Chapter 16

"In This Way My Parents Could Really Develop." Individualized Interdependence in Viet-German Families

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Abstract

This contribution explores intergenerational relations and negotiations in Viet-German families. Due to family members' diverging socialization experiences in Vietnam and Germany as well as social ties in both societies, we assume that different ideas of intergenerational relations and mutual obligations may be found in Viet-German families. We distinguish between interdependent and independent intergenerational patterns of solidarity. Based on interviews with young adults – the descendants of Vietnamese migrants – four thematic areas are identified, in and through the shaping of which intergenerational relations are continuously negotiated at the face of migration-related challenges. These are (1) a childhood for the future, (2) reciprocal support, (3) individualization of family members and intimization of the family and (4) boundaries against kinship and the Vietnamese community. Our analysis reveals the emergence of a new, hybrid pattern of intergenerational solidarity, for which we suggest the term "individualized interdependence." The role of young adults in the elaboration of this new family order stands out.

Keywords: Intergenerational solidarity patterns; generationing/generational order; independence; interdependence; negotiations; Vietnamese community; Vietnamese migrants

Introduction

Discourses on Asian minority youth in Western countries partly revolve around attributes of "invisibility" – both in public discourse as well as in scientific debates (cf. Kocatürk-Schuster et al., 2017).[1] This invisibility is linked to "the model minority stereotype [which] highlights their academic successes, with the implicit assumption of all-around well-being" (Luthar et al., 2021, p. 653), rendering further (scientific) attention seemingly unnecessary. While Asian immigrant youths have long been a topic of research in the United States already (see, for example, Kibria, 1990; Zhou & Bankston, 1998), they have gained little scholarly attention in other Western countries, and this is especially true in Germany. However, this negligence has been criticized throughout the last years, and research has also started to emerge on Vietnamese Germans[2] (for an overview cf. Schwittek & König, 2021). On the one hand, research in the field has pointed to the struggles of young Viet-Germans with both positive and negative forms of stereotyping in public and institutional spaces (Hoang, 2020; Suda et al., 2020). On the other hand, challenges within the private space of the family have been brought to the fore (Röttger-Rössler & Lam, 2018). With our study, we add to this research field by taking patterns of intergenerational relations, their consolidation and modification, as an analytical lens. In doing so, we wish to go beyond simplistic interpretations of Viet-German "success stories" and to abstain from culturally essentializing views on the 'Vietnamese' family. After providing an overview of current research on young Viet-Germans, we will introduce our methodological approach. Our empirical chapter presents reconstructions of the mutual expectations, obligations and negotiations thereof in Viet-German families. Finally, we will discuss our results against the background of families' adaptive strategies in a (transnational) migration setting.

Young Viet-Germans in Light of Current Research

According to federal statistics, Vietnamese migrants and Germans of Vietnamese origin are the second largest Southeast-Asian minority in Germany (183,000 people, 117,000 of whom have own migration experience, DeStatis, 2020), characterized by high diversity in terms of both migration reasons and conditions of arrival in the present and the past. Predominantly Southern Vietnamese people migrated to the Federal Republic of Germany as the so-called "boat people" (Beuchling, 2003) after the reunion of the two Vietnamese republics in 1975, to avoid political persecution, military conflicts with neighboring countries and socioeconomic hardships (Su & Sanko, 2017). From the late 1960s, young Vietnamese came to the German Democratic Republic for vocational training and university studies, and from the early 1980s onwards also as "contract workers"

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[1]For example, the journal *American Psychologist* has published a Special Issue titled *Rendered Invisible: Are Asian Americans a Model or a Marginalized Minority?* in 2021.
[2]In the following, we use the term "Viet-Germans," a frequently chosen self-designation of descendants of Vietnamese migrants in Germany.

to German factories after a bilateral agreement had entered into force (Weiss & Dennis, 2005).

Different strands of research on the children from Viet-German families can be identified (cf. Schwittek & König, 2021). The first strand relates to their exceptional educational success, which was also reflected, for example, in the school performance measures of the PISA studies (Walter, 2011). With a rate of 58%, children of Vietnamese origin are more likely to visit the highest secondary school form in Germany (the Gymnasium, which provides university access), than Germans without migration background (El-Mafaalani & Kemper, 2017, p. 222). Research has focused on this school success "against all odds" (Nauck & Schnoor, 2015), as Vietnamese migrant families often match characteristics which are usually associated with underachievement: a scarcity of cultural, economic and social capital, parents' poor knowledge of the German language and low participation in school activities (Nauck & Schnoor, 2015; Nauck et al., 2017; Walter, 2011).

We can identify studies that provide an in-depth look at intrafamily dynamics as a second strand of research. These studies, which are close to our own project, show the very high expectations of parents, which burden the offspring. While feelings of strong solidarity with parents and thankfulness for their sacrifices are voiced by young Viet-Germans (NhuMi, 2020), parents' pressure to study hard and to bring home only the best marks is also a shared experience for many of them (Beuchling, 2003; Röttger-Rössler & Lam, 2018). However, parents acknowledge that a greater effort must be made in the majority society to be successful: this is a belief that stems from parents' personal migration situations, where they experienced a loss of professional and economic status (Schmiz, 2014). Parents may as well expect their children to pay respect and obedience toward them and to contribute to family routines in different ways, for example, by helping out around the house, caring for younger siblings, working in the family's own business, or providing language brokering tasks (Röttger-Rössler & Lam, 2018, pp. 80–82). Additional tensions may arise at the threshold to adulthood as children's and parents' future perspectives and ambitions regarding upward social mobility may diverge. The study by Röttger-Rössler and Lam (2018) shows that it makes an important difference whether young Viet-Germans have spent part of their childhood and youth in Vietnam or have been born and raised exclusively in Germany. Members of the so called 1.5 generation, i.e. young people born in Vietnam and living there for the first years of their life (as opposed to the second generation which has been born and raised in the migration country), are more understanding toward their parents' strict education and position themselves as "'bridge builders' between Vietnamese and German lifeworlds" (Röttger-Rössler & Lam, 2018, p. 80). In significant contrast, the members of the second generation tend to criticize their parents' attitudes and complain about their (strict) educational practices, and this results in experiences of tension and conflict in the relationships with parents.

A third strand of research are studies on young Viet-Germans' perspectives and lifeworlds, focusing on questions of identity formation and positive and negative experiences of being read as 'Asians' (e.g. contributions in edited volumes by Ha, 2021 [2012], Beth & Tuckermann, 2012; Kocatürk-Schuster et al., 2017; VLab, 2020). Through ethnographic and biographic accounts, this research points to the impositions of both the positive stereotype of the 'successful Asian' and the rather negative stereotype of high inner-familial pressure to succeed (Hoang, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2020; Trần, 2017). Taken together, existing research draws a complex and ambiguous picture of Viet-German experiences, consisting of both success stories as well as fundamental struggles in which migration-related processes seem to be closely interconnected with intergenerational dynamics in the family.

Theoretical Lens: Generationing and Intergenerational Solidarity Patterns

Our theoretical perspective takes off from the importance of intergenerational relations which were pointed to by several of the research findings summarized above. To the existing body of research, we add a study with a deliberate focus on children's active role in (changing) family dynamics. Based on Alanen and Mayall's (2001) concept of generational order as a fundamentally relational one, relations between age groups are rather to be understood as processes of continuous "generationing," i.e. of constant revision of expectations and evaluations of entitlements, exchange and solidarity (Bühler-Niederberger, 2020). In the sense of a relational sociology (Emirbayer, 1997), there is no (merely) one-sided direction of influence in these processes, rather all entities involved (groups, individuals) are simultaneously formable and effective. In keeping with this volume's focus on children and young people, and as a contribution to a hitherto preponderantly adult-centered research, it is now primarily the (possible) contributions of young people themselves to the shaping of the family that will receive attention.

Although relations between age groups are in constant inner-familial negotiation, they may be oriented to patterns of intergenerational exchange that are valid beyond the individual family and its specific situation. It can be argued that societies follow different (relatively stable) notions of these intergenerational patterns: ideal-typically, and as a rough heuristic, two patterns can be distinguished, in which the relationship and exchange between children and parents are conceived differently, both when the children are still young and when the children are adults (Bühler-Niederberger, 2021, pp. 57–58). An *interdependent* intergenerational pattern of solidarity is characterized by a normative idea of "filial piety" (Hashimoto & Ikels, 2005), as it is known in many Asian societies, requesting children's obedience and respect toward their parents and following a norm of reciprocal support between family members. In contrast, the *independent* pattern – to which the countries of the Global North are oriented in both social policy and family practices – emphasizes an individualized childhood as a "good

childhood." The latter pattern calls for the support of the older generation by the young only in situations of special need; the independent life plan of the young adults takes precedence (Bühler-Niederberger, 2021). In the case of Viet-German families, we assume that the socialization experiences of parents and children are different: with our respondents growing up in a society (mostly) adhering to the independence model (Germany), while their parents grew up in a society which was and still is predominantly characterized by an interdependence model of intergenerational solidarity (Vietnam). The latter may affect the migrants' own position in the generational order, entailing expectations to support their family of origin in Vietnam, adding a transnational dimension to Viet-German families and their intergenerational responsibilities. The plausible assumption is that processes of generationing can be more demanding and conflictive in this field of tension between different patterns of orientation. And it is interesting to see which of these patterns these processes are oriented to or whether new patterns emerge in this hybrid situation.

Methodological Approach: Narrative Interviews With Young Viet-Germans

For our analysis, we draw on two explorative interview studies which were motivated by the objective of reconstructing young Viet-Germans' perspectives and experiences. The first study, conducted by Kamila Labuda, had its focus of interest primarily on the conditions of educational success, but surveyed the biographical experiences of young Viet-Germans very broadly.[3] The second study, conducted by Jessica Schwittek, was focusing on processes of generationing within the families. It placed a particular emphasis on negotiations at the transition to adulthood which stretched across transnational spaces.

The combined sample consists of nine young Viet-Germans (six males and three females), with whom we conducted 11 interviews.[4] All interviewees had grown up and were living at the time of the interviews in different parts of Germany. However, we obtained information about a much larger circle of young Viet-Germans in this way: all but one of the interviewees had siblings and reported on how they had fared at important points in their growing up. We will include this information here, as far as it concerns the proof of our assumptions or deviation from them. The interviewees were heterogenous regarding their parents' migration situation (both "boat people" who had migrated to Western Germany and contract workers or exchange students who had migrated to the former German Democratic Republic). They were born between the mid-1980s and

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[3]The study was conducted as part of Kamila Labuda's Master's thesis (submitted under the title *A-sian, not B-sian: Educational Advancement of Children from Vietnamese Family Households* (supervised by Prof Aladin El-Mafaalani & Prof Jannis Panagiotidis).

[4]Two participants were interviewed twice in order to further develop our emerging theoretical concepts, referring to the strategy of "theoretical sampling" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) based in Grounded Theory Methodology.

mid-1990s; most of them in Germany and one of them in Vietnam but who had joined his parents in Germany as a very young child. All but one interviewee held a higher education degree (or were enrolled at university) and were working as employees; one was running her own business. One interviewee had completed vocational training. Appendix A gives an overview of respondents' basic information. Field access had been established by the researchers through social media, private networks and snowballing strategies. Participants were informed about the objective of the respective study and consent was obtained.

In both studies (although with different main focuses), the interviews covered a variety of topics such as childhood and youth memories, the family's educational and language practices, the importance of the Vietnamese community, experiences at school and with teachers, peer and friendship relations and biographical decisions (such as study subject, occupational choice and marriage partner if applicable). The interviews lasted between one and two-and-a-half hours – while Kamila followed a guideline, Jessica's interviews were strongly explorative – and they were transcribed verbatim and anonymized. The analytic strategy followed principles of Grounded Theory Methodology, such as open and thematic coding and condensed around the core category of generationing as a relational phenomenon. As subcategories, we identified four thematic areas, in the shaping of which generational relationships are (re)negotiated.

Results: Intergenerational Negotiations Toward Individualized Interdependence

The Story of Lien: "At Some Point Daddy Realized 'Okay, I Have to Change Somehow So That I Don't Lose Contact With My Children'"

We start with the story of Lien, in which all four thematic areas in which generationing is ongoing are addressed in detail and the negotiation processes are clear to see. In this way, Lien's story can be considered especially illustrative for the theoretical model which we have extracted from the interviews. At the time of the interview, Lien is 30 years old and married, about to give birth to her first child. She has a sister six years younger, whom she also talks a lot about and whose negotiations with parents are very similar to hers. With her Polish husband, she runs a restaurant – very stylish, she proudly tells – where Vietnamese and Polish dishes are served. In addition, she also works in her parents' business; she says, "we help him (meaning: Dad) a lot when we are at home, my sister and I." Lien has great respect for her parents' achievements. They came to the (former) German Democratic Republic as contract workers from poor backgrounds in Northern Vietnam. Unlike many of their compatriots, they did not return to Vietnam after the fall of the Soviet Union. Rather, they went into business for themselves, selling clothes they purchased from Vietnamese wholesalers. They sold them first in the market and then in one of those "typical Vietnamese stores," as Lien calls it. Later, they imported handbags from overseas, supplied Chinese products to Indian restaurants, set up catering businesses. Lien comments, "So they really did everything, really. It all went very well, too (…) So I was doing

very, very well as a child (. . .) I really didn't want for anything"; she also got her own car when she was 18. Her parents now own several stores in town, and Lien is "super grateful" to them and admires how much they worked – "from Monday to Sunday" – and what they accomplished.

Educational success and preparation for professional future: Lien was brought up very strictly: "Well, my dad was very strict. What distinguished us from German children was that I was always picked up after school. That is, I was not allowed to go out. That sounds bad now, but it was very important to him that we did well in school." In this, Lien also recognizes a caring attitude: "I think that's the most important thing that all Vietnamese parents have: you have to be good at school so that later you can work with your head and not with your hands, like 'You have to do better than us.'" She is grateful for this now in retrospect, but as a child she often found it hard: "that you say, okay, why are the others allowed to go to the movies now, why are the others allowed to go to town and I have to study, study, study at home. No computer, no cell phone . . . You were also often sad about it and thought: unfair, unfair. Why are the others allowed and I'm not?" When Lien goes to university in another city, she takes her studies seriously and the parents also acknowledged that. She opens her own online shop for fashion articles while still a student, successfully completes her degree, runs her own restaurant and works in a responsible position in her parents' business. When reading her interview together, we researchers discussed the fact that we lacked the know-how and courage at this age to manage all of this.

Support of the family by the children: As a child, Lien was expected to spend most of her time studying and helping around the house. When she was a university student, a situation arose in which Lien was a great support to her family. She refers to it as a "cutting-in experience": "My dad had a very bad accident. He had a restaurant in the old town and it was destroyed by a flood. He was severely injured when trying to enter it and needed to go to a clinic and was out of action for months." Lien then took over quite a bit. She sold the destroyed business "really sold it for good money even though it was destroyed and it wasn't open. And that was, I think, this crucial point (she means: for her father): 'My daughter, I can trust her! She did a great job.'" She was taking care of her father, continuing to do her own work and she was stretched to the limit. "So, I lost an enormous amount of weight during that time, had an enormous amount of pressure and responsibility because I was the oldest at home and I didn't sleep for days."

Individualization, self-realization, intimization: Lien rebels when she becomes a teenager: "I wish I had German parents... Because you could see that the German parents were really, um, more interested in the welfare of the child and our parents, yes, they were just workers. They came to Germany and focused on earning money. I really didn't have such a good relationship with my dad between 15, no, 14 and 17, he was so strict and you were also pubescent and you just didn't understand the world. Everyone else was allowed." Lien invented excuses and white lies to be allowed to go to town with her friends. She also had a boyfriend at the age of 16, as she says, "very early," which she had to hide. Having a boyfriend so early was "a disaster for Asians," and besides, her boyfriend was not Vietnamese, but Polish. She started forging letters saying she had to do an internship

over the weekend. This allowed her to meet her boyfriend, but she felt guilty because she "took advantage" of her parents' poor German skills. Eventually she moved to another city for her studies to be out of her parents' direct control. Lien's efficiency, the help she gave her parents in the situation that she called the "cutting-in experience," led to the fact that now she also has "the right to speak," as she puts it. The father also took her boyfriend, whom he knew from her school days, to his heart, so he accepted her decision to marry him. Lien expects her parents to accept their children's own decisions. But she also expects – and sees this as connected to – that the parents, for their part, engage in a bit of self-realization. They should become more "open" and "relaxed," and according to her, they are making good progress: "Well, I think my dad has really made a leap in the last few years. He has become totally open-minded." This also includes treating themselves to something, and parents and children enjoying time together on vacation. Lien has also already planned for her parents to be grandparents who will one day retire and take their grandson to soccer practice. They could also enjoy living in the same house. Those are her dreams for the future, which she confides to the interviewer. What Lien has in mind, then, is not a loosening of relationships in the family. It is rather a new and especially intimate cohesion among family members who make their individuality accessible to each other and mutually accept it. We refer to this process as "intimization".

However, Lien is left with some ambivalence toward the individualized life, the life of self-realization. Looking at herself and her generation of young Viet-Germans, Lien says somewhat pejoratively: "At 30, I'm still just a child, that is, of my parents," and about one of her peers: "He's in his mid-30s by now, and he has also remained super young, and we don't have the kind of responsibility our parents had at that age. Because we focus on our own life here. Our parents are happy when we get our own lives in order." She contrasts this immaturity to the situation of her parents who had been taking care of three families (their own and their families of origin in Vietnam) when they were in their 30s.

Vietnamese community and extended family: The hard and unremitting work of the parents is (also) a consequence of their involvement with the Vietnamese relatives. A normal job in a company (with regular shifts and time for themselves and the family) would not have been enough, as the parents had to send money to Vietnam – both for the father's and the mother's families. But now – according to Lien – they also have to think about themselves. The family is now taking a vacation from time to time and has earned it, at least that is Lien's clear opinion. This implies that not all the money should be sent to Vietnam, that "those in Vietnam should also get going". Vietnam is also no longer so poor, she tells her parents, and so the relatives should not get all of the money for which her parents work so hard. She sees the Vietnamese community, and here especially the one in Germany, as an obstacle to self-realization. The first question at parties with them would always be about school success, and everyone is concerned with the "good reputation" (as a decent child/youth), otherwise there is "gossip". According to Lien, many parents do not even know what their children are studying and they

lack interest in their children's personalities. There is no doubt that this is contrary to her idea of a good family.

Lien believes that her family – she, her sister and her parents – should continue on this path, and she also sees herself essentially as the architect of this reconstruction. She notes with satisfaction: "In this way my parents could really develop." However, it is ultimately also the efficiency of all family members that has made this possible: the efforts of the parents, who created the economic basis, but also Lien's own contributions, which have earned her the recognition of her father and with which she helped the family in difficult times. In this way all of the struggles and solutions that were found between children and their parents can be seen as steps on a path to what we may call an *individualized interdependence* characterizing her family, not yet fully, but more and more – thanks to her tireless efforts. However, this interdependent entity draws narrow boundaries: against the extended (transnational) family and against the local Vietnamese community.

Four Thematic Areas of Generationing

We have not simply told Lien's story chronologically, but already arranged it according to four thematic areas that become relevant and require working out as children grow up. The respective solutions in these areas directly concern the relationships between generations – between parents and their still young, then pubescent, and finally adult children. Therefore, we may speak of four thematic areas of generationing, which we analytically distinguished in our material, and through which we can trace the working out of a new intergenerational arrangement. The path toward *individualized interdependence* is evident for all of the young people interviewed at least as a guiding concept of the young generation. However, families differ in the extent to which they approach this goal and in the nature of the trade-offs they make in doing so. Along the four areas of generationing, we now want to present selected material from the other interviews and give more differentiated insight into the processes of generationing.

Claiming Childhood for the Future

Educational aspirations and professional goals were topics which were taken up in all interviews, but discussed to different extents and detail, depending on the importance the topic had for the interviewee. In general, high expectations of educational success can be identified as prevalent – be it as a self-formulated goal and/or as imposed by parents, as it became already visible in Lien's case. Six out of nine interviewees mention experiences of being pressurized by parents in one or multiple ways: by controlled leisure time to secure children's efforts for school (four interviewees), by being grounded or punished for bad marks (five interviewees) and by an unquestioned expectation to accomplish the Abitur successfully and to enter university (five interviewees). Their evaluations of these parental practices are multifaceted, containing both critique (for being "too harsh") but also thankfulness and appreciation (for "taking care"). Nevertheless, even where interviewees describe their parents' pressure as strong, they present

themselves as the ones carrying the responsibility. As in Juan's case, where an interplay of his own and his parents' claims becomes apparent:

> JUAN: My grades were getting worse and worse, and then in grade eight, I kind of made a cut where I realized that it wasn't working that way. Then I improved my grades, I think, by a whole average grade. I don't know exactly what the trigger was, but I think I had just gotten in extreme trouble at a time where I had been bringing home a lot of Ds. And then I just improved.

Although his parents gave him trouble for bad marks (as he "thinks"), Juan claims the active and responsible role for himself; it was him who "realized" the problem and who "improved" his grades considerably. There are also three respondents who explicitly stated that their parents were very relaxed regarding their success at school and content with average marks, only interfering in a "motivational" manner when the child's transfer to the next grade was insecure (which happened in two of the three cases). Those three emphasized their own motivation to study either when they found the content interesting enough or, in Mai's case, due to a desire to become "better":

> MAI: Because I thought, it can't be that hard. Why do the others get it right? Why can't you get it right? So, and yeah okay, maybe a tutor will help you with that. And that actually helped me to improve. But I just wanted to get much better than what I could already improve. But somehow, I don't know, there seemed to be a limit for me. I met with friends to study for exams. And they also saw that I wanted it so badly.

The respondents' educational pathways suggest that they come up to their own and/or their parents' expectations: all but one interviewee have a university degree or are studying in their final semesters. However, this success cannot be interpreted as a solely one-sided dynamic of the parents' high aspirations and pressure to which the children submit (more or less readily). Rather, respondents present their school performance as their accomplishments into which they have invested a lot of time, energy and discipline, while at the same time acknowledging their parents' support. The children's success becomes visible as a collective process to which contributions from both the parents and the children are geared. However, three respondents do not present their success as part of a family project. Actually, they do not even present themselves as successful, although their current educational situation is respectable – they are in their last semesters at university or have just completed it – but they are unhappy with it. For example, they speak about their discontent with their choice of study subject, their struggle with the demands of university and how their graduation is long overdue. Furthermore, their parents are subject of their dissatisfaction: all three criticized their parents for applying too much pressure and being "too harsh."

Children's Contributions to the Family and Reciprocal Support

Mai's brother, Thao, had been a "model student," she said in the interview, and although he had learned German only after his migration at age 10, he even jumped a grade at school and had very promising educational perspectives. However, his parents asked him to drop out of school in order to help them in their restaurant which during that time required more manpower for accounting, administration and delivering orders. Thao complied with his parents' wishes. With Lien and Thao, we have presented two cases of young people who sacrificially support their parents and put their own (private and professional) projects on the back burner. Reciprocal support – entirely as the situation demands – is probably the most impressive area in which generational relations are negotiated. The example of Thao shows that this is even more important than educational success.

Besides these far-reaching solidarities, all except for one interviewee have talked about supporting their families routinely through care- and language brokering services, such as taking care of parents' paperwork or tax declaration, accompanying parents to appointments, babysitting younger siblings and taking care of their school-related issues, helping out at the parent's store, or serving in their restaurant. Regardless of the kind of support, be it as extensive as in Lien's or Thao's cases, or be it on the level of everyday routines at home or in the family's business, respondents view it as a matter of course. However, they chose different explanations for it. Ha sees it as a response – and duty – to the support that the parents have given her, which she wants to live up to:

> HA: There is no real German translation for it, but generations (...) so, my parents' generation gave me something and I give them something back, that is a kind of duty of care, (...) that I also fulfill it. (...) So family values.

While Ha – in a somewhat abstract way – refers to the normative idea of "filial piety" which obliges children to obey and care for their parents, other respondents attribute their support for parents more individually, for example, to their generous and helpful character.

The retrospective view of the interviews is revealing, showing that contributions to the family by both the older and the younger generation are adhering to a reciprocal norm. Children benefit from their parents' support regarding numerous things: for example, when parents buy them the best equipment and finance tutoring. The young can also rely on their parents for support when setting up their own business; they count on them to take care of grandchildren in the future, or to share their economic capital to buy a condominium together. Based on this mutual support, the families build and reproduce a rather tight web of interdependence.

Individualization, Self-Realization and Intimization of the Core Family

In Lien's case story, we have worked out what we call the "intimization" of relationships with her core family members, which is essentially a process of

making their individuality accessible to each other, and of mutually accepting and supporting it. Questions of individuality and the individual interests of the respondents and those of their parents become especially apparent when interviewees talk about age-typical status passages such as choice of study subject or (marriage) partner. Although not directly asked about it, three interviewees mention that their parents used to express a strong wish for their children to find a partner either in Vietnam or within the local Vietnamese community. However, all three declined this wish. Indeed, it was exactly the parents' strong interference that respondents feared in case they chose a partner from the Vietnamese community. Tuyen imagines such a scenario:

> TUYEN: Let's assume that I had a partner from a family of friends, and we quarrel, then that also has an impact on the parental relationships. That would be stupid, I think. It gives the impression of arranged friendships or relationships, if you are too much within that group. And my parents have often tried to, when I was still a teenager or even in my 20s, they always wanted me, at every party, they pointed to this girl and that girl and tried to make me talk or flirt with the girls from the Vietnamese families. But that was never my idea.

Like Tuyen and Lien, Mai also speaks about her struggle – and her success – to gain her parents' acceptance for her self-chosen partner. For example, she refuses to visit Vietnam before she is engaged because she fears being married off there, after having experienced how her older sister had been pressured to marry a friend of the family. When Mai eventually presents her German boyfriend, her worries that her parents wouldn't accept him didn't come true, to her relief. But still, she says, her mother sometimes tells her about the success of young men with whom they would have liked her to be engaged. But Mai's credo is different: "The main thing is that I am happy. And I'm also happy when I don't have so much money," representing an orientation toward romantic love, happiness and self-fulfillment.

In addition, professional choices are arenas of intergenerational negotiation and the balancing of individual and collective interests. Two respondents speak about their strong interests in creative subjects. One wanted to become an actress but eventually dropped her studies at a prestigious arts college to go into a more conventional professional field which was closer to what her parents wished for her. One young man wanted to study design, but felt discouraged by his parents when applying. Likewise, two others would have liked to do a gap year after their Abitur to make up their mind and get to know a couple of fields through internships, but their parents demanded that they enter university right away. In total, six respondents reported about struggles regarding their partner or professional choices.

This striving for individual freedom and personal choices may seem obvious in Germany which is considered an "individualized society" with a normative ideal of childhood (and youth) as life phases fostering young people's uniqueness and independence, as it was sketched out in the theoretical section of this chapter. It is noteworthy that this process is not exclusive for one age group in the respondents'

families. Not only the young people but also their parents are expected to individualize, to be sensitive to their own needs, and to make sure to do themselves some good every now and then. Lien, for example, encourages her dad to buy himself a nice car that he likes (and she adds: for him to come and visit her and his soon-to-be-born grandchild more often), and she persuades her parents to go on vacations together to 'typical German' holiday destinations such as Italy or the Netherlands. But these encouragements of parents' individualization go far beyond matters of material treats and exclusive quality time with the family. Juan, for example, also says he supports his mother's emancipation and improving of her position in the family, which also helped to stop the physical disciplining that had been common in the family before:

> JUAN: My mother has become emancipated over the years. I think I helped her a lot with that. And she then became extremely involved with my little brother. She was very young when she had my big brother. I think only 18 or 19 and then I was born four years later. And she wasn't emancipated. She just didn't know, she was just the wife. With my little brother, that changed. He didn't get physical violence.

This quote hints at the difficult conditions in which Juan grew up, characterized by harsh conflicts and physical punishments. His interview reveals his tireless efforts to modify the relationships in his family toward more mutual acknowledgment and closeness. Not only did he support his mother's more equal position in the family but also he praises her for becoming "extremely involved" with his little brother – an involvement which eventually led to a less violent childhood for him. Juan also imagines his future family life to be based on these intimate, close and accepting relations between parents and children: "What I want to have, (...) what I want my children to have, [is] something like unconditional love maybe."

Demarcation From the Vietnamese Community and Extended (Transnational) Family

As mentioned above, the Vietnamese community[5] and networks are of central importance to the parent generation. All interviews contain reports on this, describing the parents' dense web of contacts (at least in earlier days) and mutual support in private and professional domains. In Lien's case, a somewhat critical or ambivalent attitude toward the Vietnamese community in Germany became visible. She is annoyed by the "gossip" and all too traditional viewpoints, which according to her are shared among Vietnamese people in Germany, e.g. regarding gender roles.

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[5]Note that we use the term "community" in a rather operational way, referring to different forms of relations within the ethnic group. These may be circles of friends and acquaintances, professional networks related to ethnic economies, or more institutionalized entities such as officially registered associations with cultural, political, or religious agendas and activities.

Lien is also skeptical toward her parents' financial commitments to family members in Vietnam and advises them to reduce remittances – and instead to invest the money in an apartment where she plans to live together with her parents in the near future. This "demarcation" from the extended family members in Vietnam and the local Vietnamese community can be interpreted as a consequence of an intensification of nuclear family relations and commitments. In two other cases, conflicts with parents' siblings in Vietnam and inheritance issues were incidents which led to a loosening of obligations with family abroad, at least regarding financial matters.

For Thien and his family, negotiations do not revolve around transnational family relations, but rather around the family's position in private and professional networks with fellow Viet-Germans. His girlfriend is also a Viet-German (whom he got to know through university and whose parents were not acquainted with his own), and the two are planning their wedding:

> THIEN: And then just with planning of the wedding it is just still a bit slow because her father is just very well connected, he is a wholesaler, food wholesaler, so in the area of [CITY] he supplies everyone. He is very well connected throughout Germany, but we don't feel like having a big wedding. So, we're talking about 500–700 guests, of which we actually know maybe a fifth. And we don't really feel like doing that.

Thien goes on to explain that inviting all of the business partners is a matter of securing the family's face and honor for his designated father-in-law. However, he and his girlfriend are quite reluctant to have such a large and expensive wedding. Like in the cases presented above, Thien and his girlfriend pursue goals which can be classified as more individualistic: they would rather spend the money on a special honeymoon trip, or save it up for a condominium. Still, despite their individualistic orientation, they could well imagine living together with their parents in the future, quite similar to Lien. Also here, a certain distancing from community/collective orientations are apparent. Thien and his girlfriend consider investments in the ethnic networks "senseless", but to the parents, a large wedding remains necessary to save the family's face in the community. It is remarkable how persistent the family's negotiations are: Thien points out that negotiations have been going on for a long time already and that the topic has led to discord within the family. However, the young fiancées neither give in, by having the wedding done in the way that their parents would desire, nor do they decide to do the wedding "their own way" without the parents' consent. Instead, a "compromise" is being worked on, indicating everyone's readiness to continue negotiations until a viable solution is found:

> THIEN: I think her mother is working on a compromise, she said she has already tried to write a guest list, the most necessary contacts and then to narrow it down a bit more. But that's just still quite a current issue; I don't know what's going to happen now.

   The examples of Lien and Thien were chosen to show how much the Vietnamese community in Germany and (transnational) relations with family in Vietnam present an arena of negotiating individual and collective identities. Processes of a demarcation from family members in Vietnam, at least in financial terms, and of the (professional) ethnic networks in Germany can be observed.

Conclusions: A Rocky Way Toward a New Family Order – Scopes and Limits of Negotiation

We started out from the assumption that Vietnamese migrant families in Germany are influenced by both interdependent and independent patterns of intergenerational solidarity, due to their members' heterogenous socialization experiences in both societies and transnational social ties. As an empirically based answer to our research question, we propose the concept of *individualized interdependence* – as a new and hybrid pattern of intergenerational solidarity, which is co-constructed by both generations in Viet-German families in long and complex negotiation processes. We identified four areas, in which these intergenerational negotiations take place: (1) the claim of childhood in the service of future success, (2) mutual intergenerational support, including the contribution of the children already during childhood, (3) individualization, self-realization of individual members and intimization of the family and (4) boundaries against kinship and the Vietnamese community.

   This hybridization process is in itself very specific for each family. It is influenced by different aspects, such as the context and conditions of the parents' migration, the economic and social capital available to the family, their relations within the local ethnic community as well as their transnational ties and obligations. The nine families into which we were given insights by our interview partners can be considered to be at different points when observed through this proposed lens of such a hybridization process. Six families can be regarded as having – more or less – arrived at such a new, hybrid order, which is characterized by high efforts on the aforementioned negotiation areas: the young generation's childhood is claimed for success and upwards social mobility, and children and parents engage in acts of considerable mutual support. It is exactly through these mutual acts of help and solidarity that individual needs gain legitimacy: individual investments of time and effort into the family's or its members' well-being give an entitlement to take care of oneself as well, and to cater to personal wishes. This individualization and intimization of the family and of intra-familial relationships can be viewed as a "contraction" – as drawing the circle of significant others closer and limiting it to the nuclear family. This is connected to the fourth area of generationing: a certain loosening of interdependencies with the ethnic community and (extended) family in Vietnam, or at least its re-interpretation toward a more emotional (and less functional) connection.

   Our findings bear some similarity to what Cigdem Kagitcibasi has called "psychological-emotional interdependence" (Kagitcibasi, 2007, p. 20), a form of family relations she found emerging in the Turkish society, which is

characterized by a decline in economic interdependence while at the same time emotional relatedness is maintained and emphasized. While Kagitcibasi interprets this transformation of family relations in Turkey and other traditionally "collectivist" societies against the backdrop of modernization and urbanization processes, migration contexts such as the one discussed in this chapter can be considered even more complex. In the latter, the multiplication of "moral orders" of the country of origin *and* the destination country, as well as migration-specific processes such as migrants' integration into the local ethnic communities are relevant. These adaptive processes, at least for the here-discussed group of Vietnamese migrant families in Germany, do not resemble a mere assimilation to the model of family solidarity that is predominant in the destination society. Viet-German families do not move toward an independent form of intergenerational relations, but with *individualized interdependence* develop a specific hybrid form, drawing from both the independence and the interdependence pattern.

For this hybrid form to emerge, families engage in negotiation processes to arrive at viable solutions, and this process may be time-consuming and contain episodes of tension and conflict. Our analysis indicates that parents, their (young as well as adult) children, and family members in the transnational space are involved in these negotiations, drawing from both interdependent and independent ideas of intergenerational solidarity patterns in the migration context. This points to what König et al. call "adaptive capital," enabling families to "break through the usual mutual expectations and benefits that apply in families and are structured according to gender and generation" (König et al., 2021, p. 217). Viet-Germans' families, and especially the members of the younger generation, generate this sort of adaptive capital by carving out new intergenerational arrangements through both embracing *and* changing mutual expectations and duties. However, this process is conditional: an economic basis, as achieved by the parents is a prerequisite, and a certain achievement of success by the children is needed for the negotiations to progress. In short: this adaptive process works well when all family members are successful in generating capital (economic, social and cultural) to fuel negotiations, and when mutual support bears fruit.

However, even when resources are available and negotiations are progressing, arriving at a new family order resembles a "rocky road," on which detours are taken and obstacles navigated. Three families in our sample appear to have "stalled" in their negotiation process, paralyzed by the burden of "constant negotiation conflicts" as one respondent puts it. No success story is told to present the family's mutual efforts and cohesion. Rather, withdrawal and reduction of contact and communication between parents and children are prevalent. But this interpretation may also in part be due to the methodological approach of this study, with individual single interviews offering only "snapshots" in time of what has been shown to be a rather long-term process. It is well possible that episodes of withdrawal and separation mark turning points in these processes, urging everyone involved to look for new ways of connecting and relating. In this way, the quote used in the title - "In this way my parents could really develop" - can also be considered to hint at such a turning

point. Further research needs to investigate the conditions and dynamics of these processes with longitudinal approaches, and by including not only the young generation's perspectives, but also those of the parents to gain a more comprehensive picture of families' creative processes of adapting their intergenerational arrangements in migration contexts.

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Appendix A: Overview of Respondents' Basic Information

Duc (33 years, male), born in Western Germany, works as an engineer in a large company.

Ha (30 years, female), born in Eastern Germany, just about to finish her university studies in the humanities.

Hao (26 years, male), born in Western Germany, in his final semester of his university studies in the natural sciences.

Juan (30 years, male), born in Western Germany, holds an academic degree in accounting and works as an employee in a large company. He talks in his interview also about his younger brother (18 years) and his older brother (34 years). Two interviews were conducted with Juan.

Lien (30 years, female), born in Eastern Germany, holds a university degree in business administration and runs her own restaurant. She talks in her interview also about her younger sister (24 years).

Mai (36 years, female), born in Western Germany, did an apprenticeship and works as an employee in a small company. Talks also about her brother Thao (47 years) and her sister (45 years) in the interview.

Nam (26 years, male), born in Western Germany, in his final semesters of his university studies in educational sciences.

Thien (29 years, male), born in Eastern Germany, holds an academic degree and works as an employee in a research institute. Two interviews were conducted with Thien.

Tuyen (37 years, male), born in Vietnam and joined his parents in Germany at age 3, works as an engineer in a large company.