the renewal of household-based agricultural production and emergence of small family enterprise, the culmination of the central-planning and redistributive economy has opened the door to widespread rural-to-urban migration in the Red River Delta since the early 1980s. No longer inhibited by a strictly-enforced household registration system, superfluous workers, predominantly males in the earliest periods of renovation, were freed to seek work as drivers, day laborers, and in miscellaneous unskilled labor occupations, at distances far from their home villages. Furthermore, planned migrations were organized by the state through the establishment of 'new economic zones' (NEZ) beginning in the late 1970s, which sponsored relocation of approximately 4 million residents of densely populated areas, including the Red River Delta, to sparsely-settled mountainous areas, to release pressure on crowded lands and to open 'frontier' areas to cultivation (Sar Desai 1992:103). Together the planned relocations and spontaneous migrations that have occurred since the SRVN's second five-year plan have potentially altered the relative size and composition of local labor supply in the Red River Delta (i.e., one of the nation's top migrant sending areas) and thus altered occupational opportunity structures among men and women remaining in the villages and urban districts of the densely populated northern delta region. Alongside this emergent mobility of workers is the return of and retention of many men in villages and urban districts who would have served in the military during a bygone era. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Viet Nam was one of the world's leaders in troop reductions; specifically, Viet Nam was positioned alongside China, Russia, the United States, and Iraq as the societies experiencing the largest absolute number of cuts in armed forces troops; such a massive reduction in armed forces poses difficulties for national economies, such as that of Viet

Nam, which are already burdened by unemployment and rapidly growing populations of young labor force entrants:

“The real conversion challenge of post-conflict demobilization lies in the reintegration of the ex-combatants and their families into civilian life. They must establish a new livelihood, often after long periods in the military and/or conflict. In the economies in which the ex-combatants try to participate, unemployment is often high and several adjustment problems exist. The combatants released are often the ones with the worst prospects for reintegration, due to limited or inappropriate skills and education or to health problems. In most cases, many of them remained underemployed for extended periods of time.” (Bonn International Center for Conversion 1996).

The culmination of these macro-level policy changes, historical events, and population migrations are likely to have altered the occupational structure and men’s and women’s economic roles within local economies of the Red River Delta. I turn, thusly, to analyze gender and economic roles across four cohorts of young workers in the Red River Delta, so as to examine the extent to which economic changes have had enduring impacts on the gendered structure of employment.

7.3 Methodological Approach and Analyses

In order to examine how men’s and women’s economic roles changed over the later half of the 20th century, a period of great social upheaval and transformation in the Red River Delta, I undertake an analysis of respondents’ economic activities that were being performed at the time of their first marriage. Because VLS respondents’ marriages occurred regularly over a period of five decades, knowing each of their occupations at marriage, and the year of their marriage, opens a window for understanding what young people entering adulthood and the family formation stage of the life course were doing across distinct historical eras in Viet Nam.

I analyze all ever-married men and women between ages 15 and 65, treating their occupation at marriage as representative of their initial economic role in the society as a young

adult. Certainly, by undertaking this approach I miss some occupational activities that young people were doing during pre-marital young adulthood—in in-depth interviews, many women and men commented that they had worked on family farms and in other ‘odd jobs’ beginning in their teenage years. Furthermore, due to data limitations I cannot estimate the number of years that respondents spent employed in the occupation they held at the time of the marriage.

Nonetheless, the examination of occupation at marriage captures young people at a critical stage in the life course, as they are assuming adult roles and establishing a more independent status. I omit from the analysis those individuals who have never married, even though they may be economically active at the time of the survey. This approach mainly censors from the analysis young people who have yet to settle into family formation. Within the VLS data there are very few men and women who remain single into their 40s and later years of life; marriage is practically universal, with only a very small fraction of women, and far fewer men, remaining single into late adulthood—perhaps because of the disruption of war and creation of an imbalanced sex ratio in certain cohorts.

A comment on selectivity biases is warranted with reference to these data particularly as concerns the oldest marriage cohort, which has an especially imbalanced sex ratio and shows a very sharp predominance of women. From this gender imbalance we can gather that due to both natural causes and war mortality, more males than females in our sample have died before reaching age 65, and that these men and women tended to marry before 1965 (i.e., the cut-off age for inclusion in the VLS sample is 65). That the male-female sex ratio is consistently approximately .90 for younger cohorts suggests that of the couples that married in each of the 3 cohorts, young women have been more likely to remain in the local population than men, due in large part to gender differentials in migration.

To derive an indicator of men’s and women’s economic roles in young adulthood I refer

to a question in the VLS which asked all ever-married respondents, "*What sort of work were you doing at the time of your current marriage?*" For respondents who were married, then divorced, widowed or separated, and remarried, I derive work activity information from an additional question about occupation at *first* marriage. For each of these questions, responses were coded into one of 13 broad industry categories (ranging from agriculture to commerce to business services), or several non-work categories (i.e., going to school, retired, not working outside of the home). I have collapsed these categories into a smaller set of economic roles in order to meaningfully summarize the economic role fulfilled by each respondent at the time of their first marriage. I describe economic patterns across four marriage cohorts in order to measure the impact of broad historical patterns on their career beginnings.

I disaggregate respondents according to their year at first marriage. Thusly, each ever-married man and woman in the sample is categorized into four marriage cohorts: 1945 to 1964, 1965-1974, 1975 to 1984, and 1985 to 1995. Attaching fixed time references to the Vietnamese experience with socialist revolution, the American War, post-war collectivization and reunification, and market transition, poses challenges due to the fluid, gradual pattern to social change over these five decades. Nonetheless, these dates are thought to represent a meaningful delineation of major eras in recent Vietnamese history and are thought to map onto important, period-determined fluctuations in the demand for men's and women's labor contributions.

In addition to gender, I also incorporate several other indicators of respondent's status. Except in the most rare circumstances, each of these status indicators will have been determined prior to the respondent's entrance into marriage and full labor force participation. Specifically, I include data on the respondent's place of birth, religion, parental status characteristics, and educational attainment. Respondents are considered to have high status origins to the extent that one or both of their parents had upper secondary education, government employment, and/or

Communist Party membership. Educational attainment levels have been standardized according to the current 12-year system, which is divided into primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary levels. Each of these indicators are derived from combinations of variables in the 1995 VLS individual survey.

7.4 Results and Discussion

In order to convey the age-range at respondents' first marriage, and changes in this value over time, I present in Table 7.1 the average age at marriage, and distribution of respondents' age at first marriage across four marriage cohorts. Note that for the vast majority of respondents, 'first marriage' and 'current marriage' are synonymous because divorce is quite uncommon, and while widowhood has been more common in than divorce or separation in the Red River Delta, only a small proportion of these persons remarry. Essentially, the data in Table 7.1 reveal that age at first marriage has increased among younger cohorts relative to those married in the 1940s and 1950s, so that, on average, men and women married between 1985 and 1995, were ages 25 and 21, respectively. Compared to marriages of the late 1940s and early 1950s, men are marrying about 4 years later in life; however, for women the average age at marriage has only increased by about one year.

While illustrative of interesting trends in age at first marriage, my main purpose in presenting these figures is to show that subsequent analyses and discussions of 'standardized occupations' at first marriage are generally depicting a population of men and women as they enter their early 20s. Table 7.2 and Figure 7.2, then, illustrates what economic roles these "20-something" men and women were working at during different times in history. It is clear from the data presented in Table 7.2 that major historical events and shifts in economic organization

shaped the economic roles of men and women in the Red River Delta in fundamental ways. Comparing young adults' economic roles across the cohorts we observe that nearly all men and women are engaged in economic activity at the time of their marriage. This has held true for each of the cohorts, beginning with those married in the mid 1940s through mid 1950s. For young women in the Red River Delta this has most often entailed working in agriculture. For young men, employment has been more diversified across broad occupational categories. Furthermore, up until the time of the American War a larger proportion of young men than young women were not working in a job at the time of their marriage (i.e., largely due to school enrollment). However, for both men and women the proportion not working at the time of their marriage is quite low—less than 6%.

In several of the major occupational categories there are marked shifts in gender structure over time—with women becoming the dominant labor force participants in certain occupations that previously were dominated by men. The mobilization of men for military engagement rose steeply in the Red River Delta during the mid 1960s, and persisted into the early 1980s. At the same time the war effort generated a demand for production of raw materials and manufactured goods that was met, in part, by women who moved into secondary industries, especially manufacturing, during the same periods that men were moving to the front. This trend is revealed in the gender turnover that occurs in the manual labor category during the 1960s-mid 1970s, as well as the heightened gender disparity in agricultural occupations that picked up during the mid 1960s and persisted into the mid 1980s.

It is significant that agricultural occupations employed a smaller proportion of both the male and female populations during the years of protracted military struggle into the 1970s, with a gradual reemergence of its predominance as a form of employment for both women and men as the period of collectivization and persistent military engagements with China and Cambodia came

to an end. Another interesting pattern revealed in Table 7.2 are shifts in the gender composition of commerce and personal services occupations, as well as occupations in business and social services, since the mid 1960s. In both of these occupational categories, women were underrepresented up until the 1960s. At this time of heightened military mobilization, when men shifted into the expansive military sector, women appear to have moved out of traditional occupations as their primary form of employment, especially agricultural jobs, and into the burgeoning business services and social services sector. From what we know about multiple jobholding, it is likely that young women were also working in agricultural production, but that this was supplementary to other forms of economic production, including professional services. In the most recent historical period, with the gradual diminishment of employment in these professional roles there has been a parallel movement of women back into agricultural occupations and a seeming resumption of traditional patterns. For men in the youngest marriage cohort, too, it is more frequently the case that agriculture becomes a primary occupation at the start of one's employment career, as military service has become increasingly rare in the recent era of demobilization. Compared to women, men married in the most recent period (1985 to 1995) have been more likely to obtain jobs in manual labor and in skilled trades related to transport and utilities. The small proportion of young men who obtain occupations in business services and social services has actually risen in the youngest marriage cohort compared to those married in the mid-1970s to mid-1980s, whereas the proportion of women obtaining these relatively high status occupations early in their career has declined across these two marriage cohorts.

From these cohort-based data we may make several tentative conclusions regarding how men's and women's economic roles have changed in the post-socialist, post-war market transition period. First, for young people who continue to reside in the Red River Delta (rather than migrate

to seek employment outside of the local community) work has become increasingly concentrated in agriculture among both men and women. This seems to demonstrate a renewed 'agriculturalization' of the labor force, rather than a so-called 'feminization of agriculture,' and it represents a return to economic roles that prevailed prior to the disruptions of war production and mobilization and the collectivization of production. Furthermore, the expansion of professional roles in business services and social services that emerged during the years of war and the rise of socialist production (when more than 25% of the youth entering the Red River Delta labor force were being employed in this sector) has demonstrated to be a temporary phenomenon. Among youth married between 1985 and 1995, only about 10% have been employed in business services and social services at the time of their marriage. Men and women are approximately equally represented in these professional roles in the most recent cohort of married persons (5.3% versus 5.0% for women and men, respectively), yet the decline in women's representation has been steeper across the three most recent marriage cohorts, suggesting that women's gains may be more temporary and period-specific than those of men.

In Table 7.3 I expand analyses to address the worker composition of occupational sectors beyond the gender distinction, to include several other relevant social status characteristics of workers, such as religion, place of birth, parental social class background and respondent's education. By comparing the proportional share of specific occupations in the total labor force, specifically the relative share of the military/police, business services and social services, and agriculture sectors—we are able to distinguish which features have influenced access to and performance of unique social roles at different points in time. Of particular interest to me are the characteristics of persons in the military and in high status business services and social services occupations, and how these characteristics have changed over time. Beginning with members of military and police occupations, the most clear line of stratification in this sector is the gender

distinction. No more than 3% of newly married women in the Red River Delta have been engaged in military or police service at the time of their first marriage; however, during the periods of military conflict beginning in the 1960s and lasting into the early 1980s, more than 30% of young men were serving in the military at the time of their first marriage. This large percentage shift in male military participation suggests the massive impact that wartime mobilization had upon local village economic production, and specifically the roles of women in these economic systems.

Women in the youngest marriage cohort (1985-1995) are proportionally dominant in the business and social services occupations, as well as in agriculture. However, comparing the gender differential across cohorts it is clear that women's predominance in both the services professions and agriculture has declined during the market reform period relative to the years of war and socialist production. This short-term historical trend counters the position that agriculture is becoming increasingly feminized in the market reform period, unless we take into account imbalanced sex ratios in the local population due to men's disproportionate involvement in labor migration, which removes them from the local Red River Delta population (i.e., and hence, from the VLS sampling frame). Women do appear to be sliding in terms of their gains in employment in the services professions, whereas young married men are achieving a greater proportion of these occupations within the recent marriage cohort.

The influence of family social background characteristics upon occupational attainment of young people has shifted in notable ways across these four major historical periods of the late 20th century. First, young people who are members of the Catholic minority population—always a substantial segment of the Red River Delta labor force (approximately 15% of the total)—continue to be underrepresented within high status businesses/social services occupations and over-represented in agricultural occupations relative to Buddhist and nonreligious persons. This

suggests that prejudice and barriers to Catholics' entry into higher status, professional sectors of employment has continued over time, even during the present era of reduced conflict with Western powers, relaxed Communist orthodoxy and increased religious tolerance.

A finding with very important ramifications for analyzing changes in the stratification order over time and the inheritance of status emerges when we compare the social status background characteristics of workers in the business and social services professions over time. Specifically, we observe that for each measure of upper class or elite social status background, as indicated by parental characteristics, young people entering into professional business and social services occupations are disproportionately the children of high status parents. This has been the case across each of the four marriage cohorts; however, for the youngest cohort married between 1985 and 1995, the concentration of youth from high status backgrounds is even more marked than it was among earlier cohorts. The increasing proportions of youth with highly educated, government-employed, Communist Party member parents has increased for the entire labor force—representing a broad-based secular shift in the status characteristics of the population, but overtime high status occupations have increasingly become the more exclusive domain of young workers whose parents have prestigious, preferential positions in the society. I address the processes of occupational status attainment and status transmission across generations in greater detail in chapter eight, focusing upon gender differences in the process and parsing out the unique influences of parental status characteristics versus workers' educational attainment upon high status outcomes.

Another pattern of note that emerges when we compare occupational status outcomes for young men and women across time is the fact that educational attainment has risen dramatically among labor force entrants across the four cohorts, such that fewer than 5% of young people in the 1985-1995 marriage cohort have only primary schooling. The decisive role of educational

attainment in the occupational attainment process is revealed in the occupational levels observed for young men and women in the most recent marriage cohort who have obtained occupations in the business and social services professions. Nearly 85% of these young workers have upper secondary schooling levels or higher—a remarkable finding given that only 24% of total labor force entrants in the 1985-1995 cohort have similarly high levels of educational attainment.

Finally, a comment on persons serving in the armed forces at the time of their marriage is warranted, given that the military has been a point of labor force entry for so many young men in recent decades. In general, across each of the marriage cohorts, young people serving in the military have been a fairly representative cross-section of the Red River Delta labor force. With the exception of a gender bias that strongly favors male participation in the military the status characteristics of young people entering the military are remarkably similar to those for the labor force in its entirety. The similarity of persons in the military relative to the entire labor force most likely emerges due to the fact that according to Vietnamese law two years of military service is compulsory for young men in the current period, and most young men perform their military service upon completing their education. Interpreting the results for military and police occupations is complicated given that this data includes both persons who intend to pursue careers in the military and those who are only performing two years compulsory service. It is also more likely in the current period that young men have completed their two-year term of compulsory service prior to getting married. The slight rural bias favoring military service among young married persons may reflect the fact that military service is preferred as a route to education and training for rural people and people lacking family status connections to achieve occupational positions in the local economy. It may also reflect upon the that fact that rural youth tend to marry at slightly lower ages, and thus may not have completed military service by the time they marry. Among urban and high status persons, however, professional positions within

military and police institutions are more common, and their service, perceived to be more of an obligation than an opportunity, may be deferred until after they have completed schooling, started a career and formed a family. The rapid decline in military occupations among young people married in the 1975-84 and those married in the 1985-95 cohort is perhaps the most significant finding for understanding the influence of occupational structures for occupational roles. Just as this major downward shift in men's military service was emerging, so was their representation in agriculture, manual labor, and services occupations on the rise. As the young soldier has gradually disappeared from the Red River Delta, the young male farmer, manual laborer, or labor migrant seems to have arisen to take his place. Chapter eight examines occupational status positions in the current period in greater detail, addressing the social and demographic characteristics that set young men and women upon particular pathways of occupational status attainment.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to chart historical changes in the economic roles of men and women by analyzing retrospective occupational data among a population of men and women currently residing in the Red River Delta. By constructing a comparative analysis of men's and women's economic roles across four marriage cohorts ranging from 1945 to 1995, I attempt to overcome the limitations of cross-sectional data and the weak record of social and demographic data collection in Viet Nam prior to the late 1970s. The analyses are instructive of major shifts in occupational structure that have resulted from wartime mobilization and the socialist experiment with collectivization.

Among the key findings revealed here is the return to pre-war levels of young workers' concentration in agricultural occupations. This heightened concentration in agricultural work in

the youngest marriage cohort is true both for women and men; women's greater concentration is not novel, but is practically the same as patterns that prevailed among young women married in the late 1940s through the early 1960s. The comparison of economic roles across historical eras demonstrates that the disproportionate engagement of men in the armed forces generated a relatively temporary boost to women's gains in professional services occupations. The retraction of the military/police sector with broad-based demobilization of troops has realigned occupational status outcomes for young men and women. Many young men are entering the agricultural sector whereas before they would have been likely to become soldiers.

For both women and men, parental status backgrounds are currently, and have historically, been pivotal to attainment of positions in business services and social services occupations. Educational attainment, too, has arisen as a prominent factor delineating access to high status positions in the occupational structure. The aspirations and labor market decisions of contemporary residents of the Red River Delta are embedded in these recent and significant changes to the occupational structure, as well as the unfolding transition toward a market economy. Recognizing this underlying context of change and transition, I turn to an in-depth of status attainment processes in the next chapter.

Table 7.1 Age at First Marriage by Marriage Cohort, Ever Married Men and Women, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995

Age at first Marriage:	1945-1955				1955-1965				1965-1975				1975-1985				1985-1995			
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Under Age 18	26.9%	7.2%	8.4%	0.7%	6.8%	0.2%	35.9%	13.2%	38.5%	7.5%	30.9%	45.5%	37.8%	43.5%	44.1%	43.3%	35.1%	48.9%	32.6%	11.0%
Age 18-20	37.5%	35.4%	41.1%	19.2%	35.9%	13.2%	38.5%	7.5%	30.9%	45.5%	37.8%	43.5%	44.1%	43.3%	35.1%	48.9%	32.6%	11.0%	3.7%	647
Age 21-24	30.9%	45.5%	37.8%	43.5%	44.1%	43.3%	35.1%	48.9%	32.6%	11.0%	3.7%	647	559	24	21	25	25	25	25	25
Age 25-29	4.7%	11.5%	10.2%	26.7%	11.4%	34.7%	13.4%	32.6%	11.0%	3.7%	647	559	24	21	25	25	25	25	25	25
Age 30+	0.0%	0.5%	2.4%	9.9%	1.9%	8.6%	3.7%	11.0%	3.7%	647	559	24	21	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
TOTAL (N)	320	209	333	292	622	559	647	583	647	583	647	583	647	583	647	583	647	583	647	583
Mean Age At First Marriage	20	21	21	24	21	24	21	24	21	24	21	24	21	24	21	24	21	24	21	25

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

Table 7.2 The Changing Gender Structure of Occupations among Young Adults, 1945-1995, Viet Nam's Red River Delta

	1945-1955				1955-1965				1965-1975				1975-1985				1985-1995			
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Agriculture and Fishing	82.8%	63.6%	35.3%	65.8%	39.5%	71.4%	64.7%	50.7%	32.0%	63.4%	35.3%	65.8%	39.5%	71.4%	64.7%	50.7%	32.0%	63.4%	35.3%	65.8%
Manual Labor (including Construction, Mining)	7.5%	9.1%	11.6%	13.8%	12.5%	11.9%	13.9%	12.4%	9.3%	9.3%	11.6%	13.8%	12.5%	11.9%	13.9%	12.4%	9.3%	9.3%	11.6%	13.8%
Manufacturing, Transport, Utilities	1.9%	2.9%	6.5%	4.3%	6.6%	2.0%	4.3%	5.3%	3.3%	3.3%	6.5%	4.3%	6.6%	2.0%	4.3%	5.3%	3.3%	3.3%	6.5%	4.3%
Military/Police	0.3%	9.6%	33.2%	1.4%	32.7%	0.6%	6.9%	20.7%	2.7%	2.7%	33.2%	1.4%	32.7%	0.6%	6.9%	20.7%	2.7%	2.7%	33.2%	1.4%
Commerce and Personal Services	1.9%	2.9%	1.4%	4.2%	2.7%	6.6%	4.3%	3.0%	3.9%	3.9%	1.4%	4.2%	2.7%	6.6%	4.3%	3.0%	3.9%	3.9%	1.4%	4.2%
Business Services and Social Services	3.8%	5.7%	10.3%	9.6%	3.4%	5.3%	5.0%	8.2%	15.3%	15.3%	10.3%	9.6%	3.4%	5.3%	5.0%	8.2%	15.3%	15.3%	10.3%	9.6%
Not in Labor Force when Married	1.9%	6.2%	1.7%	0.8%	2.5%	2.2%	1.0%	2.3%	2.1%	2.1%	1.7%	0.8%	2.5%	2.2%	1.0%	2.3%	2.1%	2.1%	1.7%	0.8%
N/A/DK	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
(N)	320	209	292	622	560	647	583	100.0%	333	292	560	622	560	647	583	100.0%	647	583	100.0%	1644
Sex ratio	0.65	0.88	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.86	0.86	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.88

Source: 1995 Viet Nam Longitudinal Survey

Chapter 8. The Impact of Social Origins, Human Capital and Political Capital on Occupational Attainment in Vietnam's Red River Delta.

8.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter represents an initial exploration of the occupational status attainment process in northern Viet Nam. Recently, especially with the advent of market transition theory and the research efforts it has initiated, social mobility and processes of occupational attainment have become matters of great interest in post-socialist countries. However, Viet Nam has been largely absent from this field of inquiry and systematic inquiries of the factors influencing occupational status have yet to be undertaken during the reform era. While the vast majority of persons residing in Viet Nam's Red River Delta are agriculturalists, especially wet-rice cultivators, a sizable and increasing minority labors in non-agricultural fields such as handicraft production, transportation and market trading. A smaller subset of the population has secured employment in high prestige professional and managerial occupations that are often performed within enterprises and offices of the state. Previous research on socialist and formerly socialist societies has demonstrated the unique desirability of these positions, not only because they bestow a degree of economic power upon their incumbents, but also because they carry relatively favorable working conditions, employment benefits such as health insurance and retirement pensions, and the potential to bestow 'favors' upon family and friends (Geiger 1968; Parish and Michelson 1996). The prestige and influence associated with professional and other high status occupations are uniquely valuable in the northern Viet Nam setting, where formal labor markets are nascent and underemployment is widespread (Le Thi 1995). The prevalence of agricultural and informal sector work in the Red River Delta, jobs that often demand inputs of strenuous, lengthy hours of labor, lends additional social value and desirability to the relatively rare, stable, and formalized positions within professional and managerial fields.

In this chapter I formulate questions about the relative importance of social location, family socioeconomic status and political position, and human capital for the attainment of occupational positions in certain sectors of the economy. I also explore women's occupational attainment processes in the labor force relative to those of men, in order to assess whether they have been similarly successful in attaining non-agricultural and high prestige occupations. I address these questions by combining quantitative and qualitative data analyses. The quantitative analyses consider occupations according to industry-delineated categories and according to occupational prestige scores based upon international classification schemes. In addition, I incorporate qualitative analyses of in-depth interviews in which individual accounts of work history, perceptions of gender roles in work activities and the economic climate in the Red River Delta illuminate the mechanisms whereby men and women enter specific lines of activity. These accounts also demonstrate how family background and economic resources, human capital and social networks, influence the occupational attainment process. While describing their work experiences men and women have also communicated the powerful influence of local contexts, such as limited opportunities outside agricultural production and chronic underemployment, as factors influencing occupational outcomes.

The specific theoretical and empirical works that I draw upon to formulate hypotheses derive from three bodies of literature: a) studies of occupational attainment processes, especially in less developed countries; b) literature delineating and critiquing the market transition theory on continuity/discontinuity in stratification orders and changing social mobility patterns in societies transitioning from redistributive, socialist systems to market-oriented systems; and, c) works in the field of gender and development that address gender stratification in employment.

The remainder of this chapter is organized into several sections. The section immediately following provides a brief introduction to economic conditions and the employment structure of

the Red River Delta. Next, I provide an overview of major works in those areas of inquiry enumerated above that inform the analytic framework and research questions. Section four delineates research hypotheses, as well as the research methods utilized in this chapter. Section five is devoted to quantitative, regression analyses of occupational status and prestige, and discussion of these results. Section six incorporates analyses of in-depth interviews in which men and women describe the experiences they have had in the labor market; the features that have been salient in their choosing a particular line of activity; and the individual and contextual features that have limited or expanded their access to diverse occupational activities. The seventh and final section summarizes the central findings of the chapter and points to directions for further research.

8.2 The Structure of Employment and Nature of Occupational Status in Viet Nam

To recap chapter five, briefly, recall that the Red River Delta has an occupational structure that approximates a pre-industrial economy. However, it bears signs of emerging local development and heightened access to modern infrastructure and markets. The rural areas consist of peasant villages wherein household-based economies produce their subsistence and limited incomes by relying predominantly upon wet-rice cultivation, raising livestock, and limited production of handicrafts (e.g., hats, woven sitting mats) or provision of services (e.g., shopkeeping, personal transport). In general and especially in rural areas, very few men or women are able to access stable, remunerative work outside of the agricultural sector. Socialist revolution in the 1950s transformed economic relations in the region as agricultural land was collectivized and production of goods transferred to state-owned cooperatives. However, after three decades under a collective economic system that emphasized central planning and socialist labor and production relations, economic collapse occurred due to massive inflation,

inefficiencies in production, and waning Soviet aid. A mixed, 'market socialist' economy, combining market activities and significant state ownership through equitization of state firms and formation of public-private joint ventures, was initiated through *doi moi* in the late 1980s. *Doi moi* initiated a redistribution of collective land, allowing for private land use rights and encouraged the formation of entrepreneurial activity in the informal, household sector. Although economic growth has been a hallmark of the *doi moi* reforms, redundant labor and unemployment has been heightened by dissolution of many state-owned enterprises (SOE's), and the demobilization of troops from Cambodia and the China border region through the late 1980s. In addition, large waves of Vietnamese youth reach the age of labor force entry each year (Fahey, 1994; Nguyen Tuong Lai and Nguyen Thanh Bang, 1991). The distribution of once-collective land has guaranteed a minimal amount of subsistence and has invested households with the power to make production decisions. However, small landholdings are common and mechanized farm implements are nearly nonexistent, making agriculture extremely labor-intensive and physically demanding (Wiens 1998).

Although numerous, agricultural households are often poor, both in absolute and relative terms. A World Bank survey demonstrates that poverty is demonstrably higher in Red River Delta households headed by farmers, of which 65% were living in poverty during the early 1990s, compared to the 25% poverty incidence rate in households headed by professional/ managerial workers (Dollar and Litvack 1998). Farmers facing harsh conditions have increasingly left their home villages to work in low status migrant jobs, for example as pedi-cab drivers or scrap metal collectors. Labor migration to both urban and rural areas is on the rise and the Red River Delta is a key migrant sending area (Dang et al. 1997, Li 1996). One woman in her 20s whom I interviewed in the rural commune of Xuan Thanh, where nearly every family has at least one member who is a seasonal migrant, stated that a main factor inhibiting her from joining in the

frequent migrations to Ha Noi is that she is she is raising two small children and must remain in the village to care for them. Her comments suggest that, given the absence of opportunities to expand work beyond farming and the relative deprivation faced by those who rely on agriculture, family obligations are often the only obstacle to migration. The nature of city employment, while low in status, is seen as an attractive route to escaping the drudgery of farming:

*"many people who went to work in Hanoi said that they were reluctant to do farming when they returned. Working in Hanoi, they were paid much higher without dust on the legs."*¹²

Interviewees often commented on the harsh life of farmers and the desire to escape this way of life. Speaking about career aspirations for their children, many interviewees from diverse class backgrounds, echoed the sentiments of this 46 year-old father of three, who, when asked *"Do you want her [your daughter] to go back to your native place to do the farming?"* responded, *"No one wants that to be so. All the people want their children to have good jobs."*

The relative status of agricultural work seems to have declined at least since the 1986 market reforms (known collectively as *doi moi*), due to the slight increase in local occupational diversity, the increasing visibility and attractiveness of jobs in the modern, urban economy, and because dismantling of the collective system has meant a withdrawal of government support and even more fragile economic conditions if families meet the threat of natural disasters. The passage of *doi moi* laws (i.e., loosened enforcement of household registration system) has made labor migration more viable and thereby multiplied the alternatives to agricultural work. As a result of these changes, and the precariousness of relying upon agricultural production, many rural people seem to denigrate the status of agricultural work relative to other forms of work. Another woman, one of eight children from a farming family in *Loc Hoa* commune, suggests that

¹² Interview quotations are verbatim translations of English from Vietnamese, except for bracketed [] text. Interviews were tape-recorded, then transcribed into Vietnamese and subsequently translated into English. Names used in the text are pseudonyms, adopted to maintain confidentiality of interviewees.

her parents-in-law were opposed to her joining their family because she worked as a farmer. That her parents-in-law hoped for a daughter with a different occupation speaks to the relative position of agricultural workers. This low status corresponds to the difficult economic situation faced by families failing to diversify income-generation activities beyond agriculture:

“Because it is difficult if both of us [my husband and I] are farmers. The life will be better when one of us can part from family agriculture. The income from agriculture is not very much and farming is hard work. It's very difficult. We had thought that we would not be able to get married [because I worked as a farmer]”.

This attention to potential spouses' occupational and socioeconomic background has been observed by other researchers in the Red River Delta. Thus, although there has been a notably steep decline in parentally arranged marriages (see for example Nguyen Huu Minh 1998:115), additional ethnographic research conducted among Hanoians married between 1965 and 1985 notes persistent parental sensitivity to social class background in children's mate choices (Belanger and Khuat Thu Hong 1995). In addition, state employees in Belanger and Khuat Thu Hong's study also faced heightened pressure from persons outside of their family to marry a spouse with similar or higher status characteristics, often a worker in the same *'co quan,'* or government office. While arrangements may be less formal than in the past, parents continue to play a central role in the process and their attitudes perpetuate homogamous marital patterns. Thus, civil servants (i.e., cadres) are viewed as particularly well-off due to their privileged access to public services and other benefits, and because their position indicates a good family background.

For those who continue to live in the Delta upon reaching adulthood, the alternatives to agricultural employment are in quite limited supply and high demand. Operating a family business, laboring in manufacturing or skilled trades, and providing services to the local community are options that have become increasingly viable since market economic reforms were announced in the late 1980s. Small-scale entrepreneurial activity and blue-collar

professions are more prevalent in the small towns and cities of the Delta, and labor teams can be seen throughout the region, working in construction, mining, transportation and other fields. Young people (and their parents) who seek social mobility most often set their sights on government employment and “office” work in professional, managerial or clerical jobs, because other occupations demand long hours of work and offer little or no financial security. In addition, the status associated with working as a teacher or nurse, or even working in a skilled trade, is greater than that accorded to tradespersons, vendors and relatively unskilled laborers. While working as a merchant is often relatively lucrative, a stigma often remains attached to such work, as well as a reluctance to work very long hours and without financial security. That many young people are unable to secure employment outside of the family economy, even among those who have completed some form of occupational training or higher education, demonstrates that the demand for highly skilled labor is weaker than potential labor supply in the Delta region. Due to local employment structures and limited economic development many youth who obtain higher education either do not return to their home villages, or they end up working in positions inferior to their credentials and skills, such as returning to work as shopkeepers in family businesses. In a statement harkening back to the collective era, when the state bureaucracy was rather extensive, especially in urban areas, and stable positions in manufacturing and other state enterprise fields were relatively plentiful, this 55 year old woman commented on the difficulty of finding jobs in the current period:

“The government should give students jobs after they graduate. Many students can’t get a job even though they spent millions of Vietnamese Dong [on their education]. The government should help them to be employed after training them.”

As an example of this disparity in skills and aspirations, and demand for labor, several interviewees talked in ways that downgraded occupations in the informal sectors of trade and

services. Asked whether she or either of her sisters would like to take on their family's small electrical supplies shop, Ms. Tuyen, a woman in her early 20s from Ninh Binh town, replied:

"—No, my sisters and I all think that we must go to work in an occupation that is higher than selling.

--You all accept this even when your mother is able to save a lot of money?

--Yes, true, but this occupation is very difficult. On the whole, there are other occupations that are more leisurely, where there is more free time. If I go to work in an office then by the time I retire I will have a salary."

Nee and Cao (2001:24) reached similar conclusions about the relatively downgraded status of family entrepreneurship in urban China's postsocialist era, even where entrepreneurs have made significant economic gains. They comment that undertaking self-employment entails great economic risk, as well as long and irregular working hours, no employment benefits, and income that is only slightly above average. Even though civil servants' salaries may be small, there is a degree of security, social insurance, and potential for so-called "fringe benefits" associated with these jobs that continue to make them very appealing.

That professional and managerial positions, most often in government offices and enterprises, are the most highly sought after positions in the Red River Delta was a view frequently expressed in interviews. The reason commonly given was the promise of relatively high and stable incomes, as well as formal-sector employment benefits, such as retirement pensions and health insurance, that are completely unknown to the majority of informal sector workers. The comments of a 54-year old retired army captain from Ninh Binh, who currently lives in relative comfort and without economic strains, and whose work activity consists of performing odd jobs around the house, demonstrate the high regard that local residents hold toward government employment:

"The first, most convenient thing is that the couple [husband and wife] be workers or civil servants and have salaries, working for the government."

He continued to describe the rather comfortable living situation enjoyed by his family, imparted through his own salary and the generous salary his wife continues to earn as a civil servant. This relative ease and comfort suggests why government work is often perceived as the most desirable employment situation in the Delta. Mr. Tuong, another Ninh Binh town resident who lost his state job in a rice-husking factory when the company disbanded in the early 1990s and who now works privately, trading and delivering goods to local businesses, suggests that he would be unsatisfied if his children followed his work in the private, trading sector. His comments depict a sense of status consciousness, a sense that his own status has declined now that he works delivering and trading goods, rather than working within a government organization. He conveys the view that employment for a government organization, i.e., 'official work,' is still most prized in the local economy:

*--Do you want to let your children follow your job?
 --No. I will try to help them to avoid this job.
 --But it's OK if they can earn a lot of money from this, right?
 --No, I won't agree even in that case. I don't want them to do so. It can't be... Actually I myself don't like this job... It's just OK as an additional form of work. I hope that they will have a official job..."*

Similar observations on the negative valuation of agricultural occupations have been made in rural China during the market reform period in that country. Butler (1985:111) comments that peasants in Dahe province "continued to regard agriculture as a dead-end occupation...in Dahe, nonagricultural work usually earns fat cash bonuses unavailable to those who work in the fields...Rightly or wrongly, young peasants see the reforms in education as giving them a green light to study hard, enter schools outside the commune, and leave the village for a secure, state-paid job." In both China and Viet Nam, the rise of more lucrative off-farm employment, generating a greater degree of feminization in the agricultural labor force, both appear to diminish the status of agricultural work.

In addition to social class differences in educational and occupational opportunities, an extensive literature has elaborated upon women's economic roles and their involvement in diverse sectors of the economy (Chapter 3 provided a summary of this literature). In a recent exploration of gender and work activities, Ungar (2000: 293-295) refers to a process of 'de-feminization' that occurred during the war years in Viet Nam and the early era of socialist transformation, lasting until the early 1970s. During this period, Ungar observes that women became more centrally involved in political leadership and undertook more diverse activities in agricultural production, manufacturing and even the armed forces. In her historical analysis and ethnographic research with male and female veterans of the American war, Turner (1998:117) highlights women's participation in the army of northern Viet Nam, corroborating Ungar's perspective, and suggesting "that North Vietnam nearly became a gender-neutral field during the war." Personal accounts relayed to Turner by men and women engaged in the war demonstrate that:

"In the jungles, roadbuilders, engineers, liaison agents, and sappers could be men or women. In effect, they all played a supporting role, for they were caretakers who dedicated themselves to the road and the troops on their way to the battlefields and the visiting officers from the rear. Gender was not the criterion for distributing tasks, and the sources show that women were involved in every aspect of work (1998:124)."

The Viet Nam Women's Union pronounced during the height of socialist organization and production that, "no profession—worker, teacher, engineer, or physician—was closed to women." However, although women filled positions in a broader spectrum of economic activities during the war and collective period, they remained, and continue to remain, disproportionately in low-skill and low-prestige positions relative to men (Le Thi 1995). Women's participation in management positions and political bodies continues to be negligible (see, for example, Werner 1997), and where they have undertaken "men's roles" these are usually in agricultural tasks and

manual labor, rather than leadership and management positions in government, administration and professional realms.

The post-war, and especially post-socialist, era has seen a 're-feminization' of the labor force according to Ungar, with women moving back into their domestic duties and home-based production, in particular agricultural production, while men, both demobilized soldiers and former employees of disbanded state enterprises, have taken back certain positions in the productive, nonagricultural labor force. Certain women have held onto positions undertaken during the wartime years, continuing to perform certain agricultural tasks, such as ploughing and irrigation works, once viewed as the domain of men. Women are also more numerous than men in certain professional occupations that are deemed more 'feminine,' such as education and health care. Where the family economy is under strain and local opportunities are limited, similar to when families were disrupted through war and dislocation and women often were accountable for maintaining family economies, women have undertaken strenuous labor, and labor migration. Still, observers of northern Viet Nam in the *doi moi* period note that the opportunity for leaving agriculture is greater for men than for women. Vietnamese researchers offer several explanations for this pattern—men's greater independence from the family, the greater market demand for male labor, and men's greater 'ability' to adapt to changes in their social environment (Tran Thi Que 1995:196).

At this juncture, the processes of social stratification and occupational status attainment have not been systematically examined in Viet Nam, nor have empirical analyses been brought to bear on questions of family background, human capital and political capital as they influence acquisition of occupational status and prestige. In an investigation of rising income inequality in two provinces of coastal Northern Viet Nam (i.e., Nam Dinh and Quang Ninh provinces), Adger (1999:97) investigates the economic activities underlying rising inequality across villages. He

concludes that diversification into new, nonagricultural economic activities (such as aquaculture production), which raises the income of families with proximity to natural resources and families endowed with sufficient labor supply, is a central force exacerbating inequality across villages in the market reform period. While Adger's analyses highlight important, dynamic processes of diversification in local bases of production and income generation that underlie stratification across rural areas, his analyses do not address questions about which individuals within communities are capable of accessing opportunities and diversifying from agricultural employment into more lucrative fields. The current chapter examines individual outcomes, and at the same time incorporates family and community contexts as features that impose barriers and extend opportunities, and in turn, shape individual outcomes.

Another investigation conducted within nine communes of the Red River Delta during the late 1990s examined time allocation and demonstrated that women often perform the bulk of agricultural work and are beginning to undertake agricultural work formerly performed by men, such as the spraying of pesticides and moving of fertilizer and water to the fields (Le Thi Nham Tuyet 1996). Since the end of the collective period the demand for labor time is often very high for women, at times exceeding 14 hours per day during peak seasons, as they perform the long hours of traditionally female work, such as transplanting, but also often undertake labor that had been performed by male workers in the agricultural cooperatives. This report firmly establishes that a 'feminization' of agriculture is occurring in certain villages of the Red River Delta, where women are performing agricultural activities—such as operating irrigation pump stations and spraying pesticides—that had been performed by men:

“our findings show that the traditional division of labor is tending to change as women are often compelled to till the land and to prepare the soil as a result of male migration. This may

be regarded as a new feature in the gender-based labor division in agricultural production at present in Viet Nam's rural areas" (Le Thi Nham Tuyet 1996: 41).

Women's disproportionate participation in agricultural work relative to men has been widely observed in the Red River Delta (see, for example, Le Thi Nham Tuyet 1996). What remains to be addressed, however, is whether women who have obtained higher levels of educational attainment and whose parents possess high status positions and political capital experience occupational status benefits similar to those of men, particularly in their propensity to exit the agricultural labor force. The current research investigates these questions so as to enrich perspectives on the nature of gender stratification in Viet Nam.

The Relationship between Educational Attainment and Occupational Status in Viet Nam

Since education is seen as pivotal to occupational outcomes, I provide an introduction to educational attainment patterns in contemporary Viet Nam. Over most of the 20th century a sizable gender gap in educational attainment prevailed. However, policies enacted during the socialist period reduced this gap, which has nearly closed in the recent period. Socioeconomic differentials in educational attainment have persisted through the collective and into the market reform periods; parents' wealth and human capital exert powerful influence on children's relative access to the educational system, in particular their completion of upper secondary and tertiary education (Truong et al. 1998). While primary education is practically universal throughout the Delta, only a select group of adolescents is able to achieve the educational credentials (i.e., either a University or technical/vocational college degree) needed to fulfill certain professional positions. Based upon their analysis of young people ages 10 to 24, using data from the 1994 Viet Nam Inter-censal Demographic Survey, Truong et al. (1998) find that parental background, specifically parental education and household wealth, have a powerful impact on children's

educational attainment, specifically completion of upper secondary school. Furthermore, school enrollment patterns during the recent period of economic transition demonstrate that access to schooling is especially limited for children living in rural areas and in large families. School enrollment rates for children ages 6 to 15 declined sharply between 1981 and 1987 (i.e., the period marking the onset of the market reform policies) (Le Thi 1995). This pattern suggests that schooling may be an important site of rising inequality in economic status as children from poor families enter labor activities to contribute to the household economy, rather than attend school (Marr, 1991). Dollar et al. suggest (1998: 23) that the perceived low returns to basic education among poor and rural families, accompanied by rising costs, operate as disincentives to enrollment:

“When returns to education are low, households begin to remove their children from school. For example, many rural households took their children out of lower secondary school when the market reforms began.”

Although the historical gender gap in education is gradually closing, certain Vietnamese scholars suggest that the imposition of fees for secondary-level schooling underlies a rise in school drop-out among young women that has occurred in particular rural areas during the *doi moi* era. During the present period in Viet Nam many education costs through the secondary level are absorbed by the state, yet schooling is not free and at all levels families must pay substantial school-related fees that are prohibitive to very poor families. Analyzing data from the 1992-93 Vietnam Living Standards Survey, Glewwe and Patrinos (1999) show that the average school expenditures for a primary school student was about 83.4 thousand VND per year, a substantial sum for poor families, especially those with several children. Knodel and Jones (1996:496) also suggest that in the recent period incidental costs of schooling, those absorbed by families, have increased to an extent that may ‘weigh heavily on a poor family,’ thereby explaining steep socioeconomic gradients in school enrollment emerging at each school-level

transition. Knodel and Jones' research confirms that children's education levels are associated with two measures of socioeconomic status—parental wealth and parental education.

Educational policy reforms implemented in the late 1980s made allowances for private schooling, the hiring of tutors to improve learning and “the establishment of nonformal education and self-instruction activities,” thereby vastly increasing the amount of resources that families might allocate to their children's education, and potentially widening the gulf in access to the educational system across socioeconomic groups (Glewwe and Patrinos 1999:888). Large and increasing household expenditures allocated to children's education are likely predicated upon an assumption that higher levels of education are central to the process of occupational attainment and social mobility. However, there has been little systematic research demonstrating a clear link between the occupational attainment ‘rewards’ to upper secondary and higher education.

Furthermore, it is unclear whether the relationship between parental socioeconomic status and educational attainment is a recent phenomenon, associated with market reform initiatives, or whether status inheritance is a long-established pattern in Vietnamese society that also characterized the collective period. Although the current study focuses largely upon men and women who have completed their educational careers prior to education reforms associated with *doi moi*, it provides a unique opportunity for understanding the extent to which relationships between social class origin, educational attainment and occupational attainment are long-established and whether they precede market reforms.

8.3 Literature Review: Occupational Attainment and Stratification in Developing and Market Transition Societies

One point of departure for thinking about occupational status in Viet Nam exists in the status attainment research initiated by American social scientists during the 1960s and 1970s. While their research initially only addressed men's achievement of status positions in American

society, it recognized the inter-societal diversity of stratification processes and opened a field of comparative, cross-national inquiry. Duncan et al. (1972:2) spoke of processes of stratification leading to institutionalized inequality that occur across all 'known complex societies.' Early research in this field demonstrated that social origins and family background, captured by parents' education and occupational status, exert both a direct effect on children's educational attainment, and an indirect effect, with the influence of parental status being mediated through children's educational attainment (Blau and Duncan 1967; Duncan et al. 1972). The models that underlie classical status attainment research in the U.S. have been adapted to international, comparative analyses that address intergenerational processes of stratification in numerous industrializing and less developed countries. The current analyses examine whether factors influencing occupational status outcomes in Viet Nam are similar to those observed in other less developed countries, or whether the pathway of Vietnamese socialism, and its official emphasis on minimizing gender and social class divisions, is reflected in occupational status outcomes. Certain theories and empirical research on post-socialist societies (see, for example, Parish and Michelson 1996; Bian and Logan 1996; Walder 1995, 1996) suggest that advantages in income and occupational status often accrue to those persons possessing connections, especially kinship ties, to persons with influential positions in governmental and party organizations. Thus, this chapter aims to delineate the extent to which meritocratic processes, intergenerational status transmission, and nepotistic practices and those resembling cronyism influence occupational status outcomes in the Red River Delta.

Internationalizing the Study of Status Attainment: Application and Adaptation of Status Attainment Models in Less Developed Countries

Comparative status attainment research has attempted to assess the theoretical and empirical robustness of original status attainment models by applying them in ways that are

sensitive to macro-level conditions, such as demand for labor and the nature of work organizations, to societies experiencing industrialization and economic transition. The accumulated research on stratification in developing countries, which diverge in terms of their occupational and class structures, levels of development, and other structural variables, has imparted theoretical leverage and refinement for understanding processes of socioeconomic stratification (Buchman and Hannum 2001). Conclusions drawn from this body of cross-national and comparative research suggest that the determinants of occupational attainment are complex and variable due to the unique social structural, historical and economic conditions prevailing within specific countries. The unique social and economic conditions that characterize Viet Nam, specifically its less developed country status and legacy of socialism, make it a useful case for understanding stratification in a country undergoing both economic development and transition to a market economy.

Research on status attainment and intergenerational mobility in industrialized countries has been extended to diverse geographic regions. However, investigations of such processes in less developed regions are described as “sparse and disjointed” (Buchman and Hannum 2001). In an early application of occupational attainment research in a less developed country, Hansen and Haller (1973) replicated the so-called Wisconsin model of status attainment among men in Costa Rica. Not surprisingly, their findings diverged from the earlier studies. Specifically, although educational attainment exerted a positive influence on occupational attainment, there was not a strong association between family background and educational attainment among Costa Rican males. Another early, comparative effort in South America revealed that occupational mobility among Chilean youth was dependent on class status, with intergenerational status inheritance more likely among upper class and very poor families (Farrell and Schiefelbein 1985). In another example from South America, Kelly et al. (1981: 55) observed that in Bolivia, one of the world’s

poorest and highly stratified societies, status inheritance (both in terms of education and occupational status) across generations is stronger than it is in the United States. The strength of status inheritance differed across areas within Bolivia, with status inheritance being especially strong in the advanced agrarian and pre-industrial towns relative to the more traditional villages. These findings, demonstrating that status inheritance processes may vary in part due to differing levels of economic development or industrialization across areas, point to the importance of analyses that disaggregate respondents by their geographic location or local labor market conditions.

The 1970s and 1980s also witnessed numerous empirical investigations concerning the influence of industrialization upon status attainment and intergenerational occupational mobility (Lipset and Bendix 1959; Treiman 1970; Kelley and Perlman 1971; Holsinger 1975; Lin and Yeager 1975; Bills and Haller 1984; Mukweso et al. 1984). With findings often contrary to the original industrialism thesis posed by Lipset and Bendix (1959) and others, research in countries such as Brazil found that the influence of parental status upon children's education did not decline as levels of economic development increased within that country (Holsinger 1975; Bills and Haller 1984). Other investigations of status attainment processes within other countries, such as Zaire, also tended to contradict the industrialism thesis, demonstrating that educational attainment did not become increasingly important for occupational attainment as the national economy developed; often class background remained an important determining factor (Mukweso et al. 1984). Cross-national investigations of the industrialism thesis, for example Lin and Yeager's comparison of Haiti, Costa Rica, the United States and Great Britain (1975), suggest that only where industrialization is significantly advanced does the effect of father's occupational status upon son's occupational status decline relative to the effect of the son's own educational attainment upon his occupational status. Nonetheless, the significant, positive association

between parental occupational status and that of children persists over time to the present period in many advanced industrialized societies, including the United States.

Overall, existing research suggests that within developing countries, even those where the pace of industrialization has accelerated, family status and class background often exert a strong influence upon children's occupational outcomes. Contradicting the industrialism thesis, the direct and indirect influence of parents' socioeconomic status has often remained a predominant factor determining children's occupational outcomes. Viet Nam will provide an interesting case for inclusion in comparative stratification research, and research concerning economic organization and stratification within the country, because it allows us to assess whether parental background factors continued to exert an impact upon children's educational and occupational outcomes during and subsequent to the socialist, redistributive organization of the economy. Comparative research on social mobility has demonstrated that there are important cross-national and temporal differences in intergenerational, occupational mobility processes (Ganzeboom, et al. 1989). A guiding question here is whether the frequent observation that social origins and class background are influential to occupational attainment will hold just as well in Viet Nam, given the equal opportunity principles embodied in socialist ideology and government policies, and the emergence of new market economic opportunities.

Political Capital in Societies Undergoing Market Transition

Recently, theoretical perspectives for studying social mobility and status attainment have expanded considerations of context-specific and culturally specific measures of social influence and prestige. The unique socioeconomic circumstances and economic power dynamics prevailing in societies such as China and nations of the former Soviet bloc as they transition from redistributive, centrally-planned economies to economies guided by market principles, have generated a new, highly debated inquiry into the role of 'political capital' in the process of

occupational status attainment. Although socialist production schemes were intended (at least in theory) to minimize socioeconomic differences across families originating from different social class backgrounds, many have commented on the marked status positions and economic rewards accessible to urban, state sector workers versus rural and cooperative workers in the reform period. In Viet Nam as in other state socialist countries, state employees had, and continue to have, unique access to a benefits system that was denied to rural and non-state employees (Pham Van Bich 1999). Walder's (1996) depiction of the Chinese 'communist neo-traditionalism' model represents an ideology that may similarly pervade Vietnamese social relations. He states that under this model, "political loyalty is rewarded systematically with career opportunities, special distributions, and other favours that officials in communist societies are uniquely able to dispense." Because the system of communist party political authority has remained in Viet Nam, and state sector employment in local People's Committees and in the remaining state enterprises continues to bestow prestige and employment benefits, communist party membership and other statuses denoting political affiliation and loyalty most likely continue to bestow labor market benefits during the market transition period.

This contested theoretical framework highlights the importance of possessing political capital, a status that is often represented through Communist Party membership or 'cadre' status (i.e., working as a governmental administrator, political leader or other type of civil servant). Such statuses indicate high-prestige social positions formerly associated with redistributive power and resource access in the centrally-planned economy. During the slow transition to market economy, where state enterprises and local governmental administration remain attractive career opportunities, positions in the government bureaucracy continue to bear political and economic advantages to elite groups. Furthermore, the policies governing membership in the Communist Party and delineating access to cadre positions in local administrative bodies are restrictive and

they aim to ensure an elite membership by imposing indoctrination measures and limitations upon social relationships. For example, Pham Van Bich (1999:50) recounts several incidents of cadres being removed from their positions for marrying women with questionable social backgrounds.

The market transition perspective, articulated primarily by Nee and colleagues (Nee 1989, 1991, 1996; Cao and Nee 2000) purports that political capital will become less important in status attainment and socioeconomic stratification as the market mechanism advances and the power positions associated with the redistributive mechanism decline in post-socialist societies. At the same time, human capital factors, such as educational attainment and work experience, will become increasingly influential in determining income, occupational prestige and other elements of socioeconomic status (Nee 1989; 1991). However, several sociologists (Bian and Logan 1996; Parish and Michelson 1996; Walder 1996; Zhou 2000) have challenged this view of transformation in the stratification order, emphasizing continuity, if not exacerbation, of inequalities in the stratification order that favor political elites and bureaucrats who held power during the collective, socialist period. Thus, they observe that the significance of political capital carries over to new, market-oriented regimes.

In the most recent works on market transition theory there has been a step away from binary debates (see, for example, Nee and Cao 2001:5), as authors have recognized that most transitional economies are 'hybrid social orders' in which the structures of social inequality from the socialist period have yet to be dismantled and institutional path dependence slows change toward a new stratification order. In considering the transfer of status through employment and occupational attainment, Nee and Cao (2001:7) speak to the importance of social networks in maintaining configurations of social status:

"In local stratification orders, the interests and group identity embedded in elite networks combine to reproduce established patterns of social inequality even in the context of rapid structural change in the coordination mechanism of the economy."

The large and growing body of research concerning socioeconomic stratification in post-socialist China continues to be characterized by mixed, often contradictory results and thus continues to generate more elaborate empirical tests and theoretical modification. In his research on the continuing influence of cadre status on socioeconomic outcomes (1991), Nee finds that cadre status is significantly and positively associated with income levels in rural Fujian. This association, he suggests, is due largely to cadres' relatively high education levels, and thus offers support for the market transition perspective and the position that inequalities based upon status in the redistributive economy gradually disappear as societies transition toward market economies. By utilizing multi-level modeling and incorporating the spatially heterogeneous economies that exist across regions of China, Xie and Hannum (1996) extend research on stratification in post-reform China to a level of greater analytic detail. Adding a spatial dimension by integrating city-level variation in the pace of economic development, they observe that the earnings returns to educational attainment and work experience are negatively associated with economic growth, while the effect of party membership upon earnings does not vary systematically across cities. Cautiously interpreting their findings as contradictory to market transition theory, Xie and Hannum (1996: 979) suggest that the absence of a true labor market in present-day urban China and the continuing institutional salience of work units, operating as vestiges of the old socialist order, may account for the limited earnings returns to human capital and the continued 'party premium' or positional power associated with Communist Party membership. Overall Xie and Hannum's analysis suggests, in line with the notion of institutional path dependence, that in the post-reform period there are new manifestations of positional power resulting from social ties and social status linked to the former economic system.

While most research on post-socialist societies has focused on income stratification, a few studies have addressed employment and occupational status as channels for either continuity

or discontinuity in the post-socialist stratification order. Many scholars have pointed out that the benefits associated with positional power are not entirely monetary, but may include fringe benefits such as housing, and “the ability to confer or seek favors” (Xie and Hannum 1996: 979). Because myriad processes are at work when functioning markets gradually arise out of existing institutional arrangements of redistribution, sociologists studying the transition have theorized that obtaining one’s position in the market system:

“depends on access to opportunities and resources, which, in the Chinese context, is significantly affected by the existing institutional arrangements of redistribution. Those with positional power have advantages in access to both resources and the market-induced opportunities, relative to other social groups” (Zhou 2000: 1143).

Where the state remains involved in processes allocating individuals to employment positions as is common in more formalized sectors of many post-Socialist societies, and where the development of labor markets remains limited, some scholars have reasoned that “so long as political authorities play a significant role in bureaucratic recruitment and promotions, persistent and significant returns to political status are logically plausible” (Zhou 2000: 1144). As such, cadre status (both in the former socialist order and the current system) may serve as a very influential element of parental status by enhancing access to desirable employment positions among children (and perhaps other relatives). Among the few studies addressing employment outcomes in China is Parish and Michelson’s (1996) re-analysis of Nee’s earlier rural China studies, in which they observe that the presence of an administrator in the household brings labor market advantages to other household members. Specifically, they find that across diverse regions of rural China having a local leader in one’s family creates a “household advantage” through an array of administrative ties, and increases the likelihood (relative to persons not related to administrators) that a family member is able to work in more desirable, non-farm employment. Thusly, Parish and Michelson arrive at the conclusion that through the remains of

the old political order, government officials and their families “drift towards the best jobs available in their region (p. 1053).”

Nee and Cao also extend their empirical investigations to the question of occupational attainment. Using data from the China Household Income Project (CHIP)¹³, they conduct a multinomial regression analysis of men and women living in urban China in order to assess whether Communist Party membership is more or less influential in obtaining positions in certain sectors of the economy. Their analyses demonstrate that occupational attainment is an increasingly important predictor of wealth in urban China, and income inequality across occupational groups increased significantly between 1990 and 1995. They found that administrators, cadres and managers have registered marked income gains during this period, while manual laborers experienced a marked decline in their income levels. Using Communist Party membership as an indicator of political credentials and involvement in a ‘closed but extensive network which monopolizes political power’ a central finding of Nee and Cao’s analysis (2001:24) is that CCP membership remains a key determinant of occupational attainment in urban China, significantly increasing the likelihood of entering nearly every type of administrative or cadre position. This, they assert, demonstrates the “significance of membership in the party as a network conferring strategic connections and legitimacy for career advancement in formal employment settings in urban China.” Further interpreting these results, Nee and Cao comment (2001:20):

“As the Communist Party’s promise of an egalitarian utopia continues to fade, landing on the right career track becomes increasingly crucial for the Chinese urbanites.”

¹³ This data set, and Nee and Cao’s analytical sample, includes a disproportionate number of individuals employed in the state sector, whereas those in the semi-private and self-employment sectors are underrepresented relative to their actual population numbers. Thus, their results should be interpreted cautiously.

By including parental political status characteristics in a model of occupational attainment, I hope to extend the reasoning of market transition theoretical explanations to the study of intergenerational social mobility and status attainment in the Vietnamese context. As Gerber and Hout noted in their application of the market transition to Russia (1998:2): “Outside of China market transitions have varied in their pace, strategy, results, and political context...generalizing from China’s experience carries some intellectual risks.” This caveat is well-taken, and the analyses presented here are, rather than a definitive ‘test of market transition theory,’ an adaptation of its conceptual framework used to examine changes in the stratification order of a market transition society that has thus far been absent from the ongoing scholarly exchange. I take the position that the framework is particularly suitable for understanding the Viet Nam case at this point in time because, as Nee and Cao have asserted, “in the early phases of the transition when labor markets have yet to develop and the emerging private economy still faces various bureaucratic barriers” the returns to political capital may even increase relative to the rewards of entrepreneurship and human capital. At the present time, Viet Nam is still on the cusp of economic reform. The questions of market transition versus power conversion are also fruitful for understanding stratification in a society such as Viet Nam, where access to prestigious, financially rewarding and stable occupational positions is very restricted and thus the children of politically powerful persons are likely to be beneficiaries of preferential access to desirable occupational positions. Attainment of these occupations is particularly valuable in Viet Nam because most workers have low productivity, informal sector jobs—either self-employment or wage employment in the private sector—that offer limited financial returns.

Marr (1995) has made the point that Communist Party members in Viet Nam, particularly individuals who have been displaced from positions of power in the dismantled state-operated enterprises, are well positioned within the new private market economic system. He notes that

party members, once in charge of running state-directed cooperatives, have become some of the most active economic actors, setting up shops, small companies, and rural industries. Given that the Communist Party continues exercise political influence, it is likely that Communist Party affiliation will serve as a form positional power, potentially bestowing upon the children of Party members preferential access to high status positions.

Gender and Status Attainment in Developing Countries

Gender stratification theorists maintain that relative to men, women's access to new economic resources that become available through the processes of economic development is often restricted. Simultaneously, women's traditional sources of economic subsistence often are threatened or de-emphasized due to shifts in economic organization such as the mechanization of agriculture and movement toward export processing (Boserup 1970; Ward 1983; Williamson and Boehmer 1997). Women's greater concentration in family agriculture and home-based production is viewed as suitable for women due to its proximity to the home and the potential it offers for interspersing domestic chores with market-related activities. As more "modern" forms of employment, those that are characteristic of more developed, advanced capitalist economies, emerge through the course of development, women are often restricted to the types of jobs that have always been convenient or compatible with their family roles, i.e., jobs within the household sector that can be combined with domestic production and childcare. That is, women are more restricted to jobs whose value is cheapened in more modern, commoditized economies. Beginning with Boserup's elaboration of the feminization of agriculture (1970), and continuing with recent research on market reform era China, we see that men are usually privileged, relative to women, in accessing new and more remunerative work opportunities that appear during the early stages of economic development, industrialization and market transition. Thusly, a new gender division of labor tends to emerge, and women lose status relative to men during the early

stages of economic development (Ward 1983; Tinker et al. 1976). One manifestation of this process is that agricultural work becomes increasingly feminized, and a gulf widens between men and women in their realms of economic participation.

Culturally-specific explanations for gender stratification in labor market patterns have also been offered in analyses of Asian countries and suggest that certain countries with patriarchal value systems either severely limit women's labor force participation or erect barriers to women's participation in better-paying, secure, and high prestige jobs (Brinton et al. 1995; Papanek 1990). Conversely, Viet Nam scholars (see, for example, Ungar 200; White 1989) maintain that traditional, patriarchal ideologies do not so much limit and curtail women's economic participation, as heighten the burden of their workloads by maintaining a notion of separate spheres for men and women, in which women do all forms of domestic work and simultaneously must make sacrifices for family welfare by working long hours in market-oriented production. Recognizing that Vietnamese women are responsible for the overwhelming majority of childcare, food preparation, housekeeping and other domestic tasks, I take into account these roles and familial obligations, and I question whether these domestic obligations pose limits to women's ability to achieve positions of high occupational status.

Several inquiries in developing, post-Socialist societies have examined gender stratification patterns in societies that have used collectivized labor and production in the recent past and have upheld gender equity in economic participation as a primary social value. For example, analyses of household allocation of labor in rural China during the 1990s demonstrates that women are more likely than men to labor exclusively in agricultural work, while men are much more likely than women to have obtained work in household businesses of the emerging private sector (Entwisle et al. 1995). As Michelson and Parish (2000: 145) noted in their analysis of men's and women's sectoral employment in rural China during the early 1990s, men are first

in the “queue” for nonfarm employment, followed by single women, and finally married women: “That is, it appears that a critical mass of nonfarm employment is necessary before women get pulled off the farm in significant numbers.” Considering the application of these findings to the Viet Nam setting, we may expect that, despite Viet Nam’s official pronouncements supporting gender equity in labor force participation, we will observe rising gender stratification over time, specifically a greater concentration of women in agriculture, as men disproportionately exit this traditional sector to take on work in emerging employment positions. A rising incidence of labor migration emanating from rural provinces of the Red River Delta since the initiation of market reforms, which has contributed to a predominantly male displacement of labor, is also likely to heighten the concentration of women in agricultural employment (Li 1996).

8.4 Statement of Hypotheses and Research Methods

Synthesizing the theoretical insights and empirical findings presented in previous research on status attainment in developing and market transition societies, and incorporating this perspective with knowledge economic conditions prevailing in the Red River Delta, I arrive at the following hypotheses regarding occupational attainment:

- 1) Despite several decades of socialist economic organization, having as a stated goal the realignment of production relations to minimize class-based and gender-based social and economic inequalities, I posit that occupational attainment processes in the Red River Delta are marked by status inheritance across generations. Specifically, I expect that that the children of relatively well-off parents are more likely to obtain high status occupations. While the infrastructure of socialist economic organization has weakened over time, the derivative positional power held by persons with influential positions in government and party politics, I assert, remains influential in accessing resources and obtaining employment. As such, the status and position of one’s parents will serve as an

important asset in the occupational attainment process. *Thus, persons whose parents occupy(ied) privileged social positions, as evidenced by their high levels of education and prestigious occupational positions, will be more likely than others to work in positions of high occupational status (i.e., non-agricultural occupations, especially professional, managerial, and clerical work; as well as in government offices and enterprises).*

- 2) *Inheritance of occupational status across generations is transmitted largely through educational attainment.* Insufficient economic and social capital resources, and the preference for young adults in poorer families to contribute labor to the household economy preclude participation in secondary and higher education for certain youth. As a result, higher educational attainment is limited largely to the children of high status parents. Since market reforms were initiated a greater proportion of schooling costs have been passed on to families and pursuing higher education often demands expenditures that are excessive relative to family incomes (see, for example, Glewwe and Patrinos 1999). Wealthier families are better positioned to fund these educational expenditures. As a result, I posit that *persons possessing greater amounts of human capital, in the form of formal schooling, will be more likely to attain high status occupational positions, and that educational attainment will be positively associated with parental socioeconomic status.*
- 3) In addition to the indirect effects that operate through educational attainment, there will at times be a more direct route of influence between family background and children's occupational attainment. The abundance of labor supply in the Red River Delta, and the absence of a formal labor market for professional positions and importance of family-based entrepreneurial activity in the local economy create a context wherein social

network ties are important for securing employment outside of the traditional, agricultural sector. *As such, individuals who have (had) a parent working in the government sector will be more likely to obtain relatively high-status positions themselves, independent of their educational attainment. Regardless of formal qualifications, as a result of informal channels of communication and fulfillment of favors, the children of government workers will have preferential access and a greater ability to secure work in this sector.*

- 4) Political capital, or positional power, operates as an extension of parents' socioeconomic status, and will be transferred from parent to child. Analogous to patterns consistently found in post-socialist China, *I predict that individuals will experience advantages in obtaining high status employment if they have a parent who has membership in the Communist Party.*

Dependent Variables: Measuring Occupational Status and Occupational Prestige

Duncan et al. (1972: 3) point out that in analyses of stratification, researchers are “interested in jobs and occupations primarily as labels or indicators of social status...[that are] somewhat uniformly evaluated by most members of the society.” Traditionally, membership in one of four hierarchically-ordered classes, that of scholar, peasant, artisan or merchant—determined one's relative position and prestige in Vietnamese society. Scholars constituted an intellectual elite who lived lives of comfort, insulated from physically demanding labor. Merchants most often had the lowest status in the society as their work was regarded as somewhat suspicious and less than honorable compared to the labor of earnest, hardworking peasants. As in other Southeast Asian societies, the status of peasant farmer was often imbued with an heir of honor due to the strenuous labor and complex agricultural techniques associated with the work, and given that village prosperity was reflected in the bounty of the village harvest (Chandler et al.

1987). Agricultural work was evaluated more positively than the work of merchants and market traders. As Jamieson points out (1993:34), the low status of market trader most likely derived from the petty nature of exchange in village markets, and the members of the profession,

“those engaged in commerce earned low levels of status, and the occupation of market trader was reserved for women and foreigners. Most trade was petty, transactions small scale, and profits miniscule” (Jamieson 1993:34).

In advocating the socialist model, cadres in the collective period tended to denigrate merchants and market activity. Although novelist Duong Thu Huong’s writings (1988), noted for pointed criticism of corruption among government officials, may tend toward negative portrayals of stock characters, her depiction of a communist officials’ regard for peasants and market traders is likely to reflect the mood of the collectivist era:

“in our society,” he comments, “there are only two respectable types of people: the proletariat...and the peasantry...The rest is nothing. The merchants, the petty trades-people, they’re only exploiters.” (p. 50).

While some vestiges of the positive, respectful evaluation of the agriculturalist may remain, it is clear from the objective living conditions and interviewees’ subjective viewpoints, as well national survey data on incidence of poverty across occupational groups, that farmers in the Red River Delta often live in relative poverty and face the most insecure economic conditions (Le Thi Nham Tuyet 1996). As a result they often seek, for themselves and for their families, a means to escape a livelihood founded solely upon agricultural income. The transformation to a market economy does seem to have lessened the tendency to evaluate the work of merchants and traders as lowly, undesirable work, especially because the risk of loss is substantial and the long hours operating a shop or market stall are perceived to be demanding compared to the relative stability and ease of working for the government.

While the bases for evaluating occupations are most likely shifting with the expansion of market activity and non-farm production in northern Viet Nam, there are insights to be gained

through the application of more detailed, empirically-tested, and robust indices of occupational status that have been adopted in internationally comparative research, such as the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale, to the Vietnamese case (Ganzeboom and Treiman, 1996:202). Still, given substantial variations in social structure and levels of economic development across societies, it is not uncommon to encounter difficulties, and exceptions to the rule, in applying the classification scheme to all occupations in a particular national context. Treiman (1977: 151, 178) notes that the prestige of farming varies according to the size of the farmer's estate and the form of land ownership prevailing in a given society, thus arriving at a prestige designation for farmers and other agricultural workers has been particularly challenging. Assessing the degree of fit between the classification and given occupational structures, he notes that the generic, international prestige hierarchy deviates most strongly when compared to structures in the least economically developed places.

Despite challenges posed by the unique history and development stage of the Red River Delta context, I proceed with an application of Treiman's Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale, first delineated in his 1977 comparative research. I accomplish this by translating 3-digit ISCO codes for each respondent's description of their primary economic activity into an international occupational prestige score. Each job description has been designated with a 3-digit ISCO code, based upon the 1968 International Labour Organization revised classification.

In addition to the hierarchical classification of occupations that I obtain through the ISCO to prestige score translation, I also construct a five-category classification for occupations. Also based upon the ISCO classification of jobs, respondents' occupational status is categorized according to whether primary employment is in one of the following five categories: 1) professional, managerial, clerical; 2) sales and services; 3) handicrafts, textiles and small

manufacturing; 4) transport, construction, other manual labor; and, 5) agriculture and fishing. This categorization scheme provides a meaningful, activity-based disaggregation of workers, and allows a straightforward comparison of professional and managerial workers (i.e., those of relatively high status) with agriculturalists (i.e., those of relative low status). Difficulties of interpretation do arise because certain occupational sectors feature significant heterogeneity across occupations within the category. For example the category of “sales and services” may include the owners of small, successful enterprises as well as sellers and traders of small goods in the market, street-side barbers, and even local police officers. “Handicrafts, textiles and small manufacturing,” may include salaried textile-factory workers as well as home-based makers of hats, weavings and other handicrafts who work long hours and are paid a very low piece-rate. While certain of the categories encompass a substantial diversity of occupations, they do segment the labor force according to the nature of work activities and their function in the economy and society. Previous research in less developed countries has also used broad economic sector categories to characterize occupational activities, such as agriculture, services, and industry (Williamson and Boehmer 1997); administrative, managerial, white collar, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled (Iutaka and Bock 1972); agriculture labour, urban labour, middle class and upper class (Farrell and Schiefelbein 1985); and, higher grade professionals, lower non-manuals, owners, skilled workers, unskilled workers, and farmers (Domanski 1999).

By elaborating on several of the major occupational ‘titles’ or descriptions that fall into each of the five occupational categories, a clearer picture of the types of work that fall into each occupational category emerges. Agricultural work is performed by more than 60% of employed persons in the sample; the vast majority of these describe their work as “tilling the land,” followed by raising livestock (e.g., pigs, chicken), gardening (horticulture), fishing, and miscellaneous other tasks. In the professional/technical and managerial occupations, the most

prevalent job titles are those of physician, nurse, teacher, and '*can bo*' which is often translated as 'cadre,' or used to denote an administrative official or high ranking employee in a State organization). In the VLS sample, workers in sales and services are often engaged in trading and selling prepared food and produce in the market, as well as selling merchandise ranging from cosmetics, motorbikes and traditional medicine. Work performed in the 'handicraft, food, and textiles' category often encompasses employment in textile factories, as well as small-scale home-based production of noodles, conical hats, and clothing. The manual labor category consists largely of laborers in construction and manual workers such as porters and road builders, repairers, machine operators, and drivers of various vehicles such as pedicabs and motorbikes.

My approach to assigning prestige scores to occupations closely follows the approach used by Treiman and his colleagues (1996; 1989; 1977). Specifically, I assign occupational prestige scores, corresponding to ISCO classifications, for each respondent's primary job description. However, as Treiman notes (1977:48) in discussing the conceptualization of the occupational prestige construct and its internationally-comparative nature, difficulties arise at times in matching occupational titles across countries due to literal translation and the diversity of tasks both within and across specific job titles. In my own research, Vietnamese researchers translated each verbatim job descriptions into English and then consulted the 1968 ISCO classification and assigned a 3-digit code to the job description. The classification of several job titles was questionable, largely due to ambiguity in the description. Furthermore, because agricultural workers constitute greater than 50% of the workforce, it was important to arrive at an appropriate ISCO classification, and thus occupational prestige classification, for this large group of workers. Depending on whether agriculturalists are categorized in the category of general farmers, unpaid family farm workers, or general farm workers, their occupational prestige score varies from 40 points, to 34 points, to 22 points, respectively. I adopt the final category, which

places agricultural workers, the bulk of the Red River Delta labor force, at the lower end of the occupational prestige spectrum. While this recoding may slightly contradict the traditional status accorded to farmers in Vietnamese society, I use this measure because it correlates most closely with the relatively low socioeconomic status (measured as educational attainment and household income) of agricultural workers compared to workers in other lines of activity.¹⁴

In addition, a significant number of persons working in sales and trading originally coded in the unit group of 'working proprietors' in Treiman's prestige classification have been recoded to the category of 'shopkeeper.' I chose this classification since the majority of traders operate small shops from their homes and do not employ other workers. Another important measurement issue is that workers who did not provide a clear designation of the content, specific location or organization of their employment were coded, not in the 'not elsewhere classified' category, but were designated with the prestige score for the more general minor occupational group. For example, teachers who did not specify whether they taught primary, secondary or another level were classified with an occupational prestige rating appropriate to the general group of teachers. Table A8.1 in the appendix shows the distribution of workers according to their ISCO and occupational prestige scores. It also shows the ISCO occupation title and the Vietnamese-language and English translation job description for the most prevalent job description title that appeared for each 3-digit ISCO code.

A further note about designating occupational status concerns the issue of multiple jobholding. Results presented in Chapter 6 demonstrate that many VLS respondents (approximately 18% of those currently employed) work in two (or more) jobs that fall into

¹⁴ A note on the sensitivity of OLS regression results based on the choice of occupational prestige measures: the OLS regression coefficients are in the same direction and reflect similar levels of statistical significance if I code agricultural workers with a prestige score of 34 (compared to the score of 22 used in the analysis). A sensitivity analysis for the various hierarchical rankings of occupational prestige is shown in Appendix A6.3.

different occupational categories. For example, it is not uncommon for a young woman who works primarily in agriculture to spend part of her days sewing handicrafts, or to work as hired manual labor during the off-peak season. In the present analysis, because workers are categorized solely upon their primary economic activity, this woman would be categorized as an agricultural worker. While tending to oversimplify a complex reality of combining jobs to piece together a package of economic activity, the classification based upon primary activity captures the activity to which respondents devote most of their time. Furthermore, respondents were allowed to self-identify their primary activity, so this designation most likely represents the line of activity with which they identify and which defines their social position.

ANALYTICAL SAMPLE

Defining the working population or labor force, especially where redundant labor and unemployment is widespread, has important implications in the study of occupational stratification and social mobility processes. In rural areas of Viet Nam, and places characterized by underemployment in general, a sizable proportion of the working-age population may not be working at any given point in time, however they may participate sporadically in the labor force when opportunities are present. I have decided to designate workers' occupations based upon their current primary job (the job they worked at the week prior to the survey). Respondents who are not currently employed in some form of economic activity are excluded from the analyses. While choosing to operationalize the working population in this way may overlook many temporarily unemployed workers, substituting occupational and employment sector information from respondents' previous job(s) as a proxy for their current job may generate numerous errors and biases. This designation of workers also includes those respondents who first designated a non-working status, but when prompted, reported that they did perform unpaid work in a family business or farm. The analytical sample in this chapter thus consists of 3,678 persons, between

ages 15 and 65, who reported working as their primary activity in the week preceding the survey. A slight majority of the respondents in the analytical sample are women (1,962 women, versus 1,716 men). Data presented in Table 1 shows the distribution of male and female workers across the 5 occupational categories delineated above. Table 1 and Figure 1 also display the distribution of workers across two measures of socioeconomic status—mean years of education and per capita household income (because household income is difficult to disaggregate to individual earners, the former measure only measures household income based upon the head of household's occupation).

The distribution of workers across occupational categories reveals important dimensions of occupation and socioeconomic status in the Red River Delta, as revealed in Table 8.1 and Figure 8.1. First, we see that professional, technical and clerical workers constitute a small fraction of the labor force (approximately 6% of all workers currently employed), and their educational levels and household income are markedly higher than all other occupational categories. The contrast in educational and income levels is especially stark for this group of professional, managerial and clerical workers when compared to agricultural workers, who make up more than 60% of the Red River Delta's workforce. On average, professional, managerial and clerical workers have 10.8 years of education—3 years more than agricultural workers, who attain just 7.3 years of education on average. This status differential also appears in per capita household income figures, which demonstrate that households headed by professional, technical and clerical workers have the highest levels of per capita annual household income, averaging 2.7 million Vietnamese dong per person (approximately 250 USD), which is double the income level of households headed by agriculturalists, who report an annual income of 1.4 million Vietnamese dong per person.¹⁵ These income figures are based upon reported household cash income; in-kind

¹⁵ At the time of the VLS survey, 11,000 dong was equal to approximately one U.S. dollar.

income has not been included, and this form of income is likely to be highest among agricultural workers.

Table 8.2 and Figure 8.2 demonstrate the inter-correlation between the categorical and hierarchical measures of occupational status. Specifically, Table 8.2 shows the mean, median and other descriptive statistics for occupational prestige scores among men and women in each of the five major occupational categories. The graphic illustration plots the mean scores for men and women, depicting even more clearly a prevalent pattern in the data. Specifically, we observe that men and women have markedly similar occupational prestige scores within occupational groups. Combined with the data on occupational structure, this data reinforces the idea that women's lower occupational prestige scores, relative to men's, can be linked to their over-representation in agricultural employment. Figure 8.2, elaborates on interpretation of the occupational prestige scale by representing a sample occupation and its prestige score for each occupational group. In general, the data reveal that mean occupational prestige scores tend to correlate closely with socioeconomic status indicators for the group (as seen in Table 8.1 and Figure 8.1), and thereby lend validity to the use of hierarchical occupational prestige scores as being approximate measures for occupational status.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Having seen that the only a small segment of the Red River Delta population labors in high status occupations associated with high levels of educational attainment and household income, my central analyses are designed to explore which traits of men and women influence occupational outcomes—specifically work in the profession and technical fields (which also happen to be concentrated in the state sector). Gender is one of several focal variables in the analytical models. Following from the central ideas of gender stratification theories, we may expect that gender status influences occupational status. Furthermore, given the legacy of

socialism layered upon decades of traditional, patriarchal social relationships, it may be the case that men and women experience markedly different routes toward occupational status attainment. In addition to gender, there are four categories of independent variables in the statistical models that, following the research hypotheses on status attainment and the role of political and human capital, and social origins, are likely operative in the occupational attainment process. Specifically, these explanatory variables include the following: place of birth and family religion (non-economic aspects of sociocultural background), parental socioeconomic status, respondent's human capital characteristics, and standard life course variables. Finally, I construct a set of interaction terms to assess whether the effects of gender and human capital upon occupational outcomes differ birth cohorts.

Place of Birth and Religion—Components of Cultural Background

Early statements on the processes of stratification note that, “in one sense, the most important parameter of the process of stratification in a society is the degree of association between background, or social origins, and achievement” (Duncan et al., 1972:4). Within northern Viet Nam both family religion and place of birth are two characteristics posited to be meaningful aspects of an individual's social position within the larger social context. Thus they are thought to bear upon his/her potential to attain positions of high occupational prestige.

Due to meager transportation routes and a household registration system that anchored men and women to their place of birth, a relatively firm and deep gulf has existed between rural people and urbanites. Furthermore, because urban areas feature a more extensive set of government-administrative positions relative to remote rural areas, and because government-owned enterprises are more plentiful in and nearby urban areas, it follows that urban residence heightens opportunities for working in high prestige occupations within government institutions. Although there is a strong correlation between place of birth and current place of residence, I

emphasize place of birth as a predictor of occupational status because it may be the case that job-related migration has jointly influenced both occupational status and current place of residence. The analyses will clarify the degree to which rural-born Vietnamese are confined to rural occupations, and work opportunities in the towns and cities remain the domain of urban-born people. The fact that villagers often experience strong emotional attachments to their homelands, and that labor migration was severely restricted by adherence to the household registration system during the redistributive period, suggests that geographic mobility has been quite restricted until the recent period and thereby has strengthened urban dwellers' access to high status occupations.

Catholics constitute a religious minority in Viet Nam; although they make up about 12% of the national population, they have settled in concentrated areas, especially within the South of Viet Nam subsequent to the successful revolution against the French in 1954, and within specific villages of the Red River Delta (see for example, Houtart and Lemercinier 1984). Where Catholics remain in the Northern region of Viet Nam, they may be treated as a minority group due to their distinct cultural practices—such as attending church and undertaking forms of observance for death anniversaries.¹⁶ One study of a Red River Delta commune suggests that Catholics often exist as a distinct group within the community that they live (Mai Huy Bich 1995). In addition, suppressive policies have been adopted against Catholics throughout various stages of recent Vietnamese history. For these reasons, we may expect that persons adhering to the Catholic religion may face unique and disadvantaged opportunities in the workforce. Mostly likely discrimination against Catholics was strongest during the socialist period, when reaction against persons affiliated with Western and colonial powers were very strong; however, previous discrimination may have a legacy during the current period such that the parents of Catholic

¹⁶ I believe that there is considerable variability among Catholics in the extent to which they practice ancestral worship, visit temples and otherwise incorporate Vietnamese folk religion into their own set of religious practices.

youth lack educational resources and social network ties to official employment, thus inhibiting their children's employment opportunities. Respondents who stated that their family religion is Catholic are juxtaposed with respondents stating their families are Buddhist or do not follow a religion. Buddhists and those who do not follow an organized religion (but who often maintain an ancestral shrine) can be viewed as adhering to mainstream cultural practices of Viet Nam.

Parents' Social Status—Educational Attainment and Government Employment

Deriving meaningful measures of parents' educational attainment is a challenging methodological task within a context where sweeping historical changes have produced many different educational and occupational regimes over the course of the 20th century. Throughout the status attainment literature, parental background is frequently assessed through a measure of mother's or father's highest year of schooling. However, operationalizing educational attainment in northern Viet Nam consistently across time is complicated given that school attendance was severely restricted during the French colonial occupation of Viet Nam. Specifically, upwards of 70% of respondents' fathers and nearly 100% of VLS respondents' mothers were not able to attend school in the early decades of the 20th century. In essence the vast majority of the Vietnamese population were treated as second-class citizens during the colonial period and were denied access to education. In addition to the difficulties that arise out of historical changes in the educational system, measurement of parental educational attainment is also compromised given that many respondents were unable to recall the number of years their parents attended school. In order to incorporate a measure of parental educational attainment, which is likely of great importance in a society that had seen very restricted access to education, especially higher education, through the first half of the 20th century, I have taken measures to standardize years of education and incorporate cases with missing data. Standardization techniques enumerate all adults' years of schooling, ranging from one to twelve, and then adjust the number of years for

persons who were educated during the French period (i.e., prior to 1945) and Resistance government period (i.e., 1945-1954) when secondary schooling was limited to between nine and eleven years (see appendix table A8.2 for details on changes in the educational system).

In the statistical models I assess the influence of having a mother, a father, two parents, or no parents with upper secondary schooling (i.e., 9 or more years of education) upon respondent's occupational status. As stated in the research hypotheses, I anticipate that parental educational resources will have a beneficial influence upon the occupational status of children. I expect that the premium offered by parents' education will operate both indirectly, as the children of highly educated parents will possess superior resources for furthering their own educational attainment, and directly, given that highly educated parents are likely to possess superior social capital, social networks and other resources to assist their children in securing high status employment. I have separated the effects of maternal and paternal educational attainment in order to examine whether there is a gendered dimension to parental status influences. Given that patriarchal societal relations continue to influence social roles within households and local community structures of the Red River Delta, I expect that fathers' status positions are more influential to children's outcomes than mothers' status positions. However, because women's attainment of higher education is quite rare in earlier periods of Vietnamese history, it may be the case that households with two highly educated parents are uniquely endowed with educational resources that may be passed on to children. In other words, those households occupied by two highly educated parents are likely to constitute part of an educated elite; the combined resources of mother and father may therefore exert a uniquely strong impact upon their children's status outcomes.

Parents' occupational status constitutes another important element of family background likely to influence children's occupational status outcomes. Measuring parents' status in a

consistent manner across historical periods is a methodological challenge, given the historical shifts in economic organization that have occurred in Viet Nam over the 20th century. Most VLS respondents had parents who worked during the collective period and whose jobs were allocated by the local government. In addition, a significant number of respondents report that their parents were self-employed workers. Within these two large categories of workers there was likely a significant degree of variation in prestige and remuneration, however the VLS does not provide adequate detail to derive information on parents' income and occupational prestige levels. Therefore, in the current study I represent parents' occupational status through a measure of maternal and paternal government employment. It is feasible to assume that respondents whose parents work(ed) as government employees are uniquely and favorably situated in local occupational structures. Specifically, having a parent who either currently or previously worked for the government provides a 'strong tie' to an individual possessing positional power, as well as additional favorable 'weak ties' to high status persons that accrue through the respondent's parents' social networks. There are other, more restrictive definitions for capturing parents' high status employment, such as whether either parent is a '*can bo*,' or cadre, a distinction that is often drawn in social mobility research in post-socialist China. However, the '*can bo*' title captures a very restricted subset of government employees.

Similar to the approach for examining parental educational attainment, I examine whether government employment by a father, a mother, or both parents, contributes to higher occupational status outcomes compared to respondents with neither parent employed by the government. Again, I am interested in the gendered nature of parental status, and whether having a government-employed mother exerts an additional, positive influence upon children's outcomes. I presume that father's occupational status will carry a stronger weight than mother's

occupational status, however the combined impact of having two government-employed parents may generate an additional benefit for the children.

Parents' Political Capital

The body of work that has evolved in efforts to either buttress or challenge market transition theory has offered a diverse set of measures for operationalizing the 'political capital' or 'positional' advantage that derives from laboring as a civil servant. In research on China, some researchers have attributed positional advantage to nearly all variety of civil servants, while others have restricted this definition to include only 'cadres' or 'administrators' who are assumed to have top leadership positions in village and district settings (Parish and Michelson 1996). Drawing from examples in the market transition literature, I operationalize political capital of parents according to their Communist Party membership status. Each respondent was asked whether their parents were Communist Party members. In terms of official doctrine, Communist Party membership designates a strong, formalized commitment to the government's official Communist ideological position. This is revealed in official statutes of Viet Nam's Communist Party which state that (<http://www.cpv.org.vn/cpv/statutes/chapter1.htm>):

"Any Vietnamese citizen aged 18 or older, who recognizes and voluntarily executes the Party's Political Program and Statutes as well as the criteria and obligations of a Party member, operates in a grassroots Party organization; who proves himself/herself in practice to be outstanding, and who enjoys the trust of the people, may be considered for admission into the Party."

Having demonstrated a sufficient degree of loyalty, and having facilitated the necessary social ties to gain admission to the party, we may assume that Party members constitute an elite group with Vietnamese society. As of 1999, the Communist Party had 2.3 million members, just about 3% of the country's total population. While research on the topic is limited, we might assume that Party members maintain a form of redistributive power and may possess superior

informational resources that benefit their family members' educational and occupational outcomes. Furthermore, preliminary observations (see for example Marr 1985) suggest that Walder's characterization of "communist neotraditionalism," in which possessors of political authority are well situated to receive career opportunities and 'favours,' may apply in the Vietnamese context. Thusly, respondents reporting communist party membership on the part of either parent are considered to possess political capital. While parents' employment for the government may also be considered a sort of political capital (as well as a proxy for social class background), the current variable is utilized because it serves as a more direct indicator of parents' political affiliation.

Respondent Characteristics—Educational Attainment

Years of educational attainment are taken to represent respondents' level of human capital investment—a universalistic criterion that ought to shape social mobility in societies with a sufficient degree of industrialization (Lipset and Bendix 1959). Respondents' years of education have been standardized for those who were educated prior to educational reforms that established the current 12-year educational system. Respondents were then categorized according to their highest level of education as follows: 1) Primary schooling and below (0-5 years); 2) Lower secondary school attendance or completion (6-9); Upper secondary school and higher levels of education (10 years or more years). The VLS dataset does not contain detailed information regarding job training or job experience. Therefore the estimation of human capital is limited to formal schooling (an indicator common in previous status attainment research).

Although several studies have been conducted on the subject of educational attainment and educational enrollment in Viet Nam, particularly regarding stratification of educational outcomes in the post-reform era, few researchers have systematically explored the relationship between educational attainment and occupational status outcomes. The current research sets a

precedent in using a theoretically-informed, multivariate empirical analyses to establish the determinants of individuals' occupational status outcomes.

8.5. Results and Discussion

Bivariate Results

A simple bivariate distribution of workers based upon their gender and primary occupational group is presented in Table 8.3. The data presented here reiterate the preponderance of agricultural work among Red River Delta residents. Even when urban residents are included in the analyses, more than 60% of respondents state that their primary economic activity was in agricultural work. Keeping in mind the figures on household income and educational attainment presented in Table 8.1, the occupational distribution shown here reveals that a very small segment of the local population (around 6%) works in the highest prestige professional, managerial and clerical positions whose incumbents are highly educated and enjoy the highest income levels.

To begin exploring the relationship between respondents' social origins, human capital and other characteristics, Table 8.3 and Figure 8.3 show the main bivariate relationships between occupational status, as measured by mean occupational prestige score and percentage of respondents in high and low status occupational groups (i.e, agricultural work and profession, managerial and clerical work) and key independent variables featured in the explanatory models. Examination of the bivariate results shown in Table 8.3 demonstrates several patterns consistent with hypotheses about religious background, urban origins, parental status, political capital and human capital. Among the patterns of note, it is clear that occupational prestige is higher among respondents with urban origins, and those whose parents have high educational attainment levels, government employment and Communist Party membership. Table 8.3 also demonstrates that the mean level of occupational prestige is higher among men than among women, probably due to

women's greater representation in agricultural activities. Figure 8.3 depicts the relationship between mean occupational status score and three measures of parental status. The figure demonstrates that respondents whose parents have high status (as indicated by upper secondary school attainment, government employment, and Communist Party membership) have higher levels of occupational status, on average, compared to those respondents whose parents do not have such characteristics. Furthermore, comparing the first two bars in each group (which represent a father or mother having the status characteristic) with the third bar (which designates respondents having two parents with the status characteristic) suggests that there is an added benefit that occurs as a result of having two high status parents. By comparison, respondents who have neither a high status father nor a high status mother have markedly lower occupational status scores on average. The bivariate pattern of results demonstrates that persons with high status social origins, from urban locations, and with high levels of educational attainment are disproportionately represented in high status occupations, such as professional and managerial work.

Educational attainment, in particular, appears to be very influential to one's position in the occupational structure of the Red River Delta. A higher proportion of respondents with schooling beyond the lower secondary level are working as professional, managerial and clerical workers. Conversely, a larger proportion of agricultural workers, compared to workers in any other occupational category, have only primary-level schooling (i.e., 0 to 4 years of schooling). The next objective is to isolate, through multivariate regression analyses, both ordinary least squares and multinomial logistic models, the independent effects of social origins, parental socioeconomic status and political capital, and human capital characteristics. Such an analysis will allow an assessment of the degree to which high status occupations are achieved as a result

of involvement in higher education and the extent to which high status occupations are obtained through the influence of parental status positions and social networks.

Multivariate Results—OLS Regression

I begin by presenting several OLS regression analyses that model occupational status as an interval-level variable using the adapted, hierarchical occupational prestige score. Five models are presented in Table 8.4. The first model considers the gross influence of gender upon occupational prestige. The 4 successive models incorporate religious background and place of birth, measures of family social status, respondent's human capital, and a set of interaction terms, respectively. The dependent variable in each model is the occupational prestige score, taken here as an indicator of occupational status, and modified from Treiman (1977).¹⁷ I present unstandardized regression coefficients to represent the estimated relative gain or loss in occupational prestige points associated with each category/increment on the independent variables.

The first result of note supports the gender stratification position, revealing that men hold positions of significantly higher occupational prestige than women in the Red River Delta. That men's and women's educational differentials occur largely via a pathway of differential educational attainment is revealed when we compare the coefficient for gender across Model 3 and Model 4. We have already seen that women are the predominant workers in farming, the occupation with the lowest socioeconomic standing. Figure 8.4 provides a histogram depicting the distribution of men and women according to their occupational status scores and demonstrates the extent to which women's concentration in agriculture tends to bring down their aggregate occupational status scores.

¹⁷ See Table A8.1 for alterations made to occupational prestige scoring.

The multivariate findings reveal that once we control for educational attainment, men's and women's levels of occupational attainment are roughly equal. By way of interpretation, these results demonstrate that occupational stratification by gender has occurred relatively early in the status attainment process, by way of differential educational outcomes for men and women. I explore at greater length whether these results are also definitive for younger women educated in the socialist and more recent periods in subsequent analyses. Furthermore, the results suggest, rather optimistically, that controlling for education, women have achieved occupational positions on par with similarly educated men. Clearly this result demonstrates the importance that access to the educational system has had for women's careers, and the importance that unequal access between men and women has played in generating men's and women's disparate occupational patterns.

Respondents' geographic origins, as represented by place of birth, also exert a powerful influence upon occupational status. Specifically, originating from an urban place, or from a village nearby a town or city, is associated with markedly higher occupational status than is originating from a remote village location. This result can be interpreted in part through the ecological nature of economic activity, and specifically the greater concentration of high prestige occupations located within and emanating from urban places. The high correlation among place of birth and current place of residence observed among persons living in the Red River Delta demonstrates that, unless one migrates out of the region and thereby opens up a new set of employment opportunities, place of birth has a strong impact upon occupational status. Persons born within remote rural areas are much more likely to work in low occupational status positions due to the relative absence of high prestige opportunities in local occupational structures.

Considering religious background, the negative effect of Catholic family background upon occupational prestige is not statistically significant once we control for parents' social status.

This pattern of effects suggests that the negative impact upon occupational status associated with Catholic background occurs in part because Catholic families have lower socioeconomic status—the parents of young Catholic workers have lower educational levels and a slighter representation in government employment. Most likely this older generation of Catholics was similarly limited in their access to enter high status positions, and their children have inherited this relatively low status position in the Red River Delta economy. This interpretation is supported by historical accounts in which Catholic persons, due to their affiliation with the French colonists and for maintaining a religious identity during the Socialist period, report facing discrimination in entering higher education and public sector employment (Phillipp Nguyen Kim Dien 1986:10).

Regarding the effects of parental social status, and the differential effect of maternal and paternal status positions upon their children's status outcomes, it is clear that fathers' status background has a more powerful effect on children's occupational status outcomes. To begin, due to a long history of institutionalized patriarchal authority relations, in which women were effectively barred from higher education and many elite administrative and political positions, many more fathers than mothers have high status positions, i.e., they have completed upper secondary school, work for the government, and are Communist Party members. Furthermore, even where women have achieved high status positions, if their husbands are not likewise in a high status position, the mother's elevated position does not translate into a benefit for her child's occupational status. We observe in Model Three that in cases where both parents have high educational attainment and government employment, there is an additional benefit to young people compared to only having a father with a high status position. We might interpret this to indicate that where young people are embedded in a family of high status individuals, and therefore likely embedded in larger social networks occupied by relatively high status individuals,

that their chances of achieving high status occupational positions are even greater.¹⁸ We might also deduce that women who have achieved high status positions through education, government employment and Communist Party membership, if they 'marry down' and take a husband who is not similarly endowed with high status, are very restricted by the male-dominated social context and lack the influence to bring about positive occupational outcomes for their children. High status men have the power to shape their children's opportunities on their own, and their wives' high status may enhance this process, but high status women married to a relatively low status husband (a very selected subgroup of married women) do not possess such a power.

Looking further, to Model 4, which controls for the respondent's educational attainment, that the benefits of parents' educational attainment, as well as fathers' Communist Party membership, are not limited to enhancement of educational opportunities. The results suggest that having a father with positional power in the community, and parents with educational credentials, operate to improve one's chances of inheriting a high status position in the local economy. Both superior financial resources and social networks may provide the mechanisms, in addition to educational attainment, whereby socioeconomic status is passed from parents to children. The finding that mothers' Communist Party membership actually has a significant, negative influence upon her children's occupational status, having controlled for the respondent's educational attainment, is an unexpected outcome that warrants further investigation. While conclusive explanations for this result cannot be offered, especially due to the small number of cases, it may reflect upon processes of recruitment to the Party and the relative status of female Party members.

¹⁸ Using an alternate measure of parents' high status employment, I substituted a similar set of dummy variables, indicating whether the respondent's father, mother, or both parents were 'cadres.' I arrived at this designation based upon respondents' responses to questions about parental employment which indicated that either parent's job title included the word '*can bo*.' The results are strikingly similar to those observed for government employee parents; that is, having a father who was a cadre has a positive, statistically significant influence upon the respondent's occupational prestige. A slight difference across the models using these different measures of parents' occupational status is that father's cadre status

The variable of educational attainment, representing human capital investment, stands out as the strongest predictor of occupational status. Persons with lower secondary schooling, and especially those with upper secondary schooling and higher, have significantly higher occupational prestige scores than those obtaining the minimum levels of primary education. However, given that the relationship between parents' social and political status and the respondent's occupational status is attenuated when educational attainment is added to the model suggests that educational attainment is not evenly distributed across the society, but rather is linked to parental status. A result observed consistently in occupational attainment research is observed here, that is, parents' status (i.e., father's educational attainment and occupational status) has an important effect upon children's occupational attainment (Glewwe and Patrinos 1999; Knodel and Jones 1996). Among residents of the Red River Delta this effect is both direct and indirect, with the effect of parental status upon children's occupational status being mediated by children's educational attainment.

Model four also demonstrates that occupational status is highest among middle age respondents, and lowest for respondents under age 30. This finding most likely is indicative of the life course of occupational mobility, as well as the age-selective nature of education enrollment. These questions are linked to period effects of war and socialism upon occupational structure that were analyzed in Chapter 7. The youngest cohort of working respondents probably disproportionately represent persons working in low status occupations since individuals who move on to higher education, and thus attain higher status occupations, are underrepresented in the labor force during their teens and into their early 20s. Suffice to say that, at present, middle age persons hold occupational positions that are of higher status than their younger and older counterparts, a pattern linked to both individual life course and macro-level historical patterns.

continues to be statistically significant, net of respondent's educational attainment. In none of the models

The final model shown here incorporates multiplicative effects for gender and age with education, and reveals that the effects of education upon occupational status are different for men and women, and for respondents in different birth cohorts. This model demonstrates that the slope of the occupational status regression line is steeper for women than for men, thereby suggesting that high levels of educational attainment are more consequential for women's occupational status than for men's. We may interpret this finding as suggesting that for women to work in high status jobs they must have high levels of education, however for men, these jobs are more 'open,' irrespective of their education credentials, and thus high levels of educational attainment is not such a strong prerequisite for men to achieve high status occupations.

In order to explore the determinants of men's and women's occupational status outcomes in greater detail, I run separate OLS regression analyses for men and women. These results, shown in Table 8.5, demonstrate that the process of occupational attainment differs in slight, though important ways, for men and women. Following the interpretation of the interaction terms in Model 5 of Table 8.4 suggest, educational attainment appears to be more consequential for women's occupational outcomes than it is for men's. Given that men's occupational status positions tend to be slightly higher than women's, and that education has a greater 'pay-off' in occupational status for women than for men, we may conclude that men are more likely than women to achieve high occupational positions by birth (or by some other gender-linked characteristic that is not included in the model), as a result of their favored gender status in the traditional, patriarchal social context. This point is also substantiated by the R-square values for men's and women's models, which demonstrate a higher explained variance for women compared to men (.24 versus .15, respectively). For the few women who have obtained high

does having a cadre mother exert a significant, positive effect on child's occupational status.

status positions we may reason that they have more often had to 'earn' these positions through credentials and skills obtained in the educational system.

Lin and Bian (1991) in their analyses of family background effects on children's occupational status outcomes in Tianjin, China, report a similar finding to that observed here. Specifically, demonstrating that sons experience a greater advantage than daughters in having a father who worked in a high status work unit, they conclude that only sons may be 'born with a silver spoon in their mouths,' whereas daughters have to earn their education and occupation advantages 'the old fashioned way,' by excelling in school or through other kinds of personal effort. Michelson and Parish (2000) interpret this result as emerging in part though parents' differential 'expenditure' of social capital in favor of sons. The results presented here would be consistent with such a finding. In my interpretation of the Vietnamese case I add that men, especially those reaching adulthood during periods of widespread military mobilization, are likely to experience an additional social capital and skill advantage relative to women through their participation in military service.

It is difficult to draw definitive conclusions as to whether women or men benefit more as a result of having high status parents. While sons alone appear to benefit from fathers' Communist Party membership, both sons and daughters benefit as a result of having highly educated fathers, and these two explanatory variables are strongly correlated. A more telling finding is that high status mothers appear to have little influence upon the occupational status outcomes of either sons or daughters. Relative to high status men, who are more often married to women with average educational status and occupation positions, high status women are almost always married to men with equal or higher status positions.

While the approximation of changes in the process of occupational status attainment is severely limited due to the cross-sectional data at hand, I undertake an additional approach to

address the matter of change in the status attainment process over time. Specifically, I perform analyses similar to those shown in Tables 8.4 and 8.5, however I disaggregate workers into three broad age categories: persons ages 25 to 34, ages 35 to 44, and ages 45 to 55. I choose to delimit the analytical sample to include workers over age 25 since this segmentation of the full analytical sample eliminates those respondents who may have not yet established an adult employment career. It also minimizes potential selection bias in the youngest age cohort such that it would over-represent young people who are already working and have not pursued higher education. Furthermore, upon reaching age 25 most students continuing into upper-secondary and tertiary education have completed their school enrollment. Because formal retirement ages for men and women in the formal sector are age 55 and 60, respectively, I similarly delimit the eldest age category to workers age 45 to 55. This delimitation of the analytical sample minimizes bias in the category by attempting to eliminate elderly people who may have worked in high status positions earlier, but have had to move into in agriculture or other low status, family-based employment roles as they age, become frail and enter early stages of retirement (especially for former employees of the socialist government enterprises who lost their jobs in the late 1980s). As a second approach toward understanding changes in occupational attainment processes over time I examine respondents' occupational status at the time of their marriage to minimize the problem that current occupations reflects not only period effects as they are experienced by different cohorts, but also individual shifts in occupational positions over the life course. This alternative approach is presented in a subsequent section that summarizes multinomial logistic regression analyses.

Several interesting results emerge when I compare models across the three age groups. First, male advantage in educational attainment, and hence occupational status outcomes, is statistically insignificant for respondents under age 35. Among the cohorts born before 1960, and

likely unaffected by educational reforms implemented in the late 1960s, we observe that men have significantly higher levels of occupational status, deriving in part through their higher levels of educational attainment compared to women. These findings, while partial and still limited through the cross-sectional nature of the data, point to gains in gender egalitarianism that likely occurred via socialist reforms of the education system. It is important to recognize, however, that even within the youngest age group, as men and women age, and are differently affected by family obligations, and shifts in the occupational structure, we may see the reemergence of gender stratification within younger cohorts.

A persistent finding across the three cohorts is that urban origins exert a consistent, positive influence on occupational status outcomes over time. In each period the urban-rural divide in occupational status outcomes is very marked, and its effect is independent of educational attainment. Thus, we can tentatively conclude that urban versus rural origins are a primary fault line determining access to high status occupations—due to differences in occupational opportunities across areas and the limited degree of status-enhancing labor migration within the Red River Delta. Furthermore, for young people to attain high status positions they often have to migrate away from their Red River Delta villages of origin. As such, the relatively permanent social-ecological conditions in villages and cities set limits upon the social mobility that can be achieved without migrating. Educational attainment, too, is persistently a key determinant of current occupational status for men and women in the Red River Delta, irrespective of one's year of birth. For each of the three cohorts, men and women who have attended upper secondary schooling (and perhaps tertiary schooling) fare significantly better than less educated counterparts in terms of occupational status. One change that we do observe over time is that the benefit of receiving lower secondary schooling for occupational attainment is no longer statistically significant for the youngest cohort of workers. This finding suggests that

as education became more prevalent and a larger segment of the population was receiving at least primary, if not lower secondary schooling. Thusly, lower secondary schooling has become standard, so that only upper secondary schooling distinguishes jobseekers.

The results for the influence of parental status are relatively mixed and the 3 dimensions of status—parents' education, government employment and Communist Party membership—show distinct relationships with occupational status across the different age groups. One result that is clear is that Catholic religion once had a negative influence upon occupational attainment, but it is not significant among the two younger cohorts. Speaking generally about the other three indicators of parents' social status, it appears that parents' educational status is the most, in fact the only, measure of social status that has exerted a significant impact on the occupational attainment of workers under age 35. For this age group we observe a pattern similar to that observed for the full sample, in which highly educated women married to men with lower levels of education do not transmit their status to their children; however, highly educated men translate their status to children irrespective of their spouses' education levels. Among the older age groups, parents' educational attainment does not appear to be significant to children's outcomes at all. A tentative interpretation from these results is that educational attainment is becoming increasingly important in enriching one's children's opportunities in securing high status and high prestige jobs. This conclusion is reinforced in light of the findings for parents' government employment and Communist Party membership for the three cohorts. In short, we see that for older cohorts born before 1960 and having a parent (father more so than mother) with government employment and/or Communist Party membership (i.e., forms of context-specific political capital) is a boon to occupational status attainment. For the youngest cohort born after 1960 this is no longer the case. Finally, a very interesting, though difficult to interpret, result is that among the youngest workers having a mother in the Communist Party has positive and

highly significant effect on occupational status, yet the influence of fathers' CP membership is not influential.

In a final set of OLS analyses, shown in Table 8.7, I decompose the sample according to respondents' current place of residence in order to assess whether the route toward high status occupations differs across urban and rural places. Given that the occupational structure, as well as the availability of human capital and social capital resources, diverges significantly across urban and rural locations we may expect that high status occupations emerge among different types of people in urban versus rural places. The persistence of traditional gender roles, the predominance of agriculture, and the relative absence of high status occupations in rural occupational structures are likely to foster a situation in which men and persons with upper class social origins and political capital experience advantages in occupational attainment even greater than those observed in urban areas.

The analyses comparing the predictors of occupational status in the three urban districts and the seven (or semi-rural) communes offer some confirmation for these hypotheses. First, we observe that men's occupational status advantages over women exist only in rural areas. In urban areas, after taking into account educational attainment and family status characteristics, women actually have occupational status scores significantly higher than those of men. Most likely these different patterns derive from the preponderance of agricultural labor in rural areas and the feminization of agricultural work, which concentrate women in some of the lowest ranked occupations. By comparison, the traditionally female jobs found in urban areas—such as shop keeper, garment factory worker, and teacher—have relatively high status rankings compared to traditionally male jobs—such as construction worker, manual laborer, and driver.

With respect to parental status characteristics, model two demonstrates that, in general, parents' status positions have more significant direct effects on children's occupational status

outcomes in rural areas compared to urban areas. Highly educated parents tend to have children with higher occupational status. In urban areas, however, the pattern of results suggests that this relationship emerges largely via an indirect path in which children's educational attainment is the mediating variable. In urban areas the pathway of parental education via child's education is also important to children's occupational outcomes. However, there is a significant direct effect that persists even after educational attainment is held constant. Furthermore, we only observe a significant, positive effect of parents' government employment on children's occupational status in the rural communes. Having parents who are Communist Party members is important for workers in urban and rural areas. Overall, these results appear to be consistent with notions of the industrialism thesis, specifically the notion that universalistic criteria will become increasingly important, and more important than particularistic criteria, as places (in this case urban centers relative to rural villages) undergo economic development and experiences some degree of industrialization.

Multivariate Results—Maximum Likelihood Multinomial Logistic Regression

Using maximum likelihood multinomial logistic regression I model occupational attainment outcomes for all currently working men and women in the VLS sample. The likelihood of working in each of 4 occupational groups is examined by comparing the likelihood of working in a given occupation (designated at the top of each Table 8.8 through 8.11) relative to working in the reference category of professional, managerial and clerical occupations. While agricultural employment would serve as the clearest reference category for comparing high status and low status occupations, as the household income and educational attainment figures shown in Table 8.1 demonstrate, the almost complete absence of agricultural workers among persons born in and residing in urban places of the Red River Delta precludes utilizing such a reference group. Instead I use the high status occupations as a reference category, such that log odds ratios are

interpreted as a variable increasing (i.e., where $\text{Exp}(B)$ is greater than one) or decreasing (i.e., where $\text{Exp}(B)$ is less than one) the odds of working in the relatively *low* status occupation in question.

Table 8.8 shows results for employment in sales and services occupations. Perhaps because these occupations are characterized by socioeconomic status outcomes similar to those observed for the reference category there are few statistically significant results. Gender is not an important characteristic influencing the likelihood of employment in professional, managerial and clerical work relative to sales and services. The odds of women working in sales and services jobs is actually a bit lower than their odds of working in the professional, managerial and clerical fields, but the difference is not statistically significant.

The results for place of birth demonstrate that being born in an urban location increases the odds of being employed in sales and services relative to being employed in professional, managerial and clerical jobs. Comparing results across tables 8.9 through 8.11 demonstrates that working in sales and services jobs is the only occupational outcome whose likelihood is enhanced, relative to professional, managerial and clerical jobs, through urban origins. This finding is consistent with expectations since urban locations are characterized by concentrated market activity. Specifically, in the Red River Delta it is common to observe a restricted set of service and retail establishments in villages (such as a family selling breakfast foods or offering vehicle repair). In the towns and cities, by contrast, relatively thriving commercial activity serve both visitors and the local population (which is larger in size and possesses more disposable income).

Parental background characteristics offer little explanation for the attainment of occupations in sales and services. We do observe, somewhat surprisingly, that having a father who worked for the government actually increases the odds of working in sales in services

compared to working in professional, managerial and clerical work. This result, which also encompasses men and women whom have formed small family businesses, may be obtained given that fathers who worked for the government may have accrued resources to be used in setting up small businesses that employ family members.

The results in Model 4, compared across all four tables, 8.9-8.11, demonstrate that obtaining education beyond primary school substantially increases the odds of working in professional, managerial and clerical occupations relative to all other occupational categories. These results, consistent with those obtained in the OLS regression analyses, demonstrate that educational attainment is of primary importance for getting a high status occupation in the Red River Delta. The relationship is especially strong for professional work relative to agriculture, but significant for all occupational categories—obtaining higher levels of educational attainment vastly improves one's odds of working in the professional, managerial and clerical positions. Qualitative results will demonstrate more clearly how access to the educational system is blocked by economic strains and household economic organization in poor households. Qualitative results also provide insights into the reasons why high levels of education are increasingly seen as a necessary condition for obtaining certain high status occupations, even while they remain insufficient for moving out of agriculture and other informal sector jobs.

Comparing the odds ratios and levels of statistical significance across models three and four reveals that a substantial proportion of the effect of parental socioeconomic status and political capital upon children's occupational status operates indirectly through educational attainment. This finding suggests that where higher levels of education are needed to obtain high status occupational outcomes, and where obtaining higher education is not accessible to all due to restrictive financial costs and opportunity costs (i.e., fewer labor inputs) imposed upon the family economy, children whose families have abundant resources and status provide an advantage to

their children in the labor market. Father's socioeconomic status, as represented by education beyond the eighth grade, continues to have a significant, positive, direct effect upon attainment of occupational positions in high status professional, managerial and clerical positions relative to all other occupations except sales and services. Collectively, these results reinforce the position that educational attainment is most often the route whereby the children of high status parents are able to escape a life of low status work in agriculture and manual labor.

Turning to consider the determinants of agricultural employment relative to high status occupations in the professional, managerial and clerical field (Table 8.9), an interesting pattern of results concerning the question of gender stratification and feminization of agriculture emerges. The multivariate analyses and the addition of educational attainment in Model 4 reveal that once we control for educational attainment, men are not any more likely than women to be working in professional, technical and clerical jobs than in agricultural work. Educational investments, and men's historical preferential access to higher education in Northern Viet Nam, are important to the process of occupational attainment. Furthermore, the insulation of women (most often girls) in family agricultural labor at a young age is linked to the greater tendency for young women, compared to young men, to discontinue their education in order to perform greater amounts of labor in the household economy. Where their education is on par with that of men, so is their likelihood of working in professional, technical and clerical occupations similar to that of men. Advanced education, while currently highly gender stratified, has the potential to operate as an 'equalizer' among men and women in the Red River Delta.

The results in Tables 8.9-8.11 also show that Catholicism, consistent with our hypotheses, does impact the occupational attainment process. Specifically, being Catholic increases the odds of working in agriculture, handicrafts, textiles and food production, and the manual labor occupations relative to working in professional, managerial and clerical positions.

Given that professional occupations are concentrated in the governmental sector, it is possible that followers of the Catholic religion continue to face obstacles to state employment due to their minority status. The fact that this result is maintained even after educational attainment is added to the model suggests that there is a continuing tendency for Catholic persons to be excluded from certain high status positions, especially those affiliated with government offices. Furthermore, that being Catholic increases the odds of working in textiles, handicrafts and food production by more than five times suggests that Catholics have come to occupy an occupational niche within the local economies of the Red River Delta. This relationship may stem, in part, due to the geographic concentration of Catholics in a commune where textile production constitutes a large share of employment opportunities; however, a simple bivariate analysis demonstrates that Catholics living in/near Nam Dinh city are particularly concentrated in this line of activity. The continued influence of the Communist Party in local government and administration, as well as the historical affiliation of Catholicism with French colonial occupiers, are potential explanations for the relative absence of Catholics from high status, state sector occupations. The occupational histories of tailors and workers in the textile factory of *Nam Dinh* city also suggest that the historical concentration of Catholic workers in these occupations, due to the obstacles they may have met in obtaining employment within state and cooperative organizations, has carried over into the new market economy. Catholics were not excluded from working in the textile factory, which was constructed by the French during the early 20th century, and have likely passed on this line of work and sought job opportunities for their children. Furthermore, children whose parents are tailors and who operate sewing shops within their homes may have a greater chance of taking up the same line of work than those who have not observed their parents' skill in sewing and otherwise been socialized to learn the occupation, and who do not have ready access to a sewing machine and other equipment.

Next, assessing the power of parents' socioeconomic status upon respondents' potential to attain employment in high status occupations, the results shown in Tables 8.9 through 8.11 provide additional support for hypotheses maintaining that high status parents are able to pass along high status employment to their children. Having a father with education beyond the eighth grade is a robust element of parental socioeconomic status that exerts a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of children's employment in the professional, managerial and clerical occupations. Mother's educational attainment does not have a similar, significant effect upon her children's occupational outcomes. The general pattern revealed throughout the multinomial logistic regression analyses is that having parents with high socioeconomic status, whose education is exceptionally high and/or who worked for the government, offers some advantage in the occupational status attainment process. The effect of a high status family background is not so strong, however, so as to guarantee high status occupations for the children of government workers or highly educated persons.

When we consider the unique form of status held by parents who are or were members of the Communist Party, we see a similar pattern of effects as those observed for socioeconomic status measures. Communist party membership of parents (especially fathers) is associated with a greater likelihood of children working in professional, technical and managerial occupations relative to agriculture, and handicraft, textiles and food production. Mother's membership in the Communist Party has a minimal effect on children's occupational status, revealing a pattern similar to that observed in the OLS regression analyses.

8.6 Interpretation Through Qualitative Results

The quantitative results summarized in the previous section demonstrate that educational attainment, specifically attending upper secondary school and even university, is an important prerequisite for obtaining a high status occupation within the Red River Delta, particularly in high

prestige professional and managerial fields. The results also convey that parents' socioeconomic status and political capital are important factors shaping one's outcome in the occupational attainment process. Specifically, government employment and Communist Party membership on the part of one's parents, particularly one's father, increase the odds of higher education, and thus the likelihood of subsequent occupational prestige. Furthermore, the separate analyses of men's and women's occupational prestige presented in Table 8.5 demonstrate marked differences in the factors influencing men's and women's occupational status outcomes, and that men's achievement of high status occupations are less contingent upon their obtaining high levels of education.

The knowledge of these statistical relationships obtain is deepened when the relationships in quantitative data are coupled with personal accounts of men and women articulating their own experiences of entry into and transitions in labor force participation. In qualitative, in-depth interviews, men and women of the Red River Delta commented upon these processes and vocalized their observations and understanding of the ways in which they arrived at their current occupations. They also discuss their interpretation of status attainment processes operating within their local community, during the present time period and during previous, pivotal periods of life transition. Prior to examining these qualitative results I reiterate here that in order to protect the privacy of the interviewees and to maintain confidentiality of their responses I have substituted pseudonyms for real personal names.

Addressing the question of gender stratification in the field of agriculture first, it is useful to examine women's accounts of how agricultural work has changed over their lifetimes. A 44 year-old woman in the village of *Xuan Thanh* named Ms. Huyen recalled her work experience under the 'system of budget subsidies' (i.e., the collective period prior to 1986 reforms) and compared it with the current system. Her account helps to illuminate how the delineation of

agricultural tasks along lines of gender has been blurred over time. During the collective period certain agricultural tasks, such as plowing and fertilizing, were assigned to individuals and performed for a collective land area. In the current period though, Ms. Huyen comments that agriculture is the only work available and that villagers perform all agricultural work with little attention to gender differences. Asked about the work that occupies her time, she comments:

"--We have nothing to do except farm work; we only do farming, transplanting, and reaping rice."

"--What's about carrying the paddy?"

"--In recent years we have the pack-bicycle to carry the paddy. We are able to carry it, but only a very little. In my family my husband will carry the paddy if he stays at home [and hasn't migrated to work] so I only have to cut and reap the rice...Under the system of budget subsidies, we had the farmland ploughed using the buffalo of the collective, so we did not have to plough by ourselves. But from the time the system of budget subsidies dissolved we have had to take on all the work. For example, we ourselves hoe the field after reaping rice. When the farmland has been raked already, it then would have been done by the time the machines come. After that, we transplant the rice seedlings by ourselves. We use the rake."

Asked who is responsible for certain tasks, Ms. Huyen elaborates upon a system of dividing work with her husband. However, upon further elaboration she reveals a situation in which gender distinctions have dissolved and women perform the bulk of agricultural labor, including labor formerly done by men:

"We do all that work together. For example, in my family there are 2 of us, husband and wife. The children are still very small. If one day we have no farmland to transplant, the 2 of us go out to work. If we have farmland to work in another day, we give up what is our due to each other in transplanting; my husband would work the soil for me if I transplant the rice seedlings. That means there is a plot of empty soil next to the transplanted one...In the past, when there was the system of budget subsidies, it was discriminated that this was the women's work, that was the men's work. But from the time the budget subsidies were dissolved, we are all equivalent in working. The only thing that is different is that the men are much stronger than the women, we are much weaker than them in working...Now mostly it is women doing the farm work. Under the system of budget subsidies women rarely had to carry the fertilizer. But now there is no one in the family. As it is for my family, it is very hard if I let my husband do all the work, at the same time, I have nothing to do so I work with him, he is strong so he works much more and I am much weaker so I work less...[In the past] it was always the men [who carried the fertilizer]. But as you can see, now most of the men are not at home. They sometimes do not even come back at harvest time so we are forced to do all the work. We do not

discriminate that is the men's or the women's work. Now there are some boys who also do transplanting."

Asked later about jobs appropriate to men and women in the current period, Ms. Huyen's comments suggest that the changing gender structure of occupations has influenced her attitudes regarding women's capabilities:

"According to me, they [women] could do all the work. In the previous time, I, myself, even said that women were not able to do men's work. But now I think it can all be done well by women. For example, the heavy work may take men an hour to do, we are weaker than them so it may take us one hour and a half or 2 hours. But in the end, we could do that work. Now, it is really a matter of whether or not we are courageous enough. We could do all the work if we are courageous enough."

Other women recounted similar examples in which the bulk of agricultural work is performed by themselves and their womenfolk, such as a woman whose husband and brother-in-law have migrated to Ho Chi Minh city for work and so have left her with not one family plot, but two family plots, to cultivate. Due to financial difficulties she is not able to hire labor assistance to alleviate the burden of these additional work requirements. These accounts, especially those of women operating family farms while their husbands are absent, suggest that agricultural work not only remains a low status position, but as family members are more frequently separated and women work with less assistance from family members, the work also involves more physical strain and demanding work hours.

The importance of one's family's socioeconomic status background for occupational outcomes was conveyed by numerous men and women raised in poor, agricultural families that faced great difficulties paying for even modest education expenditures. Many interviewees recollected completing only primary schooling, and suggested that even the small expenses for enrolling in primary school imposed difficulties. As a result, it was not uncommon for youth to leave school around the 7th grade and to begin working full-time in agriculture. Asked what were

the hardest times faced by their birth families, young women and men often commented that it was when they themselves and their siblings were enrolled in school. Their work in domestic chores and agricultural activities rarely subsided during the school year, and often children would work several hours in the field and around the house after going to school, leaving little time to study and prepare lessons for the next day.

Inequalities in access to higher education are especially dramatic when we take into consideration the expenses that wealthier, often urban, families devote to preparing their children for university attendance. Glewwe and Patrinos (2001) are among the researchers who have documented the widening gulf in educational expenditures in the market reform period. Many families pay fees for their children to attend extra, after-school tutoring sessions, a practice that has increased dramatically in the post-reform era, and which can impose dramatically variable costs, depending upon the length and quality of instruction. In addition, young people in their final year of upper secondary school often participate in lengthy and costly programs to review for college entrance examinations (known as 'on thi' or reviewing for examination). In addition to the tuition, book and related fees they pay for college preparation, it is rare for young, college-bound students to work in the labor market to help pay for the additional costs. Mr. Tuong, a 46 year-old blue-collar worker from Ninh Binh town who has lived largely off of a pension granted upon his completion of 25 years working for the army and an agricultural state enterprise, does not dwell at length upon financial difficulties experienced by his family. His pension, and extra income he obtains by trading and delivering goods, as well as his wife's income as a state employee, provide the family with a relatively generous income. However, he does state that times have gotten more difficult now that his three children, ages 17, 15 and 5, are enrolled in school. His oldest a son is involved in extra, after-school courses in addition to standard courses, and Mr. Tuong and his wife allow this child to focus solely upon studying, rather than asking him

to work around the house or in a job. In this conversation Mr. Tuong outlines the elaborate costs that they devote to education expenses each month:

*--Did it cost very much when your children were young, say less than 12 years old?
 --When they were young, they didn't go to school, so we didn't have to pay extra-study fees. Now they have grown up. The expenses for the children are rather high, such as study fees, extra-study fees, since the year...I began paying those fees. I have sent them to many extra-study courses since moving here.
 --How much do you have to pay, including for tuition and extra-study fees?
 --Just for extra-study, it is around 270,000 VND per month for the eldest child. For the second child, it is around 100,000 VND. It is a rather big sum for a 9th grade child. The fee for my youngest child who is going to kindergarten is 35,000 VND per month. The cost for his meals is 3,000 VND a day."¹⁹*

Within the same district, another father of three children talked about the cost of supporting his 11th grade son and 7th grade daughter in taking extra classes. He provides figures that are significantly lower than the those detailed by Mr. Tuong. These results, along with numerous other reports of widely variant schooling expenditures, suggest that within the Red River Delta, and even within districts and communes, there is a significant stratification of educational expenses. As these costs rise in proportion to low income levels in poor, and especially rural, families, it is likely that access to higher education will become increasingly stratified along social class lines. The extent of this stratification in expenditures, its correlation with family socioeconomic status, and the correlation between educational expenditures and educational attainment, all warrant further investigation. Such analyses would shed light on emergent stratification processes and one of the potential mechanisms for the transmission of socioeconomic status across generations.

Irrespective of class background, many men and women suggested that it was necessary to rely upon social connections and/or pay special remuneration (interpreted as an extension of gift-giving to show appreciation for favors) to secure employment of various kinds, especially within

high status occupations. The receiving of such gifts, or perquisites, seems to be normative practice among managers and administrators in decision-making or hiring roles, thus serving for some as another of the 'fringe benefits' associated with state sector employment. While superior educational attainment is a prerequisite, many interviewees suggest that education is a necessary, but not sufficient condition, for securing employment in the Red River Delta. Oftentimes references were made to relatives who worked for branches of the government or government enterprises, as respondents suggested they hoped to rely on these social networks to secure employment. Some parents even made comments to suggest that their children are strongly advised to pursue an educational degree that will provide training and credentials for the field in which they have the strongest, most reliable social connections to potential employers. A married woman from the rural village of Xuan Thanh made the following comments when asked about her son's future employment prospects:

"I have to lean on the acquaintances in the office. We need to find the work right after he finishes the course. Things will be very difficult if we are not able to find a job for him... My siblings all work in the construction branch, and my aunt is working in the inspection branch. I would like him to study these subjects so that we can find a good job for him. But it depends on his learning. He is very intelligent. My husband was also intelligent but he did not have the chance [to attend the university]. He was called to join the army in the year when he had just failed his entrance examination to the university. When he was demobilized, he was not able to continue his schooling because his family was very large; his parents had to try their best to support their children. There were many persons that were not as intelligent as him but they had the chance to study in the university."

Even older workers, especially those who have had to seek different lines of work after their previous jobs were terminated in *doi moi* era restructuring, speak of the importance of having had social ties to persons in influential positions and offices for their own occupational mobility outcomes. The continuity in this theme suggests that the method of relying upon social networks

¹⁹ Note that this interview was conducted during February, 2001. Therefore there will be some discrepancy between these expenses and the income values obtained from the 1995 VLS data. During the time of the in-depth interview the exchange rate was approximately 14,000 VND to one U.S. Dollar.

to secure employment has been a common practice over time. Furthermore, that the children of high status parents are embedded in social networks that demonstrate more fruitful for their own occupational outcomes, also appears to be relatively consistent across generations. A middle-age man and father of two, Mr. Lam, continues to work as a civil servant and earns a comfortable salary in this position. When asked, though, whether other workers in his division have been able to secure positions with higher salaries and more lucrative rewards, he agrees, but suggests that his own access to such positions was limited. He perceives access to these positions as being structured according to one's social connections within the sector:

"It depends on many factors to change one's job. It isn't just according to my will to change. For example, you can change your job because you have good relations, but I can't because I don't have those. It's very difficult. That's just something normal..."

Family members' social relationships with high status individuals in organizations of state employment have been instrumental for many young people as they seek employment and education opportunities. Several cases also demonstrate that influential information about, and access to, employment opportunities are channeled along social network ties among individuals who sought work in the period prior to market transition. One 38 year-old man of Ninh Binh town, who used to work in an administrative position for the commune but later changed jobs to work privately in electrical supplies production and sales, recounts how he and his sister obtained their positions:

"...it was very difficult to get a job at that time. At first, in 1981, there was a scholarship to study in _____ Electricity School. We got one because 3 of my older sisters worked there. We let our 7th sister take this chance because it had been hard for her to get a job. Furthermore, she was waiting for a job for a so long time.... Then through the close relationship between my father and _____, we knew that there were several scholarships for cadres' children to go to the Machine Assembly School. That's why I applied and got one of them. Actually, I just wanted to get away from at home. I didn't have any intention or will to do anything."

Like their predecessors, perhaps even more so than those seeking employment during the collective period, young men and women in Ninh Binh town expressed concern at the lack of

opportunities for local employment, seeing many of their friends return from college or university, only to return to their parents' homes to work in the family business or to assist their mothers with selling in the market. While many college students expressed a desire to return to their home village or district, this hope was often tempered by acknowledging that employment opportunities are significantly greater in cities such as Ha Noi. For those who actually are able to attend higher education, it is common to maintain hope that through the assistance of one's relatives and acquaintances a decent job in the local economy will eventually be found. A 20 year-old woman, Ms. Quyen, who lives in Ninh Binh town and is currently enrolled in college, explained that her uncle holds a high position in a government institute and she hopes he will help her to get a job. She also reasons that if her relatives cannot assist her that perhaps her fathers' friends in high positions will be of some assistance in locating a job. Asked whether she believes it is difficult applying for work these days in the Ninh Binh area, she responded:

"-Generally it is difficult, if you are not the child [of someone who works in the branch] then you must have money, must have other acquaintances.

-Money for what?

-To enter one office you must go up with money in order to raise an offer.

-For them [college graduates] to manage to find a job do they have to wait long?

-Yes, they wait about 1-2 years... They [those with relatives] also have to wait but certain times when a family member retires then they are just able to apply for work."

Mr. Phong, a resident of the village of Loc Hoa who works to support his two daughters that are currently enrolled in primary and secondary school, elaborated upon the difficulties faced by working class people in securing opportunities for their children. He remarked that in certain hamlets of the village students rarely continue schooling beyond the primary level, their parents too poor to pay education expenses and content with their learning to "read, write and count money." Even the few youth from Loc Hoa able to attend colleges or universities face difficulties in locating employment that can only be alleviated through connection to high status people in the community. He remarks,

"There are a few good students in this commune, that is their class position allowed them to study and give money to the government, after finishing school, the State gave them a job. But for my class position it is very difficult for my children, they do not get their turn..."

That this sentiment was echoed throughout interviews in diverse locations suggests that offering money to secure a position in the local economy is widespread practice. The lengths to which young people and their families will go to secure an education for their child (where their family economy allows) and then to secure a job, points to the chronic conditions of unemployment and underemployment facing youth that have just recently entered the labor force. This excerpt from a conversation with Ms. Cuc, an 18 year-old woman also living at home with her family in Ninh Binh and looking for work, represents the situation well:

*"--Do you feel that all of the young people that have gone to study at the University and return home to find work have difficulties?
 --It is hard; they have to have a degree.
 --Having a degree, then is that enough?
 --Certainly not yet, they have to have more money.
 --Are there many young people like yourself in Ninh Binh who are unemployed?
 --Very many."*

Ms. Cuc reiterates her point by describing the low status jobs of her college educated neighbors, pointing out that on her street alone there are perhaps 10 youth who have come back from studying at a college or university, only to find work as tailors, drivers and in various types of manual work, waiting for very long periods to apply for a position in a government sector organization. The slow pace of economic growth provides quite limited opportunities for college-educated youth to obtain professional employment, such that having a university degree is a necessary but not sufficient condition for successfully locating professional, secure, high status employment. Family connections to workers in high status and government sector employment, as well as the wealth that often derives from high status family backgrounds, appear to operate as important mechanisms in the intergenerational transmission of occupational status advantages. A

comparison of occupational outcomes for highly educated residents of the Red River Delta lends support to this conclusion. Specifically, Table 8.12 presents a comparison of mean occupational prestige scores for highly educated workers originating from diverse family backgrounds. These results demonstrate that among workers who have attained upper secondary schooling and higher levels of education, those with favorable or high status family backgrounds have higher average occupational prestige scores. Having a high status father (i.e., a father who attended upper secondary schooling, who worked for the government, or was a Communist Party member), specifically, is associated with a significant increase in occupational prestige for highly educated respondents. As previous analyses have shown, mothers' status is not so strongly influential for children's occupational outcomes.

Considering the circumstances in rural areas relative to urban areas, a sharp gulf between educational and career aspirations exists, further accentuating the rural-urban divide. The comments of Ms. Thuy, a single, 25 year-old woman from the rural village of Xuan Thanh, suggest that advanced schooling simply does not present itself as a feasible option for women in families where demands for labor in the household economy are great and the potential returns to education are practically imperceptible:

"Generally speaking in the countryside we must start working very early, working odd jobs we must start young, around 9 or 10 years old, and participating in labor activities we start around age 12 or 13; we must already go to transplant rice at this age...Basically, there was no need to go to school, the educational branch was lacking employees so I applied for work, but my parents were old, my two elder sisters got married, and my elder brother worked far from home, so I was only working there about a year and I had to leave [and return to agricultural work]."

The potential advantages of education are perceived and in demand among a segment young people growing up in the contemporary period within the remote, rural communities of the Red River Delta. The constraints of the subsistence level economy preclude expenditures on higher education costs in many cases, such that labor migration becomes essential to families who

desire their children to attend higher education. The perceived importance of education, and the drive by families to secure such human capital investment for their children, can introduce important changes in the organization of work and opportunities in the household economy. Ms. Hoa, a 39 year-old woman who works as a medical assistant in Xuan Thanh, told us about the extensive involvement of women in labor migration directed toward increasing the financial resources in the family economy. Although she believes that labor migration on the part of young women results in various forms of hardship, for example very hard labor demands exacted upon women as they to continue caring for family members after they have spent several days working in Ha Noi, she notes that this work is essential for certain families to achieve educational opportunities for their children. Her comments suggest that a unique sort of resourcefulness is necessary for poor families living in remote, largely agricultural regions of the Delta to send their children to school:

“The people who have to support their children’s schooling, they must go to Ha Noi to work. In my village there is a boy who studies at the University of economics and accounting. His mother had to go to Ha Noi and stayed there for 4 years, working to support him. She must give him several hundred [thousands] of dong every month. They find the income by working in Ha Noi acceptable. There are many families [engaged in labor migration], in which their income is much more than our savings—reaching some tens of millions of Vietnamese dong.”

Irrespective of education, there are challenges to locating stable, economically viable jobs in the Red River Delta’s fledgling economy. Family-based agricultural work and petty trading provide “fall back” jobs in an economy that offers few possibilities for the many residents searching for employment. In this scenario, social networks prove helpful. At times parental advantage, or status inheritance occurs through a relatively direct route, given that positions in certain state-owned enterprises have been restricted to limited segments of the population, namely returning soldiers and the children of current and former employees. For this reason, laboring in a large city textile factory has offered the promise of a job outside of agriculture, but only for a small

segment of the population. Ms. Van, who works the fields, raises pigs and operates a breakfast stall for a living, comments that she would have liked to work in such a place, but that,

“Only people who came back from the army could join in, and the children of the workers could join the workforce there. It was not easy for the others.”

The situation of Mr. Manh, once a soldier in the war against the French, who then worked in government coalmines and ended his working career in a state-operated electric station, reflects this perception. Currently he lives on a relatively generous retirement pension of 400,000 dong, which is sufficient to forego additional labor in his retirement years. He has few worries about the family economy, reflecting a relatively prosperous living situation relative to other workers in the Red River Delta. Mr. Manh has five living children, three of whom currently work or have worked in the electric station. He acknowledges that this situation has arisen through his former position in the company:

“Because I worked there, so I have advantages for them [my children] to work there as well. My last child does not work there, however, because most of my children already do. My daughter in law and my son in law also work there. I led them into this work.”

Other residents have suggested that there is a connection between locating a job and monetary fees paid by jobseekers and their parents. Asked about the importance of attending university for one's future job prospects, Mr. Phong of Loc Hoa (quoted above) commented that this is often not enough since for many parents,

“They don't have enough money for their children to find a good job. For example, my neighbor's child now is selling beer after leaving the university.”

It was common for respondents to lament the difficulties of locating a job after completing their education, and devoting great monetary resources to obtaining a degree. Ms. Phuong, a 55 year-old woman from rural Xuan Thanh village commented on this problem:

"The State should give students jobs after they graduate. Many students can't get a job though they have spent millions of Vietnamese Dong for their education. The State should help them to be employed after training them."

Collectively these comments highlight the importance of social networks for Red River Delta residents searching out employment and applying for jobs. They point to several ways that parental social status and political capital may be beneficial to young people as they navigate the local labor market, seeking out the few nonagricultural opportunities that are available, especially those in high status professional fields and the government sector. The frequent mention of possessing 'inside information' and special routes to job opportunities, often by payment of a fee or 'gift' to an influential person, echoes the views of Rona-Tas (1994), Parish and Michelson (1996), and others, that extensive clientelist relationships provide a mechanism for keeping wealth, status, and employment positions in the hands of elite groups. Interests are thus coordinated via "collusion and other forms of illicit transactions," and "cronyism becomes a by-product of an institutional order that [had] organized the allocation of resources by non-market means" (as quoted in Nee and Cao 2001:9). The quantitative analyses herein show a relationship between parents' ties to the state economy and Communist Party that is substantiated by in-depth interview accounts in which respondents report the common occurrence of monetary transactions to secure employment and reliance upon acquaintances for information and influence in seeking employment. In combination these results reveal one of the pathways where by status is transferred across generations and the social stratification order reproduced in a context beset by a 'new market economy' that is slow to develop and filled with an overabundance of workers for the few jobs, mostly in the agricultural and informal sectors, at hand.

8.7 Concluding Remarks

The results presented in this chapter illuminate many important processes related to occupational status attainment in the Red River Delta. The finding that educational attainment is a prerequisite for obtaining a position of high occupational prestige is consistent with previous analyses of status attainment in other countries, ranging from the U.S. to post-socialist China. Inter-generational mobility is relatively restricted in Viet Nam, as economic development moves forward at a slow pace and many young people simply take on occupations similar to those of their parents. The process of status inheritance is both direct and indirect among residents of the Red River Delta. We observe that parents with government sector employment, high levels of education and Communist Party membership, are better positioned to secure a higher education for the children, especially given the expanding costs associated with education beyond the primary school level. Persons with higher social class origins also tend to benefit from the social networks of similarly situated friends and relatives who then assist in the job application process. Although the recent history of socialist labor relations in northern Viet Nam might suggest that opportunities for occupational mobility would be relatively open and egalitarian, the evidence presented here suggests that the stratification order has not changed remarkably in the contemporary period.

These findings echo patterns of status inheritance that have been observed during previous stages of Vietnamese history. In her historical analysis of Vietnamese peasants' engagement with revolutionary movements and collectivization, Wiegiersma (1988: 153) commented that even at the onset of collectivization certain groups of more privileged peasants (i.e., middle peasants relative to poor peasants) found ways to work within the new structure that preserved their positions and status. For example, peasants who achieved leadership positions could receive extra shares of collective returns and could best preserve the interests of their family economy by contracting-out certain collective responsibilities. The findings presented here are also consistent

with evidence of a continuing advantage for administrative leaders in China's occupational order. Research by Huang (1990) and Yan (1995) similarly presented largely anecdotal evidence to demonstrate that people use gifts, favors, and other special connections obtain preferential access to the best jobs in local settings.

The current results also demonstrate the extent to which the process of occupational status attainment is a gendered process. Women predominate in agricultural production, an occupation associated with very low levels of income, as well as relative financial insecurity, and a very high level of labor intensity. Previous research has demonstrated that women came to dominate in the fields, taking over 'masculine' type jobs such as plowing and spreading manure, when male labor was in short supply (see for example Wiegersma 1988, p. 162). Age-cohort analyses of occupational status suggest that women's concentration in the agricultural field is becoming more pronounced among younger cohorts of residents, especially where men of working-age are living away from the village. Men are no more likely than women to labor in professional, managerial and clerical occupations. However, we do see that men have a slight edge over women in their mean level of occupational prestige—due mainly to the relative concentration of women laboring in low prestige agricultural jobs. An important conclusion regarding gender and occupations, however, is that the occupational attainment process operates differently for men and women. Specifically, we see that educational attainment is more essential to the attainment of occupational prestige for women relative to men. The gains to educational attainment are greater for women, as they experience gains in occupational status that are statistically significant, for both lower and upper secondary schooling. Men, by comparison only experience a significant gain in occupational status through education at the upper secondary level. The statistical analyses presented here demonstrate that the traditional variables in the status attainment model, in particular educational attainment, are more effective in explaining the

occupational status of women than of men. The fact that men's average occupational status is higher than that of women, in spite of this fact, suggests that men gain positions of higher occupational status by way of their gender status alone. Women, on the other hand, continue to be disadvantaged by their gender status, especially given their concentration in low status agricultural tasks. Current patterns of gendered occupational stratification in the Red River Delta, especially women's concentration in agricultural work, maintain women's low social status relative to men.

A shortcoming associated with the current research is that it does not provide for longitudinal analyses, nor does it enable a complete separation and distinct analysis of first, subsequent and current occupations. While interviewees elaborate most often upon their perceptions of and experiences within the current, market reform era, the quantitative data spans occupational careers that were initiated during the collective and *doi moi* periods. Further analyses, aimed at assessing the particular arguments of market transition theory, in particular, ought to isolate and compare workers whose occupational outcomes were established during the current period and those who sought their first and subsequent jobs prior to *doi moi*. As such, in future research I intend to conduct research that is more attuned to changes in the process of status attainment over time, in order to establish whether market reforms have altered the opportunity structure of occupational attainment in the north of Viet Nam. Furthermore, an long-range goal is to establish a working framework for comparative analysis of stratification orders and the role of political capital across Viet Nam, China, and other formerly state socialist societies.

Table 8.1 Measures of Socioeconomic Status by Primary Occupation for Employed Persons in Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995

Occupational Category	Number of Workers	Proportion of All Workers	Mean Educational Attainment
Professional, Technical and clerical workers	222	0.06	10.8
Sales and Services Workers	429	0.12	9.1
Handicraft, textile and food workers	216	0.06	8.9
Misc laborers incl transport and construction	536	0.15	8.5
Agriculture and fishing Workers	2,275	0.62	7.3
Total, All Workers	3,678	1.00	8.1
Occupational Category for Head of Household	Number of Household Heads	Proportion of HH Heads	HH Income per Capita (thousand VND)
Professional, Technical and clerical workers	80	0.06	2,729
Sales and Services Workers	181	0.12	2,532
Misc laborers incl transport and construction	258	0.18	2,053
Handicraft, textile and food workers	90	0.06	1,794
Agriculture and fishing Workers	845	0.58	1,431
Total, All Heads of Household	1,454	1.00	1,764
<i>Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey</i>			

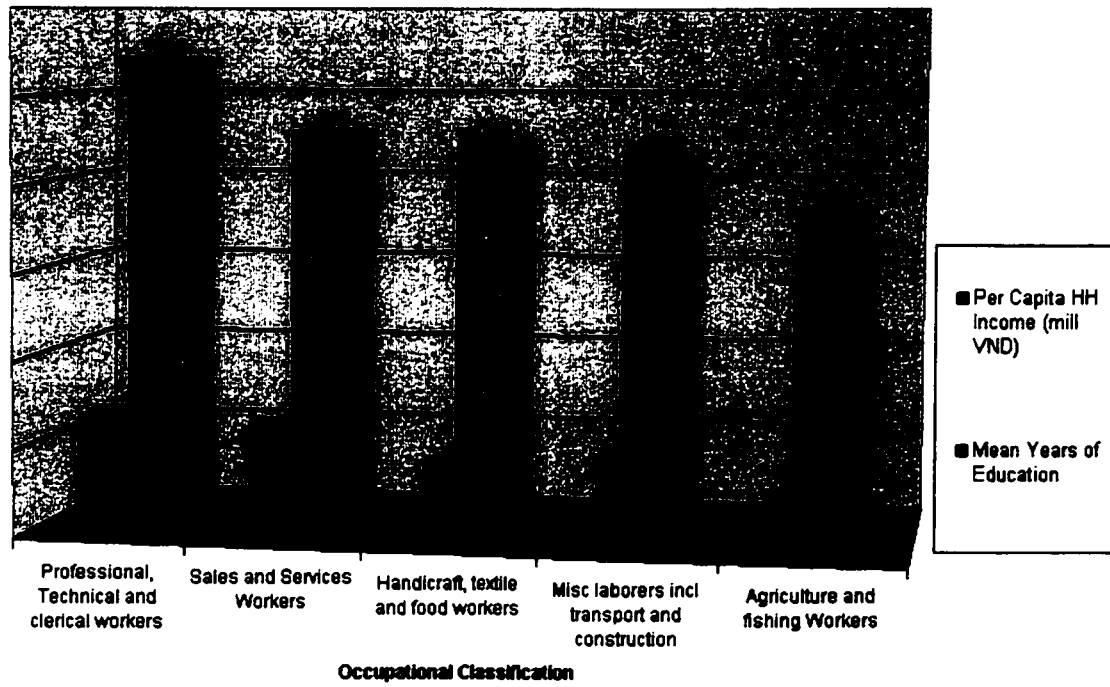


Figure 8.1. Indicators of Socioeconomic Status for Workers in Major Occupational Groups, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995

Table 8.2 Occupational Prestige Characteristics for Major Occupational Groups, Male and Female Workers in Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995

Major Occupational Group:											
	Professional, Technical and Clerical Workers		Sales and Services Workers		Agricultural Workers		Handicraft, Food and Textile Workers		Tranportation, Construction, and other Labor		
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Mean Prestige Score	52.1	55.8	36.7	37.6	22.8	22.6	33.8	33.8	32.6	31.9	
Median Prestige Score	55	60	42	42	22	22	33	33	32	32	
Minimum Score	30	30	20	20	21	21	28	26	18	18	
Maximum Score	78	78	46	45	48	42	43	43	52	52	
Standard Deviation	11.1	8.8	6.3	6.5	2.7	1.7	3.1	3.1	7.4	9.5	
(N)	112	110	167	262	969	1306	76	140	392	144	
Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey											

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

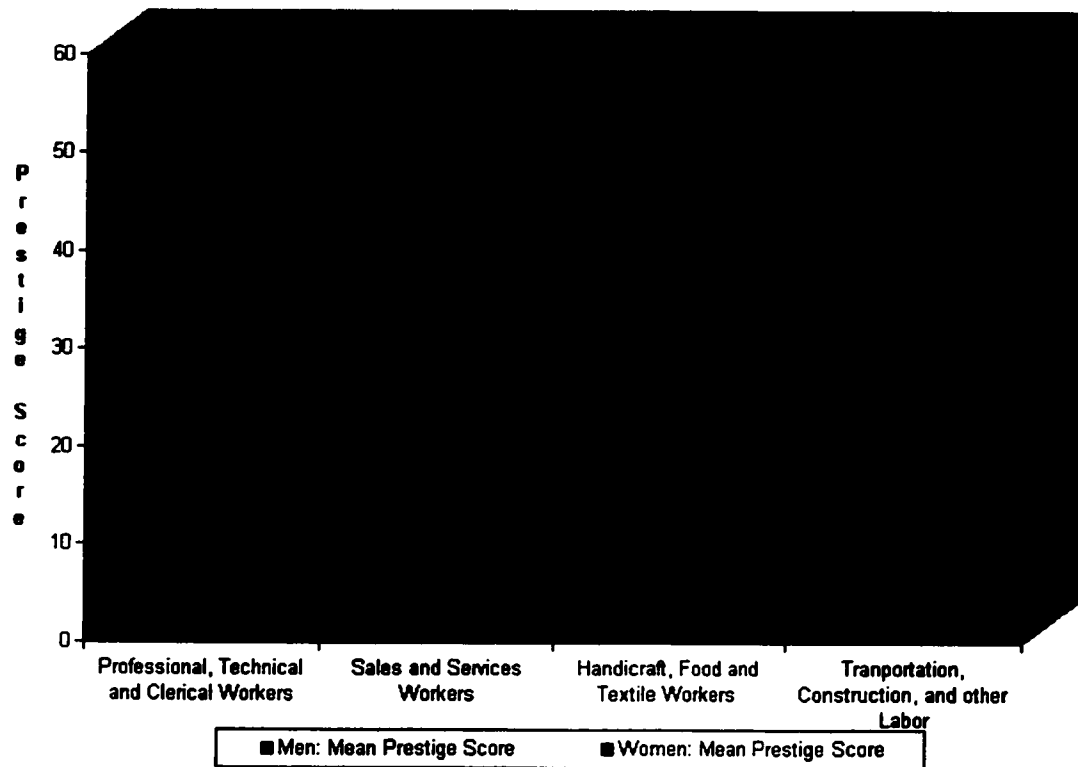
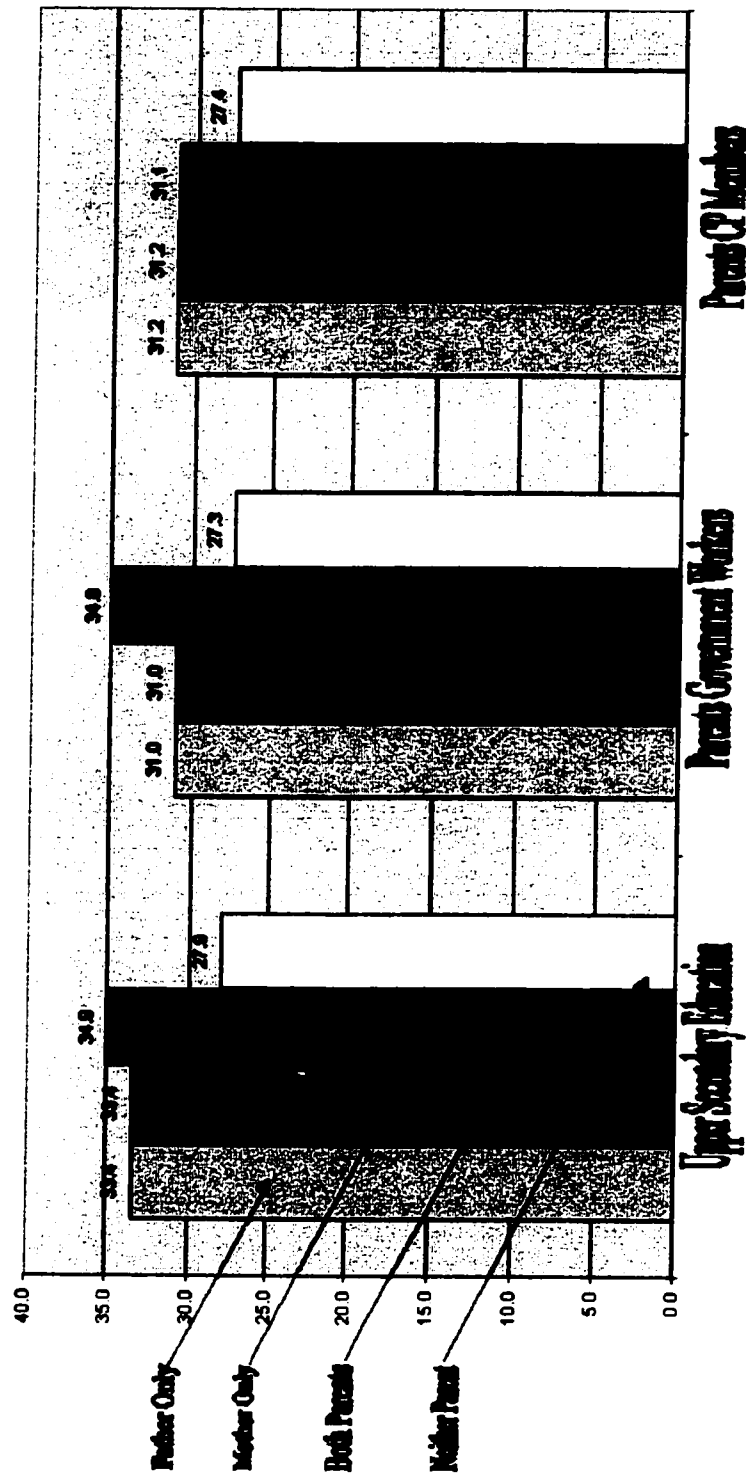


Figure 8.2 Mean Occupational Prestige Scores for Men and Women

Table 8.3 Bivariate Statistics, Occupational Prestige and Representation in High and Low Status Positions among Social Groups in Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995

	Mean Occupational Prestige Score	Std Deviation of Occupational Prestige Score	Proportion Working Agricultural Jobs	Proportion Working In Professional, Managerial and Clerical Jobs	(N)
GENDER					
Male	28.8	9.7	53.0%	6.1%	1,716
Female	27.9	9.9	63.8%	5.4%	1,963
BIRTHPLACE					
Urban Place (town or city)	36.6	10.6	9.3%	12.8%	321
Village Near Urban Place	28.7	10.1	61.0%	6.5%	1,704
Remote Village	26.4	8.4	72.9%	4.3%	1,654
FAMILY RELIGION					
Catholic	26.1	6.4	70.0%	0.8%	621
Buddhist	28.5	9.9	62.5%	6.4%	792
Not religious (Omitted)	28.9	10.5	59.3%	7.3%	2,263
PARENTAL STATUS					
PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT					
Only Father Has Upper Secondary Schooling	33.4	12.5	38.1%	16.7%	197
Only Mother Has Upper Secondary Schooling	30.2	10.7	36.8%	5.3%	36
Both Parents Have Upper Secondary Schooling	34.9	11.2	32.1%	17.3%	74
Neither Parent Has Upper Secondary Schooling	27.9	9.5	60.8%	4.8%	3,372
PARENTS' GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT					
Only Father Works(ed) for Government	31.0	11.6	48.4%	10.2%	559
Only Mother Works(ed) for Government	32.4	10.1	32.5%	7.5%	36
Both Parents Work(ed) for Government	34.8	11.1	14.8%	11.0%	216
Neither Parent Work(ed) for Government	27.3	9.0	64.4%	4.4%	2,868
PARENTS' CP MEMBERSHIP					
Only Father a CP Member	31.2	12.0	46.3%	11.1%	750
Only Mother a CP Member	30.8	11.0	37.8%	10.8%	36
Both Parents CP Members	31.1	12.5	44.6%	14.1%	83
Neither Parent a CP Member	27.4	8.9	62.6%	4.0%	2,799
RESPONDENT HUMAN CAPITAL					
R'S EDUCATION					
Primary-Less than Primary	25.2	5.9	79.4%	0.5%	637
Lower Secondary	26.8	8.0	66.9%	2.6%	2,256
Upper Secondary or Higher	35.3	13.3	33.1%	20.5%	786
R'S AGE					
15-29 Years Old	27.3	8.5	64.8%	3.6%	1,122
30-44 Years Old	28.2	10.1	67.7%	6.9%	882
45-65 Years Old	29.2	10.4	56.8%	7.2%	1,675
<i>Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey</i>					



• Source: 1995 Viet Nam Longitudinal Survey

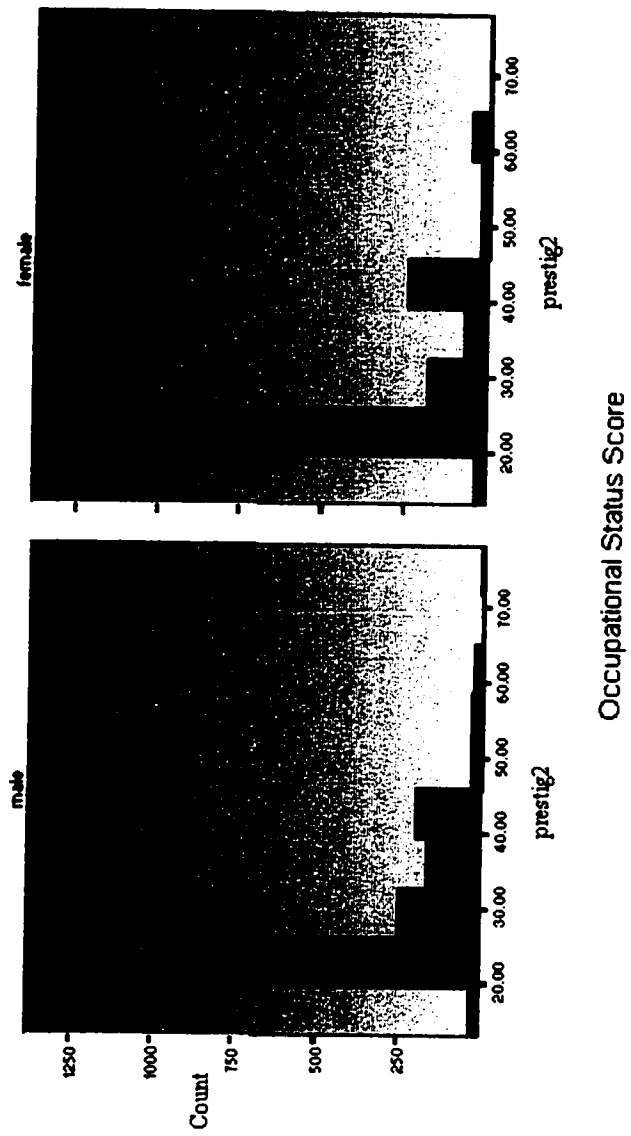
Note: The pattern of results shown in the first set of bars applies to government employment and Communist Party Membership

Figure 8.3 Mean Occupational Prestige Scores, by Parental Status Measures, Employed Persons in the Red River Delta, 1995

Table 6.4 OLS Regression: The Predictors of Occupational Prestige in Viet Nam's Red River Delta, All Workers (Men and Women), 1995

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5			
	B	***	Std Err	B	***	Std Err	B	***	Std Err	B	***	Std Err	B	***	Std Err	(N)
CONSTANT	27.92	***	0.22	25.90	***	0.28	24.96	***	0.29	21.66	***	0.51	23.20	***	1.02	
GENDER																
MALE	0.89	**	0.33	1.15	***	0.31	1.26	***	0.31	0.30		0.30	1.77	*	0.73	1,716
FEMALE (omitted)	--		--	--		--	--		--	--		--	--		--	1,963
BIRTHPLACE																
Urban				10.13	***	0.58	8.68	***	0.63	6.91	***	0.61	6.80	***	0.61	321
Near Urban				2.19	***	0.33	2.11	***	0.33	1.83	***	0.31	1.84	***	0.31	1,704
Remote (Omitted)				--		--	--		--	--		--	--		--	1,654
FAMILY RELIGION																
Catholic				-0.63	*	0.26	-0.25		0.25	0.35		0.25	0.26		0.25	621
Buddhist				0.57	*	0.26	0.19		0.25	-0.43		0.25	-0.35		0.25	792
Not religious (Omitted)				--		--	--		--	--		--	--		--	2,263
PARENTAL STATUS																
PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT																
Only Father Has Upper Secondary Schooling							3.19	***	0.72	2.37	***	0.69	2.45	***	0.68	197
Only Mother Has Upper Secondary Schooling							-0.54		1.58	-0.71		1.51	-0.10		1.51	36
Both Parents Have Upper Secondary Schooling							3.96	***	1.15	3.14	**	1.11	3.76	***	1.11	74
Neither Parent Has Upper Secondary Schooling (omitted)							--		--	--		--	--		--	3,372
PARENTS' GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT																
Only Father Works(ed) for Government							1.34	**	0.48	0.48		0.46	0.58		0.46	559
Only Mother Works(ed) for Government							2.67		1.59	1.79		1.51	1.97		1.50	36
Both Parents Work(ed) for Government							1.82	*	0.78	0.78		0.75	1.41		0.75	216
Neither Parent Work(ed) for Government							--		--	--		--	--		--	2,868
PARENTS' CP MEMBERSHIP																
Only Father a CP Member							2.29	***	0.42	1.26	**	0.40	1.20	**	0.40	750
Only Mother a CP Member							1.64		1.57	0.23		1.50	0.19		1.50	36
Both Parents CP Members							0.12		1.09	-1.35		1.04	-1.21		1.03	83
Neither Parent a CP Member (omitted)							--		--	--		--	--		--	2,799
RESPONDENT HUMAN CAPITAL																
R'S EDUCATION																
Primary-Less than Primary (Omitted)										--		--	--		--	637
Lower Secondary										2.01	***	0.45	0.80		1.08	2,256
Upper Secondary or Higher										8.83	***	0.55	5.66	***	1.25	786
R's AGE																
15-29 (Omitted)										--		--	--		--	1,122
30-44										2.66	***	0.45	-0.12		1.08	882
45-65										1.83	***	0.35	0.68		1.21	1,675
INTERACTION EFFECTS																
Gender*Lower Secondary													-1.27		0.82	--
Gender*Upper Secondary													-3.34	***	0.98	--
30-44*Lower Secondary													2.42	*	1.22	--
30-44*Upper Secondary													7.58	***	1.45	--
45-65*Lower Secondary													0.31		1.27	--
45-65*Upper Secondary													4.39	**	1.41	--
N	3,678			3,678			3,678			3,678			3,678			
-2 Log Likelihood																
R-square	0.00			0.08			0.11			0.20			0.21			
* p<=.05, ** p<=.01, ***p<=.001																

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey



Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

Figure 8.4 Occupational Prestige Score Distribution of Male and Female Workers, Age 15-65, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995

Table B.5 OLS Regression: The Predictors of Occupational Prestige, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, Women and Men, 1995

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			(N)
	B	Std Err		B	Std Err		B	Std Err		B	Std Err		B	Std Err		B	Std Err		
CONSTANT	25.65	***		0.32	24.68	***	0.33	20.88	***	0.66	27.32	***	0.34	26.49	***	0.36	23.14	***	0.62
BIRTHPLACE																			
Urban	11.89	***		0.74	10.07	***	0.80	8.26	***	0.77	7.57	***	0.91	6.78	***	1.04	4.95	***	1.00
Near Urban	2.34	***		0.44	2.24	***	0.44	1.92	***	0.42	2.04	***	0.48	2.00	***	0.48	1.74	***	0.46
Remote (Omitted)																			
FAMILY RELIGION																			
Catholic	-0.89	*		0.35	-0.48		0.34	0.17		0.34	-0.38		0.38	0.02		0.38	0.56		0.37
Buddhist	0.82	*		0.35	0.40		0.34	-0.26		0.34	0.31		0.38	-0.07		0.38	-0.64		0.37
Not religious (Omitted)																			
PARENTAL STATUS																			
PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT																			
Only Father Has Upper Secondary Schooling				3.94	***		0.94	3.15	***	0.91			2.07			1.09	1.26		1.05
Only Mother Has Upper Secondary Schooling				2.60			2.14	2.02		2.04			-2.56			2.36	-2.55		2.26
Both Parents Have Upper Secondary Schooling				3.87	**		1.46	2.82	*	1.41			4.71	**		1.87	4.09	*	1.81
Neither Parent Has Upper Secondary Schooling (omitted)																			
PARENTS' GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT																			
Only Father Works(ed) for Government				0.94			0.63	0.05		0.60			1.77	*		0.73	0.88		0.71
Only Mother Works(ed) for Government				0.54			1.97	-0.47		1.87			5.47	*		2.65	4.80		2.54
Both Parents Work(ed) for Government				3.22	***		0.97	1.67		0.94			-0.41			1.31	-0.80		1.26
Neither Parent Work(ed) for Government (omitted)																			
PARENTS' CP MEMBERSHIP																			
Only Father a CP Member				2.21	***		0.56	1.03		0.54			2.50	***		0.62	1.63	**	0.60
Only Mother a CP Member				1.32			1.98	-0.71		1.88			2.42			2.56	1.88		2.44
Both Parents CP Members				1.33			1.48	0.42		1.40			-0.59			1.60	-2.60		1.54
Neither Parent a CP Member (omitted)																			
RESPONDENT HUMAN CAPITAL																			
W'S EDUCATION																			
Primary-Less than Primary (Omitted)																			
Lower Secondary							2.48	***		0.59									
Upper Secondary or Higher							9.75	***		0.76									
W'S AGE																			
15-29 (Omitted)																			
30-44							2.95	***		0.62									
45-65							2.01	***		0.46									
N	1,962			1,962			1,962			1,715			1,715						
R-square	0.12			0.16			0.24			0.04			0.07						

* p<=.05, ** p<=.01, *** p<=.001

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

Table B.6 OLS Regression: The Predictors of Occupational Prestige, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 3 birth cohorts Ages 25-34, 35-44 and 45-55, 1995

Table B.5 OLS Regressions: The Predictors of Occupational Prestige, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 3 birth cohorts Ages 23-34, 35-44 and 45-55, 1995																			
		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
		B	Std Err	B	Std Err	B	Std Err	B	Std Err	B	Std Err	B	Std Err	B	Std Err	B	Std Err	B	Std Err
CONSTANT																			
		26.13	0.46	25.17	0.50	24.47	1.12	26.61	0.59	26.60	0.61	29.30	0.46	25.91	0.79	24.98	0.80	23.17	0.87
GENDER																			
Male		0.40	0.54	0.45	0.53	0.25	0.51	1.27	0.63	1.30	0.62	0.22	0.59	2.11	0.87	2.30	0.86	0.50	0.84
Female (omitted)																			
BIRTHPLACE																			
Urban		9.28	0.99	8.29	1.11	7.37	1.07	11.73	1.13	9.27	1.24	7.11	1.18	9.65	1.72	8.44	1.76	7.11	1.67
Near Urban		1.24	0.57	1.27	0.56	1.49	0.54	2.61	0.67	2.49	0.66	2.25	0.62	2.79	0.91	2.56	0.90	2.37	0.85
Rural (omitted)																			
FAMILY RELIGION																			
Catholic		-0.57	0.46	-0.08	0.46	-0.27	0.45	-0.49	0.54	-1.40	0.54	0.08	0.53	-1.51	0.69	-1.10	0.69	-0.27	0.65
Buddhist		0.51	0.46	0.02	0.46	-0.37	0.46	0.42	0.54	0.08	0.54	-0.69	0.52	1.44	0.69	1.03	0.69	0.14	0.66
Net religious (omitted)																			
PARENTAL STATUS																			
PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT																			
Only Father Has Upper Secondary Schooling		4.69	0.88	1.15	3.49	1.12				1.06	1.66	-0.35	1.56		0.72	2.75	-0.48	2.59	1.97
Only Mother Has Upper Secondary Schooling		3.92	2.72	2.13	2.63					3.95	7.38	8.00	6.96		7.86	10.35	-5.64	9.73	35
Both Parents Have Upper Secondary Schooling		6.22	2.17	5.50	2.09					5.28	3.67	2.39	3.45		NA	NA	NA	NA	3.72
Neither Parent Has Upper Secondary Schooling (omitted)																			
PARENTS' GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT																			
Only Father Work(ed) for Government		1.30	0.74	0.77	0.72					2.32	0.94	0.72	0.89		1.52	1.73	0.47	1.63	559
Only Mother Work(ed) for Government		1.32	2.56	-1.04	2.48					9.07	3.51	7.64	3.30		0.34	6.01	1.93	5.64	36
Both Parents Work(ed) for Government		1.28	1.22	-0.28	1.19					3.62	1.73	3.30	1.63		3.69	3.15	4.46	2.98	2868
Neither Parent Work(ed) for Government (omitted)																			
PARENTS' CP MEMBERSHIP																			
Only Father a CP Member		1.10	0.69	0.10	0.67					2.48	0.80	1.46	0.75		6.07	1.27	3.74	1.22	760
Only Mother a CP Member		7.44	2.79	6.21	2.69					1.30	3.30	1.11	3.10		5.13	7.32	0.91	6.89	36
Both Parents CP Members		-2.40	1.61	-3.13	1.55					1.61	2.55	-0.94	2.41		-4.76	5.19	-3.92	4.88	83
Neither Parent a CP Member (omitted)																			
RESPONDENT FARMAN CAPITAL																			
FIS EDUCATION																			
Primary-Less than Primary (omitted)																			
Lower Secondary					-0.09	1.12												2.59	0.97
Upper Secondary or Higher					5.67	1.24												10.63	1.23
N		1,014	1,014		1,014			1,109	1,109	1,109	1,109			590	590	590	590	690	690
R-square		0.08	0.12		0.19			0.12	0.09	0.12	0.22			0.07	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.21	0.21
* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001																			
Source: 1993 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey																			

Table 8.7 OLS Regression: The Predictors of Occupational Prestige, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, Urban and Rural Workers, 1995

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	Std Err	B	Std Err	B	Std Err	B	Std Err	B	Std Err	B	Std Err
CONSTANT	36.39	0.68	38.03	0.87	29.49	2.35	25.84	0.20	24.90	0.22	23.60	0.47
GENDER												
Male	-1.20	0.93	-1.91	0.93	-2.29	0.91	1.37	0.30	1.57	0.29	1.00	0.29
Female (omitted)												
FAMILY RELIGION												
Catholic	-4.16	3.89	-5.09	3.86	-2.78	3.75	-0.52	0.23	-0.18	0.23	0.15	0.23
Buddhist	-0.39	1.20	-0.59	1.21	-0.32	1.17	0.47	0.23	0.13	0.23	-0.22	0.34
Not religious (omitted)												
PARENTAL STATUS												
PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT												
Only Father Has Upper Secondary Schooling			3.43	1.55	2.59	1.61			2.71	0.74	2.10	0.73
Only Mother Has Upper Secondary Schooling			-7.89	3.60	-7.54	3.54			3.94	1.64	3.57	1.60
Both Parents Have Upper Secondary Schooling			2.97	2.29	2.76	2.27			4.13	1.30	3.30	1.28
Neither Parent Has Upper Secondary Schooling (omitted)												
PARENTS' GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT												
Only Father Works(ed) for Government			-0.59	1.26	-1.02	1.24			1.00	0.47	0.37	0.46
Only Mother Works(ed) for Government			-0.98	3.47	-0.42	3.35			3.81	1.68	2.98	1.64
Both Parents Work(ed) for Government			-2.92	1.37	-2.04	1.42			5.63	0.94	4.00	0.93
Neither Parent Work(ed) for Government (omitted)												
PARENTS' CP MEMBERSHIP												
Only Father a CP Member			2.46	1.11	1.37	1.08			1.40	0.41	0.76	0.41
Only Mother a CP Member			-0.42	3.44	-1.68	3.31			1.24	1.67	0.18	1.63
Both Parents CP Members			0.91	2.35	-1.20	2.30			-0.69	1.17	-1.79	1.14
Neither Parent a CP Member (omitted)												
RESPONDENT HUMAN CAPITAL												
R'S EDUCATION												
Primary-Less than Primary (Omitted)												
Lower Secondary					3.68	2.07						
Upper Secondary or Higher					9.91	2.10					0.69	0.43
R's AGE											5.90	0.56
Age 15-29 (omitted)												
Age 30 to 44					4.00	1.55						
Age 45 to 6					3.09	1.35					0.68	0.44
N	613		613		613		3,063		3,063		3,063	
R-square	0.03		0.10		0.10		0.02		0.11		0.12	

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

Table 6.8 Multinomial Logistic Regression, the Determinants of Sales and Services Occupations, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	exp(B)	***	Std Err	exp(B)	***	Std Err	exp(B)	***	Std Err	exp(B)	***	Std Err
GENDER												
MALE	0.10	**	-2.81	0.64	**	0.11	0.63	**	0.11	0.84		0.15
FEMALE (omitted)	--		--	--		--	--		--	--		--
BIRTHPLACE												
Urban				1.91	**	0.46	1.90	**	0.50	2.20	**	0.58
Near Urban				1.21		0.24	1.10		0.22	1.05		0.21
Remote (Omitted)				--		--	--		--	--		--
FAMILY RELIGION												
Catholic				4.91	***	2.43	4.13	**	2.06	2.24		1.14
Buddhist				1.10		0.22	1.14		0.23	1.15		0.24
Not religious (Omitted)				--		--	--		--	--		--
PARENTAL STATUS												
PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT												
Only Father Has Upper Secondary Schooling							0.36	***	0.11	0.42	**	0.12
Only Mother Has Upper Secondary Schooling							0.76		0.68	0.72		0.66
Both Parents Have Upper Secondary Schooling							0.50		0.21	0.55		0.24
Neither Parent Has Upper Secondary Schooling (omitted)							--		--	--		--
PARENTS' GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT												
Only Father Works(ed) for Government							1.29		0.29	1.57		0.37
Only Mother Works(ed) for Government							1.29		0.94	1.50		1.12
Both Parents Work(ed) for Government							1.45		0.48	1.72		0.59
Neither Parent Work(ed) for Government (omitted)							--		--	--		--
PARENTS' CP MEMBERSHIP												
Only Father a CP Member							0.60	**	0.12	0.72		0.15
Only Mother a CP Member							0.83		0.53	1.11		0.73
Both Parents CP Members							0.39	*	0.18	0.49		0.23
Neither Parent a CP Member (omitted)							--		--	--		--
RESPONDENT HUMAN CAPITAL												
R'S EDUCATION												
Primary-Less than Primary (Omitted)										--		--
Lower Secondary										0.23	**	0.15
Upper Secondary or Higher										0.06	***	0.04
R's AGE												
15-29 (Omitted)										--		--
30-44										0.57		0.16
45-65										0.74		0.18
N	3,877			3,877			3,877			3,877		
R-square	0.02			0.09			0.11			0.15		

* p<=.05, ** p<=.01, ***p<=.001

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

Table 8.9 Multinomial Logistic Regression, the Determinants of Working in Agriculture (Relative to Professional, Managerial and Clerical Jobs), Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995

[illegible]

Table 8.10 Multinomial Logistic Regression, the Determinants of Handicrafts, Textile and Food Production Occupations, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	exp(B)	***	Std Err	exp(B)	***	Std Err	exp(B)	***	Std Err	exp(B)	***	Std Err
GENDER	0.10	***	-3.21	0.51	***	0.10	0.50	***	0.10	0.73		0.15
MALE	--		--	--		--	--		--	--		--
FEMALE (omitted)												
BIRTHPLACE												
Urban				1.19		0.34	0.86		0.27	1.03		0.33
Near Urban				0.91		0.20	0.81		0.18	0.78		0.18
Remote (Omitted)				--		--	--		--	--		--
FAMILY RELIGION												
Catholic				14.45	***	6.86	11.05	***	5.29	4.91	**	2.41
Buddhist				0.67	*	0.14	0.69		0.15	0.64	*	0.14
Not religious (Omitted)				--		--	--		--	--		--
PARENTAL STATUS												
PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT												
Only Father Has Upper Secondary Schooling							0.55		0.19	0.53		0.19
Only Mother Has Upper Secondary Schooling							2.39		2.05	1.63		1.46
Both Parents Have Upper Secondary Schooling							0.50		0.26	0.39		0.22
Neither Parent Has Upper Secondary Schooling (omitted)							--		--	--		--
PARENTS' GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT												
Only Father Works(ed) for Government							1.02		0.30	1.14		0.34
Only Mother Works(ed) for Government							2.65		2.04	2.63		2.10
Both Parents Work(ed) for Government							3.29	***	1.21	3.16	**	1.22
Neither Parent Work(ed) for Government (omitted)							--		--	--		--
PARENTS' CP MEMBERSHIP												
Only Father a CP Member							0.39	***	0.10	0.47	**	0.12
Only Mother a CP Member							0.00		0.00	0.00		0.00
Both Parents CP Members							0.18	**	0.11	0.23	*	0.15
Neither Parent a CP Member (omitted)							--		--	--		--
RESPONDENT HUMAN CAPITAL												
R'S EDUCATION												
Primary-Less than Primary (Omitted)										--		--
Lower Secondary										0.15	**	0.10
Upper Secondary or Higher										0.04	***	0.03
R's AGE												
15-29 (Omitted)										--		--
30-44										0.18	***	0.06
45-65										0.45	**	0.12
N	3,877			3,877			3,877			3,877		
R-square	0.02			0.09			0.11			0.15		

* p<=.05, ** p<=.01, ***p<=.001

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

Table 8.11 Multinomial Logistic Regression, the Determinants of Transportation, Construction and Other Labor Occupations among Red River Delta workers, Workers Age 15-65, 1995

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	exp(B)	***	Std Err	exp(B)	***	Std Err	exp(B)	***	Std Err	exp(B)	***	Std Err
GENDER												
MALE	0.44	***	5.93	2.66	***	0.44	2.58	***	0.44	4.08	***	0.74
FEMALE (omitted)	-		-	-		-	-		-	-		-
BIRTHPLACE												
Urban				1.44		0.35	1.23		0.33	1.69		0.47
Near Urban				1.34		0.25	1.20		0.23	1.19		0.23
Remote (Omitted)				-		-	-		-	-		-
FAMILY RELIGION												
Catholic				8.56	***	4.00	6.62	***	3.11	2.76	*	1.33
Buddhist				1.12		0.20	1.14		0.21	1.14		0.22
Not religious (Omitted)				-		-	-		-	-		-
PARENTAL STATUS												
PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT												
Only Father Has Upper Secondary Schooling							0.34	***	0.10	0.33	***	0.10
Only Mother Has Upper Secondary Schooling							1.50		1.20	1.02		0.86
Both Parents Have Upper Secondary Schooling							0.26	**	0.12	0.22	**	0.11
Neither Parent Has Upper Secondary Schooling (omitted)							-		-	-		-
PARENTS' GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT												
Only Father Works(ed) for Government							1.08		0.25	1.25		0.30
Only Mother Works(ed) for Government							1.23		0.91	1.29		1.00
Both Parents Work(ed) for Government							2.43	**	0.79	2.35	**	0.82
Neither Parent Work(ed) for Government (omitted)							-		-	-		-
PARENTS' CP MEMBERSHIP												
Only Father a CP Member							0.59	**	0.11	0.75		0.15
Only Mother a CP Member							0.80		0.51	1.04		0.71
Both Parents CP Members							0.36	*	0.16	0.49		0.23
Neither Parent a CP Member (omitted)							-		-	-		-
RESPONDENT HUMAN CAPITAL												
R'S EDUCATION												
Primary-Less than Primary (Omitted)										-		-
Lower Secondary										0.19	**	0.12
Upper Secondary or Higher										0.03	***	0.02
R'S AGE												
15-29 (Omitted)										-		-
30-44										0.11	***	0.03
45-65										0.33	***	0.06
N	3,877			3,877			3,877			3,877		
R-square	0.02			0.09			0.11			0.15		

* p<=.05, ** p<=.01, ***p<=.001

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

Table 8.12 Comparison of Mean Occupational Prestige Scored for Respondents with Upper Secondary Schooling and Higher, Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995

	Mean Occupational Prestige Score	N	F-test; stat. Signif.
Religion			
Family--No religion	36.1	577	0.02
Family--Catholic	30.7	27	0.07
Family--Buddhist	33.9	180	0.08
Parents' Social Status			
Father Attended Upper Secondary School	37.9	148	0.008
Father Less than Upper Secondary Schooling	34.7	638	--
Mother Attended Upper Secondary School	36.1	65	0.62
Mother Less than Upper Secondary Schooling	35.3	721	--
Father a government employee	36.9	340	0.005
Father Did not work for government	34.2	446	--
Mother a government employee	37.3	140	0.06
Mother Did not work for government	34.9	646	--
Father a CP member	37.2	329	0.001
Father not a CP member	34.0	457	--
Mother a CP member	35.1	64	0.88
Mother not a CP member	35.4	721	--
<i>Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey</i>			

Chapter 9. Conclusion

9.1 Overview of Dissertation Objectives

In this dissertation I have attempted to document and explain the determinants of economic participation and occupational status within the Red River Delta of northern Viet Nam at the close of the 20th century. Through systematic comparisons of men's and women's employment positions and labor supply, I have shown how gender operates as a salient feature influencing socioeconomic stratification and labor force participation.

Throughout the dissertation, both quantitative and qualitative results illustrate how men's and women's economic activities have been shaped by decades of political upheaval and war, a precarious period of centrally-planned, socialist economic organization, and finally, the gradual emergence of market economic relations. As a result, difficult economic circumstances have beset residents of the Red River Delta, due to the loss of life and devastation of infrastructure during the war, the collapse of the cooperative economy and strains of adjustment to the new market economic environment. Given its status as a developing country undergoing transition from socialism to a market economy, Viet Nam has provided a fruitful case for assessing gendered inequalities and women's socioeconomic status positions relative to men. Furthermore, its cultural history, being steeped in patriarchal ideology that has engendered a preference for sons and degradation of women's status relative to men (Haughton and Haughton 1995), as well as socialist political doctrine emphasizing gender egalitarianism (Ungar 2000; Wiegersma 1988), has contributed to unique economic activity patterns for women. In such a setting we observe women fully participating in economic activity, their activities being channeled into sectors of the economy that most readily accommodate their labor and reinforce their familial duties. Decades

of socialism reinforced women's importance in making valuable contributions to the economic livelihood of families, yet the social division of labor that emphasized women's roles in farming, trading, and home-based activities remained largely intact during the socialist period. Where war and economic hardship exerted pressure upon family and village economic production as men were often drawn to the front, the frontier, or the metropolis, women remained in the home village, expanding their work beyond the traditional realm of the field and market, to work on construction brigades, plowing teams, and otherwise in the public domain. They also moved more often into the services, clerical and administrative roles that expanded with the development of socialist organizational and bureaucratic patterns. The patterns of women's movement into labor force roles, especially into work that transcended normative gender roles, demonstrates how historically-specific demands for women's labor—during the American war and in times of heightened male migration—influenced the amount and character of their work, diversifying its bases and enhancing its visibility.

In this concluding chapter I aim to summarize several of the central findings from each of the substantive, analytical chapters. I point out not only the key findings, but also questions that remain unanswered and new questions that are raised in light of the present findings. I also attempt to make connections across the three chapters and delineate interconnections and a common message on gender and work roles that emanates from a joint consideration of the research findings in their entirety.

9.2 On Labor Force Participation and Gender in the Market Reform Era

There is value, both substantively and empirically, in examining labor force participation as a multidimensional concept. I have undertaken one such approach to capturing this

multidimensionality, by investigating the finer distinctions that underlie aggregate labor force participation rates—rates that reach practically universal levels in many developing countries such as Viet Nam. Specifically, for both men and women I systematically measure the duration of working hours and occupational multiplicity, or engagement in multiple jobs, to show the diversity of labor inputs across individual workers. Several major findings, presented in chapter six, speak to the ways that family and community context condition men's and women's levels of economic participation. A finding of major significance, consistent with previous observations on women's labor force participation in Southeast Asia and Viet Nam, in particular, is that women's labor force participation levels are similar to, and often in excess of, those of men. Women's work duration and incidence of multiple jobholding also parallels that of men. Certain geographic locations and sectors of employment are especially conducive to men's and women's ability to work multiple jobs and for periods of long duration. Specifically, residing in an intermediate rural area generates a boost to economic participation where proximity to highway infrastructure and market activity encourages investment in economic sideline activities and household occupational diversity, while a firm grounding in traditional agricultural activity is maintained. The two sets of regression models presented in Tables 6.6 and 6.7 revealed that persons employed primarily as employees (usually in government organizations) experience an enhancement in working hours that occurs largely through their status as multiple jobholders. Women, more often than men, remain active in agricultural work and other informal sector jobs at the same time that they work as employees in state offices or private enterprise. This is a dualism made possible only within geographic locations that possess a relative abundance of opportunities for working in diverse economic sectors. These spatial and sectoral dimensions are among the most influential factors shaping the intensity and occupational multiplicity of labor

force participation—they are important to both men's and women's levels of economic participation.

The analyses of labor force participation in chapter six also highlight fine points of differentiation across men and women, and features of their family composition, to demonstrate how labor force participation patterns are adaptable to the economic resource demands faced by families, especially those met in raising and educating children. Comparing the levels of economic participation for men with young and school-age children to those without children or with grown children reinforces the viewpoint on economic participation presented in theories of subsistence and peasant economy. Specifically, the significant, positive association between working hours and numbers of dependent children demonstrates that time spent in work participation is greater for men, the more children they have, both under age six, and currently enrolled in school. For women a similar pattern emerges—the intensity of economic participation does not decline for women with young children as one might expect, due to the increase in time spent in feeding, watching and otherwise caring for your children. Furthermore, among women with children enrolled in school the likelihood and duration of economic participation is actually higher than it is among their counterparts who do not have children in school, and thus do not face the substantial expenditures associated with school enrollment and preparatory investments for advancing to the upper secondary and tertiary levels of education. In their economic behavior, then, residents of the Red River Delta resemble the peasants studied by Chayanov, Gourou, Scott and others, among whom family composition influenced the ratio of workers to consumers in the household (i.e., constituting the 'dependency ratio'), and thus the amount of labor necessarily performed by household members to provide for subsistence needs.

In the Red River Delta the movement to a more modern, market-oriented economy has heightened the emphasis upon educational achievement, just as the costs of education have risen and become more unequal (a point reinforced in chapter eight). Thusly, agricultural workers striving to meet subsistence needs are joined by other workers who struggle to ensure their children's future in the labor market, in working long periods of time, often in several lines of activity. As such women and men across diverse social class backgrounds are motivated to maximize labor inputs to meet family expenditure demands which increase substantially in the presence of young children and children currently enrolled in school. That women with young children, too, experience an increase in their level of economic participation speaks to the strength of this relationship. It also demonstrates that diverse, flexible modes of childcare exist which enable women to work continuously over their lifetimes. Clearly women's and men's levels of economic participation are constrained by local opportunity structures; however, within these local frameworks there is room for expanding and contracting one's effort and potentially one's income-generating potential in response to economic demands that fluctuate over the family life course.

The analyses of economic participation, while advancing beyond simple "in" versus "out," dichotomous indicators of labor force participation, do present several challenges and shortcomings. To begin, due to data limitations the analyses rely upon relatively unrefined estimations of time spent in work activities for the market, rather than using a complete disaggregation of time allocation to multiple economic activities, social reproduction tasks, social participation and leisure pursuits. It is helpful that interviewees' discussions of their work schedules aid in understanding time allocation in its entirety and substantiate the position that women perform the bulk of domestic chores and childcare. Furthermore, the inclusion of primary

and secondary occupations adds a layer of necessary complexity to the analysis; however, this may not be enough to capture the entire spectrum of work activities that women and men engage in, even over a short duration of time. On a related note, the annual collection of data and absence of questions about changes in work performed at different times of the year restricts the analysis to a 'snapshot' of work activity that likely shifts over the course of a year, and especially during the more intensive agricultural harvest seasons. A more complete, detailed picture of economic participation would trace differences in men's and women's work across the year and more effectively capture seasonal dynamics in economic participation.

9.3 On Historical Shifts in Men's and Women's Economic Roles

Historical shifts in the occupational structure of the Red River Delta over the last decades of the 20th century have generated important shifts in women's and men's economic roles. During the years that Vietnamese men were being mobilized on a massive scale to fight wars with the Americans and Southern regime, Cambodia and China, women on the homefront were charged with a new set of work responsibilities in order to maintain agricultural production and war-related production. At this time they began to enter business services and social services occupations, as well as a diverse set of manual labor occupations, more frequently and rapidly than they had before. Women became the majority of the labor force in villages; they had 'visiting marriages' in which they coped with the absence of an adult male in their family labor force; and, they took on jobs in state enterprise and agricultural cooperatives that would have been performed by men in peacetime.

The parallels to American women's incorporation into skilled-trade and factory production jobs during the mid 1940s are instructive. Both settings suggest that there is

considerable flexibility of gender-work norms and institutional policies regarding women's employment at times when there is a great demand for women's labor. As the massive expansion of the military in Viet Nam has waned and troops have been demobilized, we see among the most recent cohort of young married adults that men's representation in agricultural work is increasing quite markedly relative to younger cohorts, while women's representation in agriculture has increased only slightly since the mid 1960s. This finding suggests that the so-called 'feminization of agriculture' as it has been conceptualized in other developing countries, is perhaps more aptly described as an 'agriculturalization' of the labor force in parts of the Red River Delta where occupational structure is readjusting in the context of demobilization and loosening of socialist production patterns.

There is some evidence from analysis of marriage cohorts in the VLS that the gains young women made in achieving entry into relatively high status business services and social service occupations during the 1960s and 1970s have been eroded in the market reform period. Not only have such occupations among young adults declined as a share of the total occupational structure since the *doi moi* reforms. It is also the case that women's representation in business services and social services has declined while men's has risen. These findings are consistent with Ungar's (2000) notion that a 're-gendering' of work activity has taken hold in Viet Nam during the recent transition to market socialism. The trends revealed in the VLS data for young married workers suggest that women's gains in certain areas of professional, state sector employment may have represented fleeting opportunities and period-specific gains. One occupational sector that has experienced gradual, consistent growth among young workers over the latter half of the 20th century is that of commerce and trading. The analyses here confirm the frequent observation that women work as traders and operators of small businesses more

commonly than men. In the Red River Delta we see the proportion of women and men in commerce and personal services edging slightly higher over time, with women maintaining a consistent numeric and proportional edge over men. According to scholars in the field of gender and development, who frequently assert that men move into commerce and family businesses when these roles become more lucrative under market development, the current gendered trajectory indicates that commerce and personal services do not yet carry the prestige and levels of remuneration necessary to heighten the participation of young men. Tracing this trend as the nascent market economy in Viet Nam becomes more mature and lucrative, and as the stigmatization of trading and market activity declines, will be a useful exercise for addressing processes of gender stratification that map onto economic development processes.

From chapter seven we also come to realize that over time the high status occupations in business services and professional services have increasingly become the domain of young people whose parents hold positions of relative prestige and high social class background in the society. That is, among the youngest cohort of men and women able to achieve these professional positions in the labor force, there is a disproportionate share of persons whose parents have high levels of education, government employment and Communist Party membership. This pattern of results, in which the children of privileged social backgrounds are in turn favored in entering occupations of relatively high status, suggest that the socialist experience did little to transcend the obstacles of social class in achieving meritocratic occupational status attainment processes and that it failed to generate any reconfiguration of intergenerational status inheritance patterns. Young people from high status backgrounds have enjoyed an advantage in obtaining high status occupations for several decades and a social class divide that has been reproduced across generations continues to the present day.

The conclusions I derive about men's and women's changing economic roles are taken solely from information on respondents' occupational activity at first marriage. This approach aids in formulating an analysis of historical change in the absence of longitudinal data. While it is practicable to examine changing gender economic roles by addressing the activities of young men and women in their early 20s as they enter stages of economic independence and family formation, a more thorough study would focus upon the full range of workers, young and old alike, at distinct periods of time. Furthermore, while the first job one fulfills, or one's job at first marriage, is an important indicator for the economic role one fulfills in the society, we are not equipped for addressing change in occupational status over the life course, and how any one individual's economic role shifted over the decades in response to historical and economic changes, and life course transitions. The finding, in chapter six, that many workers hold multiple jobs also suggests that it is also important to elicit information on all economic activities to capture economic roles in their entirety. Qualitative analyses are a valuable addition in this respect, with women's accounts revealing the multitude of economic roles that they pursued during their husbands' long-term absences.

To clarify the degree to which women's economic roles have shifted across historical eras as a result of macro-level societal changes, versus changes in the immediate household labor force composition, further analyses should take into account the independent effects of historical change in the demand for labor, family structural change, and change in men's and women's stores of human capital and work experience. Where data allow, an analysis of women's and men's relative levels of representation in different employment sectors (e.g., state office, family business, agricultural cooperatives) would provide valuable insights for understanding an important dimension of gender stratification—men's and women's differential incorporation into

public spheres of employment versus home-based production. Furthermore, just as the analyses of labor force participation in chapter six would yield a more complete picture of women's time allocation through the addition of distinct, quantitative data on time spent in childcare and domestic chores, it would be especially valuable to delineate how women's time spent in social reproduction tasks have changed over time, and the extent to which women's responsibility for performing social reproduction tasks was alleviated through socialist institutions and whether this burden has re-emerged during the market reform period.

9.4 On Occupational Status Attainment Processes and the transmission of Status across Generations

The analyses of occupational attainment processes in the Red River Delta demonstrate that access to high status employment positions is not egalitarian, but rather a pattern of status inheritance across generations accrues through both direct and indirect routes. We observe that parents with government sector employment, high levels of education and Communist Party membership, are better positioned to secure a higher education for their children, especially given the expanding costs associated with education beyond the primary school level. Persons with higher social class origins also tend to benefit from the social networks of similarly situated friends and relatives who then assist in the job application process. Although the recent history of socialist labor relations in northern Viet Nam might suggest that opportunities for occupational mobility would be relatively open and egalitarian, the evidence presented here suggests that the stratification order in the early stages of market reform maintains status relations from the socialist period.

A great emphasis upon educational achievement shapes the lives of young people in the Red River Delta. Among urban and high status families, a significant proportion of parents'

expenditures are dedicated to enhancing youth's educational prospects. The leading aspiration of many men and women is to see their children go into higher education so that they may ultimately succeed in obtaining a comfortable, secure, well-remunerated occupation. However, competition for entering the public university system continues to be fierce and successful entrance and performance in the university falls far short of guaranteeing a job or upward social mobility. Embeddedness in a structure of family and kin relationships that generate access to employment in government offices and enterprises is a valuable resource for young labor force entrants attempting to secure work in the midst of underemployment and the absence of a mature formal labor market.

Although lacking historical evidence for pre-existing disparities, the comments of interviewees suggest that a widening gulf in access to educational resources, delineated by family social class background, has taken hold in the Red River Delta. The central role of educational attainment in achieving high status positions in professional occupations, coupled with emergent inequalities in educational resources, has great implications for the reproduction of occupational status outcomes across generations and into the market reform period. For those families that have been able to accumulate stable and relatively generous remuneration for their employment it is much more viable to obtain for their children the extra classes, tutoring, and college preparation resources deemed necessarily for educational advantage.

9.5 Reconsidering Gender Egalitarianism in Economic Activity

In combination the findings reported in this dissertation demonstrate that it is difficult to arrive at a definitive conclusion concerning the degree of gender egalitarianism in economic participation in northern Viet Nam. To begin, we see clearly the multidimensional nature of

women's status relative to men, as highlighted by sociologists such as Mason (1986) and Brinton (1993). For example, women's gains in achieving remunerative work outside of the home when collectives and the workpoint system were initiated, and during the current market reform period, were not entirely beneficial to their status positions because their social reproduction tasks and family-based agricultural production activities were not fully assumed by state institutions, nor did husbands undertake significant shares of work in the domestic sphere. As a result, women's work burdens were doubled, as scholars such as White (1989) have pointed out. Work in the public sphere has actually been a detriment to certain women's abilities to obtain a voice and presence in local political bodies and women's organizations because the burden of work leaves little or no time for leisure or rest. Political involvement is thus beyond the reach of many young women struggling to manage the dual roles of mother and laborer.

Through historical analyses it is revealed that women's gains in achieving employment outside of traditional activities in agriculture, petty trading and handicraft production were enhanced as a result of the war and the growth of socialist production organizations. While men do not experience a distinct numeric advantage over women in professional, managerial and clerical occupations (i.e., those jobs deemed 'high status' in an emerging market economy) in the Red River Delta, young men have increased their representation in these jobs in the most recent period, while young women's representation has contracted since the onset of market reforms and demobilization of armed forces. Parents' aspirations are that both sons and daughters will escape the drudgery of farming and the stigma and financial risk of petty entrepreneurship by achieving some form of state employment. However, for the few women who attain professional positions—most commonly working as teachers or as assistants in healthcare or administrative fields—there is not necessarily a parallel elevation in status or reduction in responsibilities for

social reproduction tasks in the household realm. Older women and men often comment that they wish professional jobs upon their daughters, especially work in the teaching profession, because they perceive these jobs to combine most readily with their foremost womanly obligation to family, and the hours of work can be combined with taking care for husband and children. That women whose primary jobs involve state sector employment are most likely to be multiple jobholders also demonstrates women are more inclined (or expected) than men to maintain work obligations in family agriculture or nonagricultural tasks once they have moved into formal sector, and even high status, jobs. That certain women have achieved professional occupational roles, or have moved into traditionally male lines of work does not necessarily represent that a population of women have been liberated through adherence to socialist ideological principles or cooperative work organizations. Rather, the select group of women who have achieved such economic status positions have done so without foregoing their obligations to family and without shedding many of their traditional roles in social reproduction and subsistence production.

In general the analyses in this dissertation demonstrate how women's status positions relative to men's, as measured by levels of economic participation and achievement of occupations in professional occupations, must be interpreted in a way that recognizes the exacting demands placed upon women's time and energy. Women continue to perform the vast majority of chores in the household, even though the intensity of their economic participation is comparable to that of men. In in-depth interviews women are much less likely to report having free time, or they tend to conceptualize free time as performing household subsistence tasks, such as taking care of livestock or watching their children. In young adulthood and old age, women are frequently drawn into childcare tasks and other types of unpaid labor that enable other women to participate more fully in economic activity outside of the home. As a result their own time for

education, leisure, political participation and rest may be significantly cut short. In many ways, economic participation on the part of women fails to bring autonomy or liberation from obligations in the household realm. Rather, their work is compounded and diversified, as they work on many fronts to provide for their families.

9.6 Directions for Future Research

The research presented in this dissertation has generated numerous additional research questions and has set the stage for a research agenda that further extends questions about gender inequalities and women's socioeconomic status. For one, I believe that subsequent research on women's economic participation should incorporate a longitudinal component that assesses how changes in family structure and changes in other family members' work activities and income generation influences the work of married women. An analysis that examines in detail how women's activities and duration of work change in the months prior to giving birth and during infancy, parallel to research by Tiefenthaler in the Philippines (1997) would prove valuable for understanding the extent to which women's economic participation can be relaxed in response to the added burdens of childcare, or whether it is minimally interrupted through the event of childbirth due to economic strains that keep women working continuously over time. Additionally, performing analyses that focus attention specifically upon the work activities of children and the elderly would answer questions about how work participation changes at the beginning and end of the life course, and how the labor of adolescent girls and elderly women facilitates economic participation on behalf of working-age family members. The finding that it is not necessary to have a maternal surrogate figure in the household in order for a woman with young children to continue working, at the same time that publicly provided childcare in

kindergartens and crèches are becoming both less numerous and more costly, raises pressing questions about emerging childcare institutions in the market reform era. Work that explores the sources of childcare, reliance upon kinship and neighborhood institutions in raising children, and household expenditures for childcare should be conducted, along with analyses that investigate the influence of childcare institutions and costs upon decisions about fertility control and employment.

The commonplace migrations of workers from the rural villages to urban centers and 'frontier' areas of the new economic zones have created many households in which women are primary breadwinners. Married to husbands in 'visiting marriages,' women oftentimes must make drastic changes in the organization of household labor to substitute for the labor contributions of men absent from the home, especially during peak agricultural seasons. In future research I intend to focus upon the organization of economic activity and changes in women's and children's economic roles within the growing segment of households in rural areas that have labor migrants. I would like to explore the circumstances under which women in 'incomplete' households affected by labor migration choose to hire labor; work longer hours themselves and in more diverse lines of activity; formulate labor exchange arrangements with neighbors and kin; and otherwise adapt to the relative absence of workers in their households. Furthermore, in interviews with women whose husbands had departed from rural villages in the Red River Delta, many women commented upon how they have subsumed work activities that had formerly been performed only by men. Work such as carrying manure and spraying pesticides, which may pose a threat to the health of women, especially those who are already frail and elderly, pregnant, or recently returning to work after giving birth. This line of research will focus upon the consequences to health and wellbeing that women face in difficult family structural situations,

shaped by labor migration and other events that take men away from households, such that the demand for labor in the household economy is a challenge to women's capabilities.

The analyses presented in chapter eight, which address changes in the stratification order and the determinants of occupational status attainment, provide a valuable contribution to what could be the groundwork for comparative analyses of status attainment processes in Viet Nam, China, and other post-socialist countries. A developed field of analysis and debate, centered on China, but also incorporating analyses of post-socialist Soviet states, has sought to clarify the nature of changes in stratification orders over the course of market transition. China scholars have produced a diverse set of findings on occupational and income trajectories for persons with connections to the state and the former redistributive economy (see, for example, Parish and Michelson 1996; Bian et al. 1991). Another group of scholars has shown how the boundaries of gender in the labor market change in the course of market transition, and how women's status is altered with the decline of socialist employment and childcare institutions (see, for example, Entwisle et al. 2000). Questions about the socioeconomic fate of the *cadre*, or civil servant/administrator, in the current period are common across these post-socialist settings and provide a starting point for cross-cultural, comparative inquiries. It is my objective to elaborate upon the finding that parental political capital generates positive occupational attainment outcomes for children by conducting similar analyses in southern and other regions of Viet Nam, and perhaps by undertaking a comparative analysis of workers in China. This type of comparative work would shed light on the specificities and commonalities of market transition processes as they shape occupational outcomes. Research sensitive to historical, cultural and institutional variations across Viet Nam and China could enrich the market transition theoretical framework. Tracing how diverse social groups fare in the course of transformation in Viet Nam's

social order and economic institutions is a research objective that has great potential to inform theoretical development on the subjects of gender stratification and market transition. My own work, I anticipate, will follow the progression of market transition as it unfolds beyond this early, hybrid stage of market socialism, and will trace changes in stratification processes and women's economic roles in the Red River Delta and elsewhere in Viet Nam.

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Appendix A**SAMPLE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE: GENDER ROLES AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE RED RIVER DELTA**

Interview #: _____

Date: _____

Interviewer Name: _____

--INTRODUCTION--

Please introduce yourself a little bit, let us know how old you are, where you are from, and tell us about your family. We would like to know about your parents' family (what did they do for a living, how many children did they have, and what are the ages of their children), and about your own family, if you have married, when did you marry, do you have any children?

Respondent's Name: _____

Respondent's Age: _____

Respondent's Place of Birth: _____

Respondent's Current Address: _____

Do you follow a Religion? _____

Details of Respondent's Birth Family: _____

Father: Year of Birth: _____, Still Living?, if so, where?: _____; Type of Employment: _____

Mother: Year of Birth: _____, Still Living?, if so, where?: _____; Type of Employment: _____

Number of Siblings, their Age, Sex:

Sisters: _____

Brothers: _____

Please describe your own family. How old is your spouse? What does she/he do? How many children do you have? How old are they? Do they work or go to school?

What is your occupation these days? What jobs do you do in any given day? Do you other, different types of work at different times of the year?

What other sources of income does your family have? Include the work of your spouse, children, and anyone else whom you live with.

—SCHOOLING AND FIRST WORK PARTICIPATION—

I would like us to talk now about when you were young and going to school and first beginning to get involved in work activities. First, could you answer a few questions about your education?

What is the highest grade that you completed in school?

For what reason did you stop going to school at this age? Did you think about going to school further?

Did many of your peers go to school further, attending upper secondary or university? How are these children different from those who stopped school early? Did they come from different kinds of families? Did they have more money? Didn't they have to do work, such as farm work?

What about your siblings' schooling; did any of your brothers and sisters go to school for a longer period of time than you did? For a shorter period of time than you did? Do you think that those who studied longer are better off—have happier lives? Higher incomes? Why was education unequal across yourself and your brothers and sisters?

Is education important to finding a good job here? If so, why don't all young people go to university? What kinds of difficulties do they meet in attending school?

Did your parents rely upon you to do housework and take care of family members when you were still young and going to school? What did they ask you to do? What did your brothers and sisters do around the house?

—WORK HISTORY—

How old were you when you first started to work at a job—some kind of work for income or to help in family farming or business? What was this first job? Where did you work and how did you get there? Whom did you work with? What did you think of it—was it hard to do, tiresome, enjoyable, appropriate for your age and strength?

How did you learn to do this work? What kind of training did you receive? Were other kids your age doing this kind of work too, or were you especially young to be working?

Who decided that you would do this work? Was it yourself? Your parents? Did you think about choosing any other kind of work? Why did you take this job? Were there other jobs to choose from?

How did you combine this work with doing your homework? Was it hard to do both? Did you find that your schoolwork was not very good? Were you very tired with doing all the work? Do you think that homework as more important than the work than you were doing, or less important?

--WORK TRANSITIONS--

How did your work activities change after you were married? When did this occur? Did you work a different job? Did you work longer or shorter hours? Did you work in a new place, or did your work continue as before?

You have told me that when you were growing up you worked as _____, and when you were married you changed to work as _____, now you are working as _____. Have you done any other jobs in your life time? What jobs?

Did you ever receive any help from a family member, relative, or friend in obtaining a job? Who helped you? How did they assist you to find work? Would you have been able to get this job without their help?

Do you feel that you have switched jobs many times? Too many times? Why have you worked in so many different jobs? [Prompt: Did you change because you had to? To earn more money? Because your family needed you to do work at home?]

--WORK AND CHILDCARE--

When you were pregnant and after you gave birth to your children how long did you rest from working? Was this enough time—for watching your child and caring for your health?

Describe what you were doing when you went into labor for the first time... Were you at home? Working? How did you get to the health center? Who went with you and stayed with you?

How did you manage both caring for your young children and doing work when you returned to work afterwards? Did you receive assistance caring for your children? From whom? Please describe the arrangements—how you found help, how you took your children to nursery, how did you feed/breastfeed, how much did the care cost?

How did you choose this person (people) to care for your children? Did you have any other potential caregivers to choose from?

Is it better for mothers to care for their own children, or some other person? Can a grandmother do as good of a job as the mother? Do you prefer to have your children at the KG or nursery school, or would you rather care for them yourself or have a relative care for them at home?

In your opinion, what are the traits/qualities of a good childcare provider? Can men be good at this job?

If you took your child to the nursery, how did you feel about that? Did you feel comfortable doing this? Was this a positive environment for your children? Was it better than what you could have provided yourself at home? Did you have any difficulties/complaints?

Who was working in the nursery? How old were they? Did they have experience? Did you know them? Did you trust them to watch your child? Do you think your child had enough attention at the nursery?

Did your husband help you around the house when you had small children? What did he do to help care for the children? Did you ever get angry if he did not help you?

Think of the time that has been most difficult to care for your children—in terms of watching them, providing for their basic needs, and nurturing their growth. How old was your child? How many children did you have at that time? What factors made caring for your child(ren) difficult? Did your husband assist you with care? How? Did other relatives help you at this time? How? Whom?

—ORGANIZATION OF WORK ACTIVITIES—

Nowadays, what is your typical day of work like? What time do you wake up? What do you do in the day time? When do you return home in the evening? What time do you go to sleep?

In an average day, how many hours do you have for sleep, for rest, for leisure or fun activities?
What do you do in your 'free time' and with whom do you spend this time?

Do you work alone or with others? With whom do you interact during the day?

Do you think that your work is tiring? Have you ever done work that you feel was
damaging/threatening to your health condition?

When is the last time that you were not able to work for a day because of an illness or injury?
What was this illness/injury? What brought it on? Did you see a doctor?

Have you worked when you were feeling very ill/injured? Why? Do you think that this was
necessary?

Do you feel that you are more strong or less strong than other women/men your age?

—QUESTIONS ABOUT WORK AND GENDER ROLES—

I get the impression, walking around here in my visit, that women are working longer and more
often than men. Is this observation accurate? If so, why is this the case?

Do men have more time for leisure activities, based on your knowledge of the families of your
friends? Why do you think they have more time for relaxing and resting? Do you think that this
is appropriate?

Do you think that the situation between men and women has become more equal compared to the time prior to doi moi? Do women have to work harder and longer than men now?

Whom in your household does the following domestic tasks:

- Meal preparation:

- House cleaning:

- Child care:

- Care for elder relatives:

- Helping children in studies:

- Shopping:

- Repairing home, appliances, machines:

If your family does farming, who does the following tasks:

- Transplanting:

- Weeding:

- Working the soil:

- Fertilizing:

- Using pesticides:

- Cutting grass:

- Working the plough:

- Harvesting:

**What is the most desirable job for a woman to have around this community, in your opinion?
What about for men?**

**What is needed these days in order to get a good, stable job? A job with good income? What
kinds of characteristics and resources are needed?**

**Many people seem to wish to work for the government, or in an office/professional job. Do you
agree? What prevents people from getting this kind of job?**

**Has there been a stage in your life when your workday was easier? Was there a time that you had
to work harder/longer to get by? When was your work most difficult? Why? What caused your
life to become easier?**

Appendix B: Table B.1

Logistic Regression Comparing Measures of Economic Participation among Persons Age 15-65 in Viet Nam's Red River Delta, 1995

	Economically Active, includes Unpaid Family Workers		Economically Active, Restricted Definition without prompt for unpaid labor	
CONSTANT	14.45***	0.24	13.04***	.23
Gender (Female=1, Male=0)				.09
Age 15-24	.35***	0.17	.33***	.16
Age 25-44 (Omitted)	1.00	--	1.00	--
Age 45-65	.33***	0.16	.34***	.15
0-5 years of schooling	1.29	0.17	1.22	.16
6-9 years of schooling	1.39**	0.12	1.44***	.11
Omitted (10+ years of schooling)	1.00	--	1.00	--
Single	.54***	0.18	.59***	.18
Married (omitted)	1.00	--	1.00	--
Widowed/Divorced/Separated	0.66	0.24	.76	.24
Urban	.45***	0.13	.53***	.12
Proximate Rural: 0-3 km from hwy	0.91	0.14	1.09	.14
Intermediate Rural: 3-10 km from hwy				
Most Rural: 10+ km from highway (omit)	1.00	--	1.00	--
Kids Age 0 to 5				
Kids Enrolled in School	1.23***	0.07	1.21**	.06
* Prob t <=.05, ** Prob t <=.01, ***Prob t <=.001				
Model N	4464		4464	
-2 Log Likelihood	3036.03		3246.25	
Model Chi Square/df	438.94		434.16	
R-square (Cox and Snell, Nagelkerke)	.09, .17		.09, .17	

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

Appendix C: Table C.1

Detailed Occupations by ISCO and Occupational Prestige Scores							
Modal Occupational Title- Vietnamese	Occupational Title-English Translation	RECODED ISCO TITLE	Original 3-digit 1988 ISCO	Recoded 3-digit ISCO	Original Occup Prestige Score	Recoded Occup Prestige Score	(#)
Bac sy	Doctor	Medical Doctor	61	-	78	-	7
Giao Vien (dai hoc/cao dam)	Teacher at University	University and Higher Education	131	-	78	-	3
Kiem Soat Vien	Inspector	Jurist, n.e.c.	129	-	71	-	1
Bac sy rang ham mat	Denture-maker	Dentist	63	-	70	-	1
Ke Toan	Accountant	Accountant	110	-	62	-	8
Tong Bien Tap Bao	Writer for Paper	Authors and Critics	151	-	62	-	1
Thu y	Veterinarian	Veterinarian	65	-	61	-	1
Giao Vien	Teacher	Teachers	139	139	62	61	56
Can Bo kinh te	Cadre in Economics	Economist	90	-	60	-	3
Giao Vien Cap 3	Secondary School Teacher	Secondary Education Teacher	132	-	60	-	3
Giam doc	Director	Managers, n.e.c.	219	-	60	-	3
Giao Vien Cap 1	Lower Secondary School Teacher	Primary Education Teacher	133	-	57	-	6
Ve tranh hoa sy	Artist	Sculptors, Painters and Related Artists	161	-	57	-	1
Dien Vien Chao	Chao folk actor	Actors and Stage Directors	173	-	57	-	1
Ky su	engineer	Engineer, n.e.c.	29	-	55	-	1
Can bo thong ke	Cadre in Statistics	Statistician	81	-	55	-	4
Can bo xa	Can bo of Commune	Government Executive Officials	310	-	55	-	34
Ky su soi	textile engineer	Industrial Engineer	28	-	54	-	2
Y ta	Nurse	Professional Nurse	71	-	54	-	5
Lam may photo	Photo maker	Printers and Related Workers, n.e.c.	929	-	52	-	3
Y sy	Doctor Assistant	Medical Assistant	62	-	50	-	3
Y te	Worker in Health Center	Medical Workers, n.e.c.	79	-	50	-	17
Trong tre	Babysitter	Pre-Primary Education Teacher	134	-	49	-	10
Ve quang cao	Commercial design	Commercial Artists and Designers	162	-	49	-	1
Nhan vien uy ban xa	Worker for Commune/People's	Stenographers, Typists, Teletypists	321	-	48	-	1
Quan ly nong nghiep	Agricultural Manager	Farm Managers and Supervisors	600	-	48	-	3
Can bo ky thuat	technician	Engineering Technicians	39	-	46	-	3
Chup anh	Photographer	Photographers and Cameramen	163	-	46	-	3
Thu mua muoi	Buyer	Buyers	422	-	46	-	1
Quan ly lai xe	Car unit manager	Production Supervisors and Foremen	700	-	46	-	1
Giam doc cong ty muoi	Director of Salt company	Managers (Wholesale and Retail)	400	-	45	-	2
Duoc ta	Pharmacist Assistant	Pharmaceutical Assistant	68	-	44	-	1
Sua chua oto	Repair Automobiles	Motor Vehicle Mechanics	843	-	44	-	10
Tho dien	Electrician	Electrical Wireman	865	-	44	-	16
Sua chua xe	Repair Machinery	Mechanic, Repairman	849	849B	38	43	80
Kim hoan	Jeweler	Jewelry and Precious Metal workers	860	-	43	-	4
Buon ban	Seller/Trader	Shopkeeper	418	418B	48	42	219
Thuong nghiep	Worker in Commercial industry	Shopkeeper	498	418B	15	42	20
Ban hang an	Operate Restaurant	Shopkeeper	518	418B	37	42	16
Cong nhan lam nghiep	Cadre in forestry	Forestry Workers	632	-	42	-	3
Nha may nhua	Mechanic in Plastic Factory	Machinery Fitters and Machine	841	-	42	-	1
Sua vo tuyen	TV Repair	Radio and TV Repairman	854	-	42	-	1
Bo doi	Soldier	Members of the Armed Forces	1000	-	42	-	11
Ngan hang	Bank worker	Bookkeepers and Cashiers	331	-	41	-	4
Tai chinh	Worker in Finance	Bookkeepers and Cashiers	338	331	34	41	3
Hop tac xa thu cong	Handicraft worker	Other Production and Related Workers	949	-	41	-	9
Quan ly khach san	Hotel manager	Managers (catering and lodging)	500	-	40	-	1
Cong an	Police officer	Police and Detectives	582	-	40	-	14
May mac	Make clothes	Tailors and Dressmakers	791	-	40	-	29
Lam do nhom	Aluminum Products Making	Blacksmiths, Hammersmiths, Machine Operators, n.e.c.	839	-	40	-	3

(Continued) Detailed Occupations by ISCO and Occupational Prestige Scores

Modal Occupational Title- Vietnamese	Occupational Title-English Translation	RECORDED ISCO TITLE	Original 3-digit 1968 ISCO	Recorded 3-digit ISCO	Original Occup Prestige Score	Recorded Occup Prestige Score	(9)
Cong nhan vat lieu dien	Worker in Electrical Factory	Electrical Fitters and Related Electrical Workers, n.e.c.	859	--	40	--	1
Go han	Metaworking and welding	Welders and Flamecutters	872	--	39	--	6
Can bo thue	Can bo in taxation	Clerks, n.e.c.	399	--	37	--	17
Lam moc	Carpenter	Carpenters, Joiners and Parquetry	954	--	37	--	51
Xay lap dien	Worker in Electrical Lines	Electric Linemen and Cable Jointers	857	--	36	--	1
Lam ren	Blacksmith	Blacksmiths, Hammersmiths and Forge Press Operators	831	--	35	--	6
Khai mo	Coalmine worker	Miners and Quarrymen	711	--	34	--	4
Nau ruou	Wine maker	Brewers, Wine and Beverage Makers	778	--	34	--	5
Che bien	Processing	Food and Beverage Processors, n.e.c.	779	--	34	--	39
Cong nhan may	Sewing Worker	Tailors, Dressmakers, Sewers, Upholsterers and Related	795	790	26	34	9
Dien anh	TV technician	Sound Equipment Operators and Projectionists	862	--	34	--	2
Tho xay	Bricklayer	Bricklayers, Stonemasons and	951	--	34	--	41
Cong nhan duong sat	Railway worker	Railway Engine Drivers and Firemen	963	--	34	--	4
Cong nhan duc	Casting worker	Metal Casters	724	--	33	--	5
Lam may sat	Hulling machine operator	Grain Millers and Related Workers	771	--	33	--	14
Lam mien, dau phu, v.v.	Bread, vermicelli, tofu other foods makers	Bakers, Pastrycooks and Confectionary Makers	776	--	33	--	33
Nhan vien ban ve	Ticket seller	Transport Conductors	360	--	32	--	2
Ban than, thit, v.v.	Market seller of meat, etc.	Salesmen, shop assistants and demonstrators	451	--	32	--	54
Cat toc	Cut hair	Hairdressers, Barbers, Beauticians and Related	570	--	32	--	4
Cat vo	Fishing	Fishermen	641	--	32	--	46
Lam da	Stone exploitation	Mineral and Stonetresters	712	--	32	--	76
Cong nhan det	Textile worker	Weavers and Related Workers	754	--	32	--	71
Lai may xuc	Excavator driver	Earth-moving and Related Machinery Operators	974	--	32	--	1
Nau	Cook	Cooks	531	--	31	--	3
Bom nuoc nong nhiep	Irrigation Worker	Farm Machiner Operators	628	--	31	--	1
Lam chan	Blanket making	Upholsterers and Related Workers	796	--	31	--	1
Tho trang tri noi that	House interior decorator	Cabinetmakers and Related	819	--	31	--	2
Dong gach	Brick maker	Glass and Ceramic Kilnsmen	893	--	31	--	11
Quet voi	Painter	Painters, Construction	931	--	31	--	1
Lai xe	Driver	Motor Vehicle Drivers	965	--	31	--	27
Buu dien	Post office	Mail distribution Clerks	370	--	30	--	3
Thu kho	Warehouse man	Stock Clerks	391	--	30	--	2
Bao ve	Security personnel	Protective Services Workers, n.e.c.	589	--	30	--	11
San xuat lop xe	Tire production	Tin Makers and Vulcanizers	902	--	30	--	2
Dich vu ca nhan	Private service owner	Other Service Workers	599	--	29	--	53
Cong nhan xi nghiep go	Worker in Wood enterprise	Wood Treaters	731	--	29	--	3
Cong nhan quan ly duong son	River transportation Management worker	Ships' Deck Ratings, Barge Crews and Boatmen	981	--	29	--	1
Lam giay	Paper maker	Paper Makers	734	--	28	--	3
Sua chua giay dep	Repair shoes	Shoemakers and Repairers	801	--	28	--	2
Lam hang ma	Epaper effigy maker	Paper and Paperboard Products	910	--	28	--	1
Xay dung	Construction Worker	Construction workers, n.e.c.	959	--	28	--	52
Chan nuoi	Raise animals	Livestock Workers	624	--	26	--	240
Cong nhan soi	Silk worker	Spinners, Weavers and Related Workers, n.e.c.	759	--	26	--	1
Ban rau, qua, banh, v.v	Market seller of vegetables, fruit, etc.	Street vendors, canvassers and newsvendors	452	--	24	--	28
Lai xe	Driver	Transport Equipment Operators	989	--	24	--	58
Bat cua	Catch crabs	Fishermen, n.e.c.	649	--	23	--	2
Giat la quan so	Washing Clothes	Launderers, Dry-cleaners and Pressers	560	--	22	--	1
Lam ruong	Farmer	Agricultural and Animal Husbandry Workers	611	620	40	22	1969
Che xe bo	Ox-cart driver	Animal and Animal Drawn Vehicles	986	--	22	--	2
Phuc vu an uong	Waitstaff	Waiters, Bartenders and Related	532	--	21	--	1
Trong cay	Grow trees	Orchard, Vineyard and Related	623	--	21	--	2
Quet rac	Clean Garbage	Charworkers, Cleaners and Related Workers	552	--	20	--	1
Boc vac	Unloading worker	Dockers and Freight Handlers	971	--	20	--	4
Cong nhan	Worker	Laborers, n.e.c.	999	--	18	--	58
Cong nhan thuy loi	Irrigation worker	Agricultural Workers, n.e.c.	629	--	14	--	22
TOTAL							3684

1. From Treiman, 1977; 2. This is coding scheme used in the OLS regression analysis

Source: 1995 Vietnam Longitudinal Survey

Vita

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