The Charging Migrants: Male Vietnamese Migrants in Contemporary Japan and the Negotiation of Sexualities and Masculinities in Transnational Migration

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Table of Content

Acknowledgment

When I was contemplating the prospect of pursuing a Doctoral Degree, many of the people that I consulted shared a relatively similar thought: doing a Ph.D. is a difficult, lonely, and exhausting journey. By the time that I was typing this Acknowledgment, I had been four years into my Ph.D. and could attest that the abovementioned description was correct.

Realizing my doctoral project has been a difficult journey (and I believe no doctoral project is without struggle). Not only because of all the challenges of managing a scientific project: putting ideas into a concrete project, (re)formulating the research design, collecting and theorizing data, and writing up but also the external factors such as moving between countries and conducting ethnographic research during a global pandemic. This dissertation project has also taken me on a lonely and exhausting journey filled with a lot of stress, lows, and self-doubts. There were several moments in which I was stuck and frustrated with the twist and turns that this project has taken from the initial research proposal to fieldwork and the later stages of theorizing data, finding the connecting themes, writing, and rewriting.

However, there have been several positive sides that I also realized while navigating this doctoral project. I have learned new knowledge and valuable research and social skills that helped me not only conduct the research but also grow as an academic and a person. But what I have come to appreciate the most so far has been the people who offered assistance along my journey. Their guidance, supports, friendships, and companionship have been the sources of intellect and energy that I drew on to make it this far with this project.

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List of Abbreviations

CV – Curriculum Vitae

FDI – Foreign Direct Investment

HIV/ AIDs – Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome.

ISA – Immigration Services Agency of Japan

ISDS – Institute for Social Development Studies

JETRO – Japan External Trade Organization

JICA – Japan International Cooperation Agency

LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Queer

MOJ – Ministry of Justice

MOLISA – Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs

ODA – Official Development Assistance

TITP – Technical Internship Training Program

VAMAS – Vietnam Association of Manpower Supply

List of Figures

List of Pictures

Chapter 1
Introduction: The Charging Migrants

I first met Tai at a New Year Party (*Shinnenkai*) at a Vietnamese restaurant in central Tokyo in February 2020. We did not talk much as Tai was busy running around taking pictures of the events and the guests. After the event had ended, I approached Tai to ask whether he would be interested in having an interview and he said he had no time on that day and also in the next two months. He had to catch the train back to Kanagawa (a prefecture south of Tokyo) to start working early the next day and most importantly, he would soon travel back to Vietnam for his wedding. Without knowing that a pandemic was coming, we agreed to meet again when Tai has gone back to Japan from his return trip home. Tai went back to Vietnam at the beginning of March 2020, shortly before both Japan and Vietnam closed their borders because of the Covid-19 pandemic. While his wedding could fortunately still happen as planned, his trip back to Japan could not. Tai's flight back to Japan was delayed three times and eventually canceled due to the entry ban from the Japanese government in early April. Tai ended up being stuck in Vietnam for months and our promised interview in Japan turned into a transnational video call in the summer. Tai answered my video call topless and in his working short pants as he was boiling the bamboo roots that his neighbors had just given him. He said that as a man growing up in highland Vietnam, it was normal for him to walk around at home and even on the farm topless because "everything is simple here (at home), not like in Japan". Tai continued to complain about losing his income in Japan because he was stuck in Vietnam but claimed that he was very content with his situation at home: being near the family, getting to spend more time with his newlywed wife who he had only met two times before the wedding, and being able to charge his energy up after working very hard in Japan. As our conversation proceeded, I realized that the notion of charging was not only referred to when Tai talked about his "little break" in Vietnam after the wedding but also appeared at several points in his migration journey.

Born into a working-class family in central highland Vietnam, Tai dropped out of school after finishing the 9th grade to assist his parents with farm work. It was during a visit to his father's hometown in northern Vietnam that Tai first heard about going abroad to work as there was a wave of young people from this town going to Japan either as students or workers. Tai then started to look for the opportunity to migrate to Japan with the hope of "earning

better money". Because he had no high school diploma, Tai's only chance to go to Japan was to apply for the technical intern trainee program, a program that recruits foreign laborers to work in Japanese undermanned industrial sectors. His application was supported by a migration agency in Ho Chi Minh City which was introduced to Tai by one of his relatives. After one year of charging up with preparation including language training and making his profile more appealing to potential employers, Tai migrated to Japan at the age of twenty-one as a technical intern trainee working for a construction company in the western part of the Tokyo Metropolitan area. Tai worked very hard and utilized every chance to have *zangyō* (overtime work) because his sole goal was to accumulate money. In order to save more money, he did not drink, gamble or go out with his colleagues much. Because his head was "buried in work", Tai also could not have the time and energy to think about other things such as dating or looking for a partner. By the time his three-year internship contract ended, Tai had been able not only to pay back the initial amount of money that his family had borrowed to advance for his migration but also to accumulate a significant amount of savings. His company offered to extend his stay but Tai declined to go back home, aiming to return to Japan to work again after a one-year break.

With his accumulated saving in Japan, Tai helped his parents buy more farm equipment and hire more workers for the harvesting season after returning to Vietnam. It was during this time that he learned how to drive a car and took his parents on several travel trips as a way of "taking care of the parent". He thus considered himself to be "different from the other returned men who just brought the girls out and forgot about the parents". During one of these trips, Tai met and exchanged contact with a young woman. However, the pair only gave each other their telephone numbers and social media accounts and Tai did not take further steps in flirting with this woman because he had already had a plan to re-migrate to Japan soon. Besides, Tai had other options regarding dating partners because many local women in his hometown were into him thanks to his status as a returned migrant from abroad. Tai remembered: "after returning to Vietnam from Japan, a lot of women asked me out... I did not have to ask them out, they were the ones who asked me to go out". In 2017, Tai went to Japan for the second time as a technical intern trainee working for the same construction company that had previously employed him. Although Tai's ultimate migration goal this time was still making money, he did not invest all of his time and energy into work. Rather, he traveled around more, bought a new camera, learned how to take pictures, and attended

more to his appearance. All of this happened after he managed to persuade his employer to give him a salary raise and fire the Japanese co-worker who was abusive to him. Tai regarded such an event to be a turning point in which he was reminded that he had focused enough on working and earning money and he should pay more attention to himself.

As Tai started to pay more attention to other aspects of his life other than work, he thought about looking for a Japanese lover "like many other Vietnamese men". Such an idea, however, soon perished when Tai reflected on his migrant status:

> "I have never thought that a Japanese woman would be into me… because …first: I am Vietnamese, and second: I am only a low-skilled worker who works for other people. So how can a Japanese person like me?... Besides, it is too expensive to date and so difficult to build a family with Japanese people"

While Tai's status as a foreign migrant in Japan might have hindered him from finding a Japanese partner, it had a different effect in Vietnam. When Tai posted photos of himself traveling in Japan on social media, the woman he had met during the trip in Vietnam messaged him to compliment his pictures. The two then talked more regularly and subsequently started a long-distance relationship. A few months later, Tai's girlfriend suggested getting married – a suggestion to which Tai agreed thinking that he had reached the age of building a family. Tai then shortly went back to Vietnam to meet his future wife and her family and plan for a wedding, all of which happened within just a few months. After the wedding in his hometown, Tai could not go back to Japan as intended because of the pandemic-induced travel restrictions. It was during this waiting period at home that Tai found out that he was going to be a father. Thus, he hoped to be able to go back to Japan soon to earn more money and, if possible, bring his wife and child to Japan. However, Tai's long-term plan was to permanently return to his root - Vietnam. "Staying in Japan might be convenient but it does not feel at home", Tai explained his choice, "and it is still better to be closer to your family and parents".

After his two migrations to Japan, Tai believed that he had grown into a mature, capable, and confident man. He also felt that his social, sexual, and masculine statuses had increased over time as he accumulated more experiences and resources from working abroad. However, such an improvement in status was more visible when Tai was in Vietnam in comparison with when he was in Japan. For example, while he is "only a low-skilled worker" with a foreign background in Japan, Tai is a man with high respectability in Vietnam thanks to

his good income and experiences of living abroad. Besides, in opposition to the diffident attitude regarding his attractiveness to Japanese individuals, Tai was very confident when he was in Vietnam as many local women asked him out. His migration journey, thus, features the notion of charging in two ways. First, migration to Japan is a way for Tai to charge up his economic, social, and masculine status by accumulating different resources and becoming more independent and capable. Japan in this sense is a charging station for Tai where his social body and status are filled with capital and assets. Second, the different ways in which Tai's social status and background are discerned in Japan and Vietnam suggest that his migrant body is charged with different perceptions in dissimilar social contexts. While the experiences and consequences of migration are not universal, the notion of charging that vividly characterizes Tai's migration can also be found in the journey of many other Vietnamese migrant men in Japan. It does not only depict what migration means to male Vietnamese migrants but also captures how these men make sense of and negotiate their social, sexual, and gender statuses throughout different stages of migration.

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1.1. Introduction

One of the most prominent characteristics of the twenty-first century has been the increasing dissociation of social and geographic spaces at all levels in human society. This has been a result of the easy transgression of national borders reflected through the hypermobility of people, goods, information, and the enhanced transnational connections between different social groups. Such a development represents a key manifestation of transnationalism – a phenomenon in which "despite great distances and notwithstanding the presence of international borders, certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified and take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common – however virtual – arena of activity" (Vertovec 2009, 3). Research on transnationalism in social sciences started to take off since the late 1980s and witnessed a boom in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Nowicka 2020). While the concept of transnationalism has been serving as an analytical tool in various disciplines, it is within migration studies that it is extensively utilized and engaged with. The sociology of migration started to pay attention to the transnational connections and contacts that migrants corresponded with people and institutions back in their homelands as early as the nineteenth century (Vertovec 2009). However, migration scholarship during this time and the

early half of the twentieth century mostly focused on migrants' experiences of adaptation, assimilation, and/or exclusion in the receiving societies rather than their transnational connections. Such an academic priority, however, started to change toward the end of the twentieth century when the rapid developments and advances in travel and communication technologies allowed "a significant shift" in how contemporary international migration takes place and is understood (Vertovec 2001, 574). During this period, migration scholars looked beyond conventional assimilation theory and segmented assimilationism and directed more scrutiny to the migrant-centered social fields that transgress geographic, cultural, and political borders and the multiplicity of networks that migrants sustain in both places of residence and places of origin (Basch, Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1995; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Levitt, DeWind, and Vertovec 2003). By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the increased amount of studies on migrants' transnational connections, activities, and ways of being and belonging has made transnationalism one of the most fundamental concepts in capturing the wide range of contemporary migration and migrants' experiences (Vertovec 2009; Yeoh et al. 2003).

Nowadays, cross-border migration is seen not as a permanent move from one nation-state to another with few social and material links but rather as a process occurring within transnational social spaces that are constantly reworked and negotiated through migrants' simultaneous embeddedness in multi-layered and multi-sited arenas (Faist 2000; 1998; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Shams 2020; Nowicka 2020; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1995). In particular, migrants not only partake in different forms of social, economic, religious, political, and individual engagement that span across different nation-states and communities but also develop practices and display identities that fit more into the reality of transnationalism. Since the last two decades, scholars have suggested considering contemporary cross-border migration as inherently transnational and the experience of international migration is "a kind of gauge which, while anchored, pivots between host land and transnational connections" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1003). Such a perspective has widened the spectrum of social practices that need to be considered in people's movements across national, social, and cultural borders. However, the attention paid to different aspects of transnational migration has been unequal. Phenomena that tend to be examined more are those that can be easily observed and measured such as migrants' transnational economic practices, political engagements, or the formation and functioning of

migrants' transnational networks. The economic sphere, for example, has been the most studied domain of migrants' transnational practices because in many cases, the aspiration for economic gain is one of the prime reasons that motivate migrants to move in the first place. The visibility and salience of migrants' remittances in both sending and receiving countries as well as the emergence of several actors in the transnational economic domains have also drawn large attention to migrants' transnational economic ties (Guarnizo 2003; Portes 1999; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999; Portes, Guarnizo, and Haller 2002; Vertovec 2009). Other facets of transnational migration that have been extensively examined include the nature and function of border-crossing social networks, families, and households, ethnic communities and associations, power relations surrounding gender and status, religious institutions and practices, patterns of economic exchanges, and political engagements (Vertovec 2004, 971).

While migrants are bearers of sexualities, gender, ethnicity, class, and nationality and at the same time agents constantly negotiating their self-identities vis-à-vis others in transnational spaces (Yeoh et al. 2003, 3), much of the work on transnational migration has not favored dimensions that are subjective, deeply felt, and embedded in migrants' transnational social life but not overtly expressed such as emotions, gender, sexuality, and imagination (Levitt, DeWind, and Vertovec 2003, 571). In other words, the more intimate spheres in individuals' experiences such as emotional needs, sexual and gender behaviors and subjectivities in the context of transnational migration have been less studied than other spheres, and the question of how gender and sexual practices and identities are constructed transnationally has not been adequately addressed. Furthermore, literature to date that deals with these facets of transnational migration mostly conceptualizes and theorizes based on the experiences of female migrants. Although data on international migration indicates that the number of migrant men exceeds that of migrant women (fifty-two percent versus forty-eight percent of the total number of international migrants respectively) (Word Migration Report 2022), the quantitative data on studies of migrant men and women does not resemble such a trend (Fresnoza-Flot 2022). Rather, studies on male migrants are largely outnumbered by those on female migrants, especially in the context of Asia and with the study themes of sexuality and gender (Baas and Yang 2020).

This dissertation ventures from such a scholarly context to engage more intensively with the dimensions of sexuality and gender in the transnational migration journey of male migrants in the Asian context. It inquires into such aspects by exploring the ways in which

Vietnamese migrant men in Japan negotiate their sexualities and masculinities during the different migratory phases. Drawing on the life histories of seventy male-identifying Vietnamese migrants in Japan and returned migrants in Vietnam, it explores how migrant men's sexualities and masculinities affect their transnational migration decision-making, behaviors, and experiences and vice versa – how the experience of migration influences migrant men's gender and sexuality. Because transnational migrants are people who move across not only geographical but also socio-cultural borders, this dissertation's focus on migrants' transnational negotiation of sexualities and masculinities points to the different systems of social institutions, practices, and meanings that condition migrants' lived experiences. Such inquiries then allow this dissertation to ultimately conceptualize what transnational migration means to migrant men's aspirations for social trajectories. In other words, the dissertation investigates the social meanings of transnational migration among migrant men and the effects that cross-border mobility has on their sexuality and masculinity in terms of practices, desires, status, and identities. It argues that sexuality and masculinity are integral parts of the transnational migration journey of migrant men in terms of motivation, experiences, and consequences. The dissertation also links male migrants' negotiation of sexuality and masculinity to the aspirations for social transformation and upward social mobility in terms of social, sexual, and gender statuses. Particularly, it argues that transnational migration to Japan is, for many Vietnamese migrant men, a rite of passage leading to positively recognized manhood. Specifically, migrating from Vietnam to Japan represents a transformative pathway for migrant men to turn from young, inexperienced individuals to capable, well-articulated, and mature men.

However, such a transformative pathway is not at all smooth as migrant men have to face various institutional and individual constraints that require suitable strategies and tactics to negotiate. The dissertation, thus, proposes the concept of "charging migrants" as the analytical thread to unfold and make sense of not only migrants' negotiation of sexuality and masculinity but also the social meanings that they and other social actors attach to their migratory journeys. The notion of "charging migrants" is elaborated in two ways in this dissertation. First, I demonstrate how migrating to Japan is an effective means for many male Vietnamese migrants to accumulate different kinds of capital and subsequently elevate not only their socioeconomic but also sexual and gender statuses once they return home. From the perspective of social mobility, transnational migration is then a process in which migrant

men can achieve upward mobility in the home country by charging up their social body and status with resources gathered from abroad. From a gender perspective, I argue that transnational migration is, for many Vietnamese migrant men, a pathway that allows migrant men to gather masculine capital and claim mature, well-articulated, and independent manhood. An example of such an argument can be seen in the aforementioned case of Tai who experienced upward mobility in terms of sexual, masculine, and social status in Vietnam after having migrated to Japan and accumulated sufficient cultural and economic capital from his work. In that sense, the notion of "charging migrants" indicates not only a social process in transnational migration in which migrants accumulate different resources but also a motivation or an aspiration from migrant men.

In addition, the "charging migrants" can also be seen through how Vietnamese migrant men's sexuality and gender are perceived differently during migration with spatial and temporal variances. Because transnational migrants are people who move across not only geographical but also socio-cultural borders, they have to face and navigate dissimilar systems of social institutions, norms, and practices through which their sexualities and masculinities are affected, challenged and (re)negotiated. Baas and Yang (2020, 13) asserted that the bodies of migrants are often "tension-ridden" and "charged with negative emotions" in the host society. I argue that the social experiences in Japan of many male Vietnamese migrants reflect such an observation as they face difficulties in finding and establishing intimate encounters or relationships or the reality of being discriminated against because of their nationality and migrant status. The dissertation, thus, also pays attention to how these migrant men employ different strategies and tactics of self-presentation to put their social status and bodies in a more positive light. At the same time, male migrants often experience an elevation in social, sexual, and masculine statuses when they return to Vietnam thanks to the positive perceptions that many locals associate returnees from abroad with. In other words, the social body and status of the Vietnamese migrant men who return from Japan are charged with positive views and thoughts in the Vietnamese context. However, the dissertation does not suggest a strict dichotomy between how the migrant social status and bodies are charged with negative or positive perceptions. Rather, it points to the spectrum of possible meanings and effects that transnational migration can have on migrant men's social bodies and status. Consequently, the notion of "charging migrants" can also be understood as connoting a condition, a status, and/or a process of reconfiguring and negotiating. In that

sense, the migrant in the notion of "charging migrants" can be understood both as a object and a subject.

The notion of "charging migrants" in this dissertation, thus, not only expands the meanings of migration but also sheds light on migrants' agency and different systems of social institutions, practices, and meanings that condition migrants' lived experiences. How such a notion is analyzed in the migration journey of the Vietnamese men in this research will feature a multi-level reading of male migrants' engagements with sexuality and gender including the micro-level (migrants' self-representation of the bodies, behaviors, and their subjective sexual and masculine identities), the inter-personal level (migrants' social network and their inter-personal, social interactions with other social actors in the migration context), and the institutional level (social structures, organizations, institutions, and norms). Before further empirical evidence is presented, it is important to address in detail the three backbones of this dissertation: why study sexuality and gender in men's migration?, who are the male Vietnamese migrants in Japan? and how can "charging migrants" be a suitable theoretical framework that speaks to the individual empirical chapters in this dissertation and the dissertation itself as a whole?

1.2. Studying Migrant Men's Sexuality and Masculinity in an Inter-Asian Context

Sexuality can be a crucial power dimension that facilitates not only the trajectories but also the experiences of transnational migration. Such a statement, however, is a recent claim since the sexual dimension had historically been marginalized and is still relatively "absent as a social factor in mainstream sociological studies of transnational migration" (Carrillo 2017, 6; Manalansan 2006). The field of migration studies in the past used to have several false assumptions about sexuality. For example, scholarship used to focus primarily on migrants' processes of integration and assimilation in the receiving society and their participation in different labor markets. Because transnational migrants are indeed sexual beings who have emotional and sexual lives and aspirations beyond the productive sphere (Ahmad 2009), ignoring the sexual dimension in their migration journey risks dehumanizing migration and excluding migration from being a part of an individual's intimate life. Moreover, human sexualities are socially produced, organized, maintained, and transformed based on shifting symbols, contingent contexts, and political processes (Plummer 1995). The intimate dimension in the lives of people who move, thus, shapes and is shaped by an "immigrant

culture of sexuality", which is both responsive to and reflective of the cultures of sexuality in the host countries (González-López 2005, 21). The assimilationist approach in conventional migration studies often saw migrants' lives as following a linear process of fully embracing the culture and social norms in the host society and relinquishing those in the country of origin. However, migrants' previous ways of thinking about and living their sexualities are not erased after migrating but rather curtailed by the "labors of reinvention and renegotiation in new places or reimagined old ones" (Sanchez-Eppler and Patton 2000). As a result, overlooking the sexual dimensions in migration means turning a blind eye to a wide array of social structures, institutions, and actors spanning across borders that shape migrants' lived experiences.

Moreover, although transnational relocation can enable queer practices, identities, and subjectivities (Carrillo 2004; Gorman-Murray 2009; Groes and Fernandez 2018), migration studies used to consider the typical migrant to be heterosexual and subsequently neglect the experiences of non-heterosexual, queer-identifying migrants (Carrillo 2017; Fresnoza-Flot 2022; Luibhéid 2008). In the few studies to date that investigate transnational queer migration, sexual minority migrants' mobility trajectories are commonly presented as unidirectional. Specifically, research on global flows of queer migrants predominantly features movements from supposedly "oppressive" (mostly rural areas, developing countries in the global South) to presumably more "progressive" destinations (mostly urban areas, developed countries in the global North). Such a direction of queer migration flows is thought to allow queer practices, identities, and subjectivities to be engaged with in more flexible ways (Carrillo and Fontdevila 2014). While this viewpoint can be correct in many cases, it also disregards the variances in global queer movements and reinforces the political dichotomies of East-West, North-South, and legacies of colonialism in migration studies. Hence, more empirical studies that address the sexual aspect of border-crossing with careful considerations of the heterogeneity of the migrant population and geographical contexts are needed to provide insights into how and where institutions, structures, and ideologies are being transformed in relation to transnational migration (Favell and Recchi 2011).

The performances of sexualities also occupy a central position in constructing migrants' gender identities (Walsh et al. 2008) and echo the highly gendered nature of migration. However, gender has been addressed either too little or too out of proportion in migration studies, depending on whether the researched group consists of male or female

migrants. Early research on international migration predominantly took for granted that the typical migrant is a heterosexual male human being. The gendered dimension in his life was mostly covert, and how he experienced migration as a gendered being remained unexplored (Fresnoza-Flot 2022; Raymond Hibbins and Pease 2009; Pedraza 1991). This perspective also rendered the by-default male migrant as the primary mover who migrated to (mainly) take on the task of enhancing the stay-behind family's livelihood. Because of such assumptions, female migrants used to be invisible in early migration studies. Feminist scholarship within the last few decades, however, has challenged such a gender-blindness by drawing attention to the embodied migration experiences of migrant women, and how such experiences inform "the emancipatory and constraining nature of gendered migrant spatialities and identity politics" (Yeoh and Ramdas 2014, 1198). In tandem with the feminization of migration in which more females migrated and contributed to the collective incomes of the household, migration studies have paid attention to the moving women and investigated the various aspects of females' migration journeys, especially in the Asian region (Fresnoza-Flot 2022; Hoang and Yeoh 2015; Oishi 2005). Important steps have been made in these studies to give voices to female migrants, foreground their migration experiences, and point to the different effects of transnational migration on women's engagements with sexual and gender norms and expectations in the host and home countries.

Ironically, the field of women studies has developed so far that male migrants have been ignored almost to the same degree as female migrants had previously experienced in conventional migration studies, based on the numbers of academic publications on the respective researched populations (Fresnoza-Flot 2022; Mahler and Pessar 2001; Pessar and Mahler 2003). Much of the migration literature to date has also been distinguishing between how migrant men and women experience migration and, therefore, focusing on different aspects of their migratory journeys. Particularly, scholarship has often portrayed migrant men as the "primary movers" or "rational decision-makers" who migrate to enhance the family's livelihood (Raymond Hibbins and Pease 2009, 4) and hence commonly paid more attention to their economic and labor practices. On the other hand, the sexual and gendered dimensions in female migrants' experiences tend to be scrutinized more because international migration can provide many women with agency and bargaining power to negotiate traditional gender norms and expectations (Hoang 2011; Hoang and Yeoh 2011; 2015; Pedraza 1991). However, such a dichotomy in the topical focus of migration studies not

only fails to explore the variances in men's experiences but also repeats the gender-and-sexual-blind analyses and stereotypes of migration studies in the past. Furthermore, gender identity and subjectivity are not fixed or monolithic, but rather can be changed or negotiated depending on different times as well as the reconfigurations of socio-cultural structures and contexts. Researchers have observed that migrants' masculine subjectivities are likely to be shifted or reworked in the process of migration. In particular, the dominant masculine expectations and norms or migrants' notion of hegemonic masculinity might be destabilized or reinforced, and new forms of masculinities might be developed and enacted flexibly as a result of geographical and international relocation (Carrillo 2017; del Aguila 2014; Ray Hibbins 2005; Thing 2010). Nevertheless, the outcomes of the process of (re)considering, (re)constructing, and (re)defining gender identities during migration are heterogeneous. On the one hand, male migrants might learn, perform, and even internalize new codes, symbols, and representations that are associated with the local variants of masculine behaviors (Britton 2018; Chen 2017; Hibbins and Pease 2009; Lin 2013). Evidence has suggested that such a process often threatens male migrants' sense of masculinity as many male migrants often face downward mobility in terms of socio-economic status after migrating to an unfamiliar context (Ahmad 2009; Batnitzky, McDowell, and Dyer 2009; Ray Hibbins 2005). On the other hand, some also attempt to either reinforce or even intensify the masculine values and norms that they have familiarized with before in the new migration context as a way of reassuring or reclaiming their (lost) masculinity within unfamiliar gender cultures and environments (Choi 2019; 2018; Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo 2005). In order to understand how, when, and where migrants' gender selves reconfigure as part of migration, the variance of spatiality in their journey should be scrutinized.

To date, the majority of literature on the sexuality and gender identities among Asian male migrants has taken into consideration such aspects in male Asian migrants in non-Asian, Western contexts, where their sexualities and masculinities were negatively impacted by structural factors such as legacies of white hostility and colonialism, gendered labor practices, degrading media representations, and hierarchies based on sex, gender, race, and class (Ahmad 2009; Fung 1996; Han 2006; 2008; Nguyen 2014; Proschan 2002; Ruez 2017). For instance, Asian male migrants often have to face downward mobility in socioeconomic status and deviation from the Western hegemonic masculinity after migration to the West (Chua and Fujino 2008; Ray Hibbins 2005; Wei 2017). Together, these elements often render Asian

men as having "falling bodies" that do not matter and that are poor, effeminate, asexual, and sexually undesirable (Ahmad 2009; Kong 2007). Consequently, Asian male migrants, especially heterosexual ones, often have difficulties cultivating intimate interactions or relationships with locals and therefore have to face not only constant anxiety and stress but also hardship in developing self-confidence (Lu and Wong 2013). In the Asian context, studies on Asian male migrants are still lagging due to the disproportionally growing scholarly attention given to female migration. While there has been a well-established body of literature that addressed how female Asian migrants' sexualities and gender shape and are shaped by intra-Asian migration (Hoang 2011; 2016; Hoang and Yeoh 2011; 2015; Oishi 2005; Roces 2022; Yeoh and Ramdas 2014), such perspectives in the migration journeys of Asian men are still by and large either absent or overlooked (Baas and Yang 2020; Fresnoza-Flot 2022; Lin 2017; Louie and Low 2003). If mentioned, men are often considered as the background for the main focus - the sexuality and/or gender dimension in females' migration experiences. In other words, studies on the gender and sexual aspects of the migration journeys within Asia of male migrants are still lacking. Such a focus is necessary as there are various ways in which masculinities and sexualities are manifested in Asia (Lin, Haywood, and Mac an Ghaill 2017; Louie and Low 2003; Pendleton 2015; Roberson and Suzuki 2003; Roces 2022). Examining the ways in which Asian male migrants negotiate their sexualities and masculinities within Asian contexts, therefore, provides more nuanced perspectives to deviate from Euro-centric and US-centric approaches to looking at genders and sexualities. In addition, more gender-aware and sexuality-aware studies of migrant men are needed not only for the sake of academic balance but also for the strengthening of feminist and social change scholarship (Peretz 2016).

1.3. Charging Migrants – Male Vietnamese Migrants in Japan

Taking into consideration the aforementioned lack of study on the negotiation and transformation of sexualities and masculinities among Asian migrant men in intra-Asian transnational migration, this dissertation engages with the dimensions of sexuality and gender in the transnational migration journey of male Vietnamese migrants in contemporary Japan. It inquires into the negotiation of sexualities and masculinities among Vietnamese male migrants of various sexual and gender identities and explores the concomitant relationship between transnational migration and these men's sexualities and masculinities

in terms of practices, desires, subjectivities, and statuses. This dissertation explores how male migrants become "charging migrants" through transnational migration from the accounts of seventy male-identify Vietnamese migrants in Japan and Vietnam. It investigates not only the narratives of Vietnamese migrant men residing in Japan but also the experiences of men who used to live in Japan but had returned to Vietnam either permanently or for short-term purposes. Such a sample allows the tracking of migrants' negotiation of sexualities and masculinities in different periods (during and after migration) while also considering the temporal dimension in studying transnational migration, social transformation, and social mobility. On top of the aforementioned theoretical and empirical necessity to consider the experiences of Asian male migrants in intra-Asia migration, another reason for the choice of male Vietnamese migrants in Japan as the research population of this dissertation is the increasing popularity of Japan as a migration destination among Vietnamese men in the last decade.

1.3.1. Japan as an attractive migration destination for male Vietnamese migrants

The first recorded migration flow from Vietnam to Japan happened in the early twentieth century, during the period of French colonialism in Vietnam. Around two hundred Vietnamese students were sent to Japan from 1905 to 1910 as a part of an independent political movement named *Dong Du* (東遊), which meant "Go East" or "Travel East" (Marr 1971; M.-V. Tran 2009; Vinh 1988). This movement was led by the scholar Phan Boi Chau and other like-minded nationalists in Vietnam hoping to nurture a new generation of revolutionaries with the help of Japan to stand against the French colonialist regime and regain freedom for Vietnam (see Shiraishi 1975 for a detailed analysis of why Japan was chosen by the movement leader as a destination to send Vietnamese students to). Within a short period, Vietnamese students were sent mostly to Japanese universities to study the Japanese language and Japanese military and technological advances in order to help liberate the motherland. However, the movement was disrupted after the signing of the Franco-Japanese Treaty in 1907 and most of the students were sent back to Vietnam out of political pressure (M.-V. Tran 2009). Albeit short-lived, the *Dong Du* movement marked the first officially recorded transnational flow of Vietnamese migrants between Vietnam and Japan. The Vietnam-Japan migration flow started to happen again in the late 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s,

especially after the two countries established formal bilateral diplomatic relation in 1973. During this period, those who migrated to Japan were mostly students through governmental sponsored scholarships or refugees who fled Vietnam after the fall of the Southern Vietnamese government in 1975[1]. Until the 1990s, the majority of Vietnamese migrants in Japan were refugees who either involuntarily had to stay in Japan after fleeing the Vietnam war or voluntarily took refuge in Japan for economic reasons (Kawakami 2008).
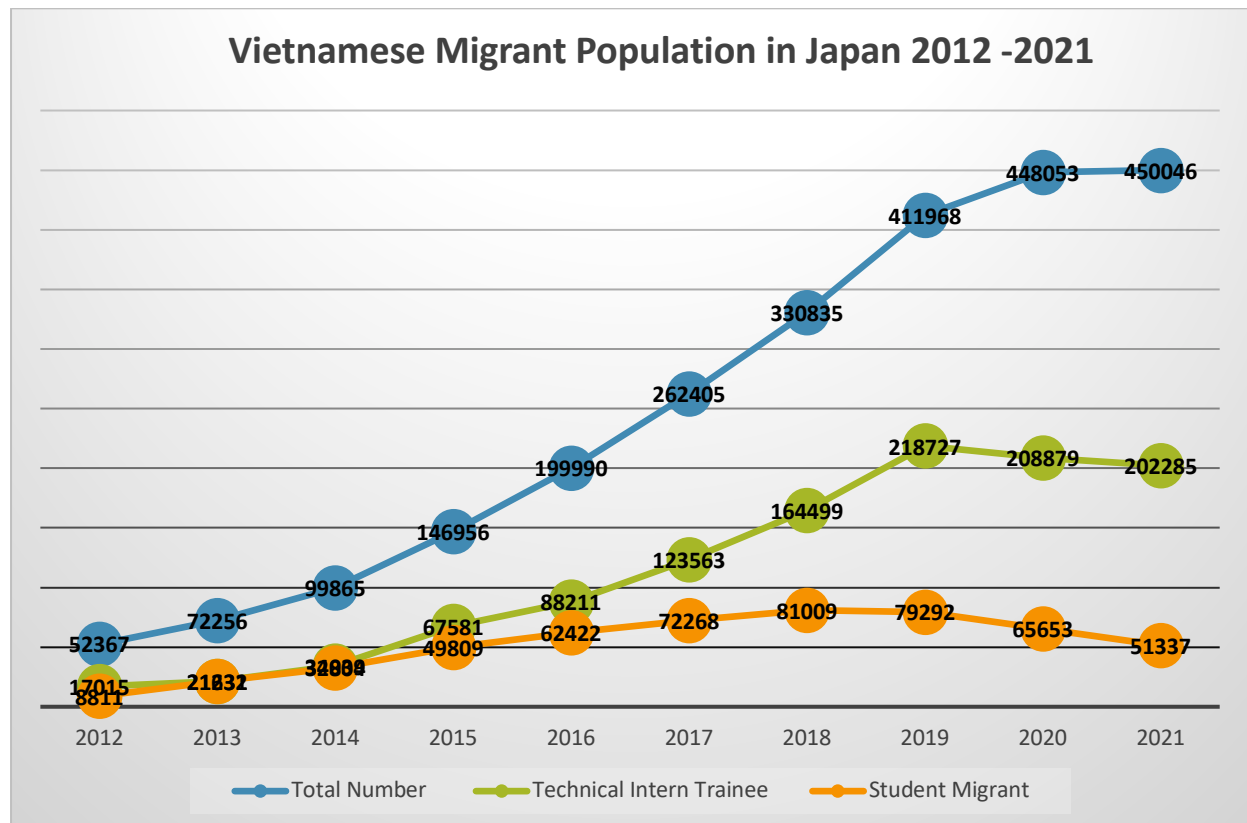
Figure 1. Vietnamese Migrant Population in Japan 2012 -2021

Source: Ministry of Justice 2012-2022.

Migration flows from Vietnam to Japan started to increase in the late 1990s and took off significantly from the turn of the twenty-first century. Since the 2000s, Japan has been one of the most popular migration destinations for Vietnamese migrants of different backgrounds and visa statuses. The number of Vietnamese migrants in Japan gradually

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[1] After the fall of Saigon in the Vietnam War in 1975, several Vietnamese fled due to political reasons. Many used boats as the main mean of transportation to escape the country and hence came the term "boat people". While most wanted to cross the Pacific Ocean to go to the US, several were stuck in refugee camps mid-way in countries such as Japan and the Philippines.

increased over the 2000s and rocketed in the 2010s. The World Migration Report from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) identified Vietnam-Japan as the second most significant transnational migration corridor from Vietnam in terms of volume (Mcauliffe and Triandafyllidou 2021). While America is still the country that houses the most Vietnamese outside of Vietnam, Japan has turned into the second most significant migration destination for Vietnamese migrants. When in 2012 there were only around registered 52,000 Vietnamese migrants residing in Japan[2] (Ministry of Justice 2013), this number increased by more than eight times after less than a decade (Figure 1) (Ministry of Justice 2021). According to the data from Japan's Ministry of Justice, there were more than 450,000 Vietnamese nationals in Japan by mid-2021, making the Vietnamese the second-largest group of foreign residents in the country (the Chinese constitute the biggest population of foreign residents in Japan). The colossal flow of Vietnamese newcomers to Japan has significantly diversified the characteristics of the Vietnamese population in the country (Shibuya 2022). Instead of refugees like in the 70s and 80s, the majority of the current Vietnamese migrant population in Japan features student migrants, technical intern trainees[3], and high-skilled workers. Since 2017, Vietnamese has become the biggest group of foreign students studying in Japanese language schools (*Nihongo Gakkō*) (JASSO 2021) and made up approximately a quarter of the whole group of international students in Japan. The group of Vietnamese students has also been making several media headlines in Japan because of its fast-growing pace (within only five years from 2012 to 2017, the number of Vietnamese students in Japan has grown twenty-eightfold) (NHK 2017; 2021). At the same time, Vietnamese has also been the group of foreign workers that expands the most rapidly in the country (Sieg and Miyazaki 2019). In 2019 alone, more than 152,500 Vietnamese workers were sent through official channels to work abroad, and around fifty-four percent of them were sent to the Japanese labor market[4] (MOLISA

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[2] There were 52,367 registered Vietnamese individuals in Japan as of December 2012 (Ministry of Justice 2013).

[3] Technical Intern Trainee (*Ginō Jisshyusei*) is the official term to refer to migrants who migrate to Japan under the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP). This program was established in 1993 by the Japanese Government with the aim of addressing the labor shortage in several industries that require hard manual labors in Japan.

[4] According to the Vietnamese Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA 2020), the total number of Vietnamese labors going abroad in 2019 was 152,530 individuals (35,9% of whom are female labor migrants). Within this total tally, 82,703 (54.2%) labors went to Japan. The second largest foreign labor market was Taiwan with 54,480 labor migrants (35.7%), followed by Korea with 7,215 laborers (4.7%) and other destinations.

2020). This means that in 2019, nearly 6,900 Vietnamese laborers were sent to Japan per month, making Japan the biggest foreign labor market for Vietnamese workers (VAMAS 2020).

There are four mainstream explanations for the drastic expansion of the Vietnamese population in Japan. First, Japan has been among one of the largest providers of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Vietnam since the 2000s. In 2021, Japan was the third biggest FDI investor in Vietnam, with a registered investment capital of nearly 3.9 billion USD and accounting for 12.5% of the total investment capital in the country (Ministry of Planning and Investment 2021). In tandem with the influx of FDI from Japan to Vietnam, Japanese firms and companies, especially those in the manufacturing and retailing industries, have been actively setting up branch offices and production plants in the country. As a result, employees with a suitable set of skills and experiences have been in high demand in these workplaces. Going to Japan to either study or gain working experience, therefore, has been considered by many Vietnamese youths as a strategy to increase their employability and competitiveness in the Vietnamese labor market upon return (Nohara and Nguyen 2017). Second, the attraction of studying in Japan has also been one of the major reasons that facilitate the flow of Vietnamese migrants to Japan. Such an attraction is the result of several structural factors from both Japan and Vietnam. For example, the "300,000 International Student Plans" promoted by the Japanese government under Prime Minister Fukuda's administration urged for more simplified procedures of visa application and enrolment in educational institutions to attract more foreign students to Japan. At the same time, the wish to internationalize, the need for international students from many Japanese education institutions, and the active recruitment of other actors in the migration industry such as education brokers also boosted the number of Vietnamese students in Japan (Liu-Farrer and Tran 2019). Besides, Vietnam's economic transformation after the *Doi Moi* (Renovation) reform in 1986 has allowed the expansion of the Vietnamese middle-class and lower-middle-class population. This meant that more Vietnamese locals had the financial means to consider going abroad or sending their children abroad for education.

The above-mentioned wish from the Japanese side for international students also lowered the threshold regarding the requirements for the student visa, which made the opportunity to study in Japan more accessible for many Vietnamese. When compared to other developed countries that have long been commercializing international education such as the U.S., the U.K., Australia, or Singapore, Japan appears to be a more affordable studying

abroad destination as Japanese education institutions charge a relatively lower tuition fee. The close geographical distance between the two countries also played a crucial role in making Japan an attractive migration destination for many Vietnamese students. In addition, the popularity of Japanese culture in Vietnam in the last fifteen years also drew the attention of quite a number of young Vietnamese to the opportunity of studying in Japan. Nowadays, various Japanese cultural festivals and events are hosted throughout the year in big Vietnamese cities such as Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Danang, and Hue. Japanese manga and anime are loved and widely consumed by youngsters, and eating Japanese food has become not only trendy but also more ordinary among Vietnamese cosmopolitans. Migration to Japan, thus, has turned into an attractive option not only for young Vietnamese migrants who seek opportunities to accumulate their economic and cultural capital but also for those who want to fulfil their admiration for Japanese culture.

Third, despite the post-*Doi Moi* rapid economic and social developments in the last three decades, there is still a big gap regarding the average income between Vietnam and Japan. In 2020, it was reported that the average monthly wage in the private sector for a graduate from a college or university in Vietnam ranged from 300 to 450 USD (MOLISA 2020). This number, unsurprisingly, is significantly lower if an individual does not possess a university or college degree unless he/she opens his/her own business. On the other hand, the average monthly income for people between twenty and twenty-four years old in Japan in 2020 in the private sector was around 201 thousand Yen (approximately 1500 USD) (National Tax Agency 2021). This suggested that the average income in Japan can be from three to five times higher than in Vietnam. As a result, there has been a very positive perception in Vietnam about Japan as a lucrative country to migrate to. Japan is commonly considered to be one of the most modern, richest, and safest of all potential destination countries in Asia, with plenty of opportunities to earn money (Bélanger and Wang 2013). This perception indeed plays a salient role in shaping the aspiration and desire to migrate to Japan among many Vietnamese. Since the beginning of the 2010s, advertisements for migration to Japan either under the scheme of the Technical Intern Training Program or as student migrants have been omnipresent in Vietnam. In cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city, it is not difficult to find migration agencies that specialize in sending either students or laborers to Japan. These agencies often promise the possibility of earning good money in Japan and guarantee a high chance of securing the visa. To make migration to Japan even more attractive, most agencies

promote the chance of doing overtime work (*zangyō*) to earn additional money for labor migrants and the possibility of funding the study through part-time work for student migrants. In Japan, international students are allowed to work part-time up to twenty-eight hours per week (and forty hours per week during holidays or semester breaks). Consequently, international education has long been a side door for cheap labor migration into Japan that allured many non-academic-oriented students (Liu-Farrer 2009; 2011). The distinction between student migration and labor migration for many Vietnamese migrants in Japan, therefore, is often blurred. While Chinese students were the main source of working foreign students in Japan in the 1980s and 1990s, Vietnamese students have now taken over such a position. In 2021, students from China and Vietnam accounted for over 67,5 percent of the total number of international students in Japan (JASSO 2022). Drawn by numerous advertisements from education agencies, many young Vietnamese (and their families) believe that the student visa in Japan would offer them more agency in working and studying in Japan.

Last but not least, facing the problem of labor shortage, many Japanese firms and companies have been extending the recruitment procedures to other countries, mostly in Asia, to attract more international talents (*tarento*) (skilled labors) to come and work in Japan (Conrad and Meyer-Ohle 2018; Conrad and Meyer-Ohle 2019; Hof and Tseng 2020; Oishi 2012; Tseng 2021). Since the beginning of the 2010s, various job fairs and recruitment events have been organized each year in Vietnam by migration agencies and/or local universities to match Japanese employers with young Vietnamese university graduates who are interested in working in Japan. Once a candidate is shortlisted from the event, he/she would be invited for further interview(s) and would be guided with necessary procedures for migration to Japan if eventually chosen. Such activities have created a transnational labor market that facilitates a significant number of Vietnamese migrant workers to Japan, especially in the Information Technology (IT) and trading sectors (Muranaka 2022). Other actors that have been actively facilitating the flow of high-skilled laborers from Vietnam to Japan include head-hunting firms or human resource companies that operate and recruit transnationally. These companies often hire foreign workers to support the recruitment of co-ethnic workers. They usually take up the tasks of coordinating with the branch offices in Vietnam for available job posts in Japan, interviewing potential candidates in Vietnam, and helping the newly arrived migrants to get used to life in Japan. In addition, the newly-implemented specified skilled worker program (*tokutei ginō*) has also been a channel that has great potential in funneling

more Vietnamese migrants to Japan. This visa scheme allows foreign workers to enter Japan and immediately work for up to five years in one of the fourteen industrial sectors suffering from labor shortage as long as they have passed the language and skill tests. Unlike the Technical Intern Training Program, foreign workers who apply for the specified skilled worker program do not have to go through intermediate agencies or supervising organizations and can have a direct working relationship with their Japanese employers. Since the implementation of this visa scheme in April 2019, the Vietnamese has been among the national groups that had the highest accepted numbers of skilled workers (Immigration Services Agency of Japan 2021).

THE NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS IN JAPAN DIVIDED BY GENDER (2012 – 2021)
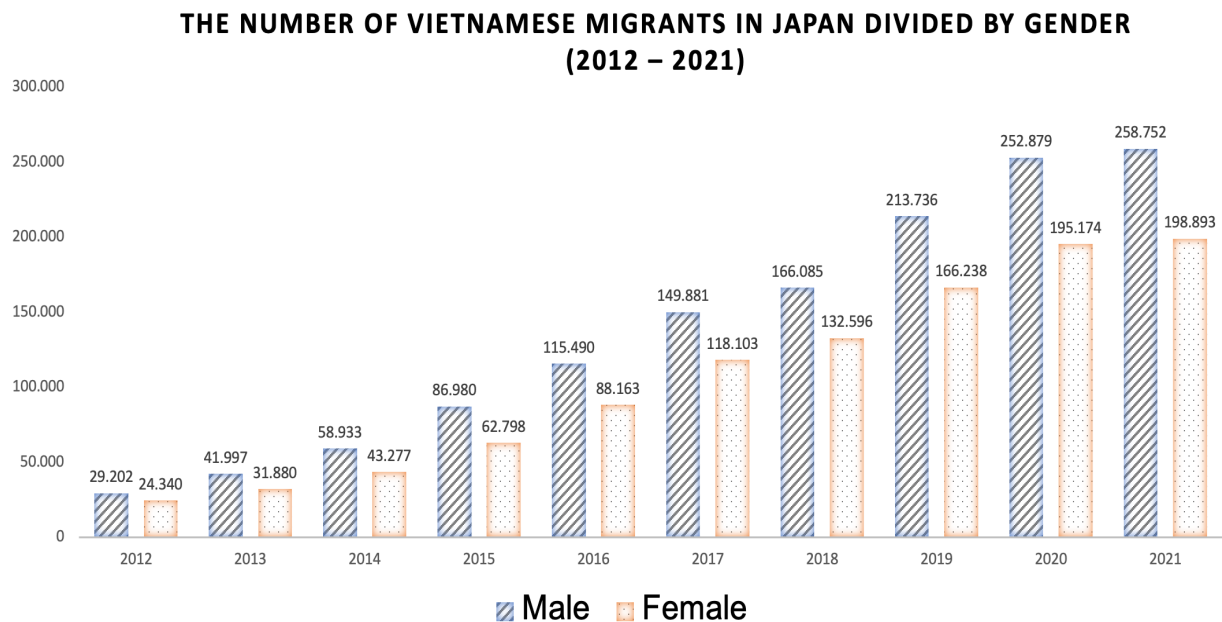
Figure 2. The Number of Male Vietnamese Migrants in Comparison to Female Vietnamese Migrants in Japan 2012-2021.

Source: Ministry of Justice 2012-2022.

Among the total tally of Vietnamese migrants in Japan, the group of male migrants takes up around sixty percent. Such a figure has been remaining relatively steady throughout the years since the early 2010s (Figure 2). Most male Vietnamese migrants went to Japan as student migrants, technical intern trainees, and highly-skilled workers who are commonly employed in the IT or trading sectors. The majority of male Vietnamese migrants in Japan belong to the age group of the early twenties to early thirties, with the age range of twenty-

two to twenty-nine years old being the most dominant. Such an age range is also reflected in the biographic information of the research participants featured in this dissertation (see details in the following part). In terms of place of residence, Vietnamese migrants in general concentrate in four regions in Japan: Kanto, Chubu, Kansai, and Chugoku (Figure 3).
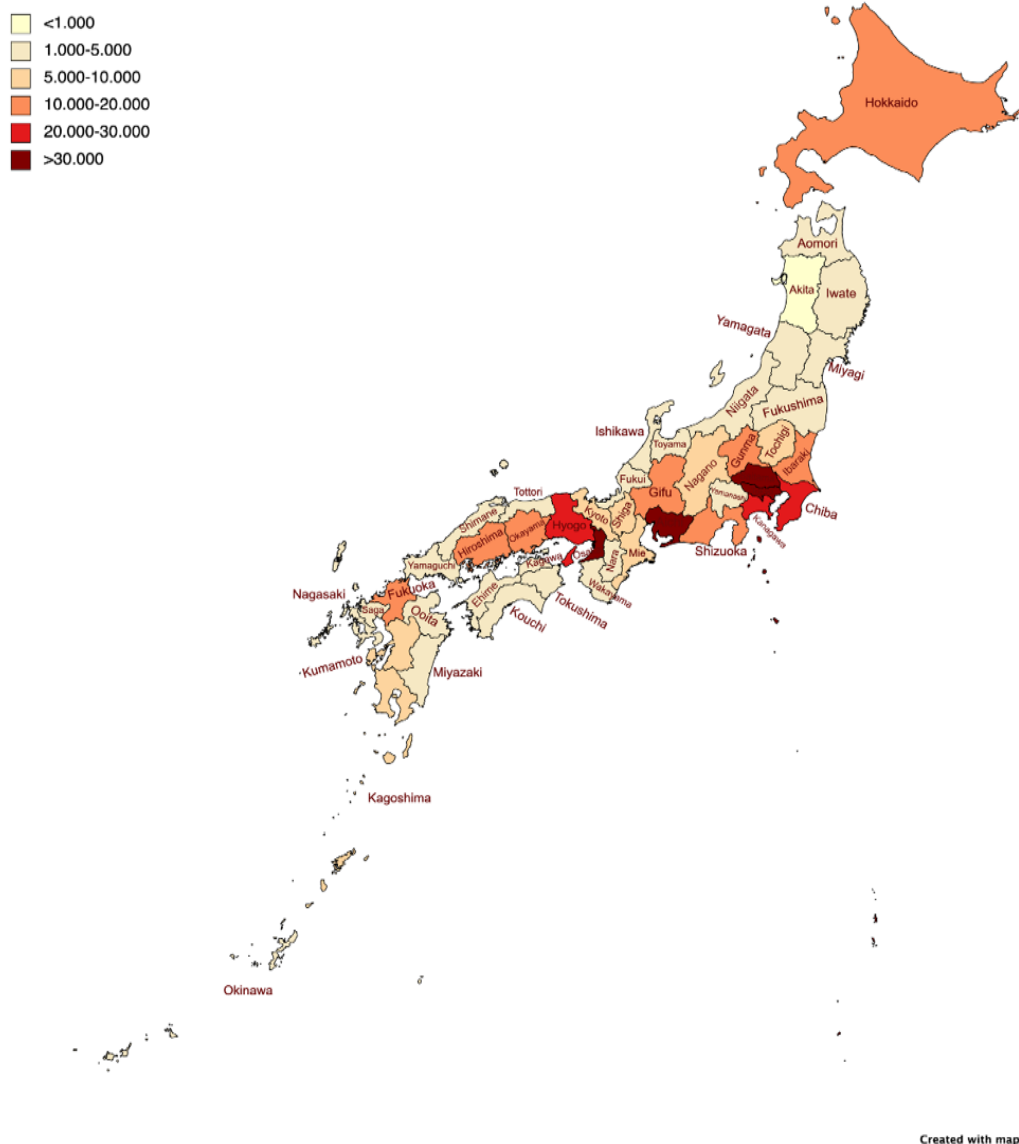
Figure 3. Distribution by Population Density of the Vietnamese Migrant Community in Japan in 2021.

Map by the author based on source from Ministry of Justice 2022.

Such a distribution of migrant population is mainly because these regions consist of the two biggest metropolises in Japan (Tokyo and Osaka) as well as several prefectures with a high

concentration of industrial factories, processing zones (Chiba, Gifu) and agricultural areas (Gifu, Aichi, Hyogo).

1.3.2. Studying the "charging" male Vietnamese migrants

This dissertation draws on the life histories of seventy men and selects the individual as the unit of analysis. Such a choice of research design stems from three grounds. First, having the individual as the unit of analysis means giving voice to social actors and studying their individual social experiences from their perspectives. This bottom-up approach, thus, has great potential to find real causes of and viable solutions for problems that any given social group, especially disempowered, marginalized, or disadvantaged populations, have to face (Castles 2001, 27). Second, the individual is an appropriate unit of analysis for the study of sexuality and gender in terms of practices, subjectivities, and statuses as these are notions that can only be thoroughly examined through individuals' lived experiences. Third, as this study also aims to unpack the relationship between transnational migration, transformation, and social mobility, the individual analytical unit offers a suitable perspective to look at mobility strategies "from below" (Goldthorpe 2007). These are the strategies employed and pursued by individuals with less advantaged class origins who yearn for upward social mobility and social class transformation (ibid.), which is the situation of many Vietnamese migrant men who come to Japan with the expectation of improving their socio-economic status in the first place.

In order to comprehensively capture the narratives of the migrant individuals, this study employs the method of ethnographic interviews and participant observation to gather evidence. Many migration scholars believe that multi-sited ethnography is particularly suited for studying the creation and durability of transnational social fields because it allows researchers to document how migrants simultaneously maintain and shed cultural repertoires and identities as well as interact within a location and across its boundaries (Amelina and Faist 2012; Faist 2000; 2012; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Such a methodological approach can also help avoid the potential limitations of methodological nationalism, which is the tendency to consider the state as the boundary for the unit and scope of analysis (Weiß and Nohl 2012). Sharing a similar perspective, this study collected empirical evidence through ethnographic fieldwork and interviews in several localities in the two national contexts of Japan and Vietnam from September 2019 until August 2020. The main

research sites in Japan included the areas of Tokyo Metropolis and the surrounding prefectures such as Saitama and Chiba, the cities of Osaka and Kyoto because these are among the areas with high concentrations of Vietnamese migrants in Japan (see Figure 3). In Vietnam, the fieldwork was conducted in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Even though there is no official statistic on the residence location in Vietnam of returnees from Japan, these two cities were chosen because of the high concentration of Japanese companies and Japan-related employment [5], which attracted many returned migrants. While the fieldwork was carried out in both Japan and Vietnam, the length of fieldwork time was not similar in each national context as the second round of fieldwork in Vietnam in 2020 was hindered by limited international flights and strict immigration regulations[6] induced by the global Covid-19 pandemic.

The research compensated for such a situation by taking up online interviews and virtual ethnographic observation. The shift from offline to online was challenging in many ways as there was a lack of physical interactions and the reading of non-verbal cues and body language between the researcher and the participants (Vogl 2013). However, such a transition also allowed the broadening of the scope of geographical locations in which the research participants of this study resided. Eventually, the Vietnamese men featured in this study resided in various parts of Japan including not only the Kanto (Tokyo, Chiba, Saitama) and Kansai (Osaka, Kyoto) areas but also Hokkaido, Tohoku, Shikoku, Kyūshū, and Okinawa. Similarly, returned migrants in Vietnam who lived in different cities or provinces other than Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City were reached out to. Subsequently, the group of returned migrants also included men who lived in Danang (the third biggest city in Vietnam) and Daklak (highland Vietnam). In addition, the distance created by the online interview allowed some research participants to talk more openly and comfortably about private, individual matters such as sexuality and gender.

The main empirical evidence of this research stem from seventy-nine interviews with seventy male Vietnamese migrants and former migrants. In addition to these interviews, a few interviews and informal conversations were also conducted with female Vietnamese migrants in Japan and former migrants in Vietnam to acquire more nuanced perspectives on

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[5] According to the data from Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), there were 1985 registered Japanese companies in Vietnam as of December 2020. Most of these companies are located in or within the vicinity of Hanoi (794 companies) in the North and Ho Chi Minh City in the South (1044 companies) (JETRO 2021).
[6] By March 2020, almost all commercial flights from Japan to Vietnam were cut off as one of the Vietnamese government's strategies to contain the spread of the Covid-19 virus. In April 2020, the Japanese government also issued a re-entry restriction which banned foreigners of all visa status who left Japan from returning to the country (except for those who had the Japanese permanent residency).

the researched population. The research participants were recruited through three methods: snowball sampling, online advertisements on Facebook, and the researcher's participation in different social events catering to Vietnamese migrant communities in Japan. Among the seventy research participants featured in this research, fifty-three were living in Japan and seventeen were residing in Vietnam at the time of the interview. This dissertation includes both heterosexual and non-heterosexual men to take into account the diversity of migrants' sexual and gender identities and give voices to the understudied group of queer migrants. Moreover, such a sample allows the discovery of not only the differences but also similarities in terms of sexual, gender, and migration experiences between heterosexual and non-heterosexual migrant men. In this study, twenty-three research participants identify as non-heterosexuals (either gay or bisexual), while the rest forty-seven men identify as heterosexuals. Sixteen men were married at the time of the interview while the rest were unmarried, except for one divorcee.

While research participants' age ranges from twenty years old to seventy-two years old, the majority of men in this study were in their mid-twenties to early thirties. The length of participants' stay in Japan was from six months to fifty-two years. In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of men from different class and occupational backgrounds, this research tried to incorporate narratives from migrant men with diverse visa categories and occupations. Consequently, the men in this study have occupations ranging from language students to post-doc researchers, from technical intern trainees working on construction sites or butcher shops' floors to high-skilled workers working for big Japanese firms or even managers/heads of companies (see Appendix A for a detailed list of research participants). Besides, although this is a study about Vietnamese men, two research participants had naturalized and attained Japanese citizenship. The research, however, included the experiences and narratives of these men because both of them still considered themselves Vietnamese and saw their Japanese citizenship as only for the convenience of legal procedures. For example, one of them, who is also the oldest research participant, had naturalized for more than 30 years, got married to a Japanese wife, and had two sons who are also Japanese nationals. However, this man often refers to himself as

Vietnamese and even appeared on a program named "Dear Mother, I am Vietnamese"[7] on Vietnamese National Television during the Lunar New Year of 2020. Both of these naturalized men have Japanese names but used their Vietnamese names during the interviews for this research or when interacting with other Vietnamese.

The narratives of the seventy men in this study were collected with the qualitative method of life-history interview, which explores migrants' perceptions and reflections on their life course. This interview method was utilized to capture the sexual and gender dimensions in migrants' lived experiences, in which sexualities and gender identities are formed, challenged, and negotiated concerning temporal and spatial varieties (Carpenter 2015; Plummer 1995; 2001). The method also has the potential to bring out biographic analyses that allow the interpretation of specific social phenomena from research participants' perspectives (Rosenthal 2004). All of the interviews were conducted in Vietnamese as this was the preferred language of all research participants and because people might be more comfortable talking about personal and intimate issues in their first language (Stella, Flynn, and Gawlewicz 2017). Japanese words and phrases were frequently used by participants who possess good Japanese skills. Before the interviews, research participants were fully informed about the objectives and goals of this research as well as all the ethical considerations involved in the process of conducting scientific research. During the interactions with research participants, different markers of the researcher's identities and positionality were flexibly revealed and constantly reflected on to avoid the overestimation of common origin in producing "common individuals", and to pay sufficient attention to the different degrees of ethnic and national belonging (Çaglar and Schiller 2018). It also allows the construction of the researcher's "credibility" and "approachability" (Mayorga-Gallo and Hordge-Freeman 2017) and, therefore, stimulates rapport building and two-way information exchanges.

During the interviews, participants were presented with one written vignette, which is a text stimulus that describes hypothetical individual(s) in specified circumstances and structures, to whose situation respondents are invited to respond (Finch 1987; Hughes 1998; Hughes and Huby 2004). One of the main reasons for the adoption of the vignette technique

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[7] The program "Dear Mother, I am Vietnamese" (*Me oi, con la nguoi Viet Nam*) was aired during the Lunar New Year of 2020 on Vietnamese National Television. The program featured successful Vietnamese people in the diaspora who used their inventions and achievements to contribute to Vietnam – their motherland.

was the potential sensitiveness of the research topic. A big boundary for research on sexuality is that people normally do not want to share their sex lives with researchers (Farrer 2010). While many Vietnamese nowadays can easily talk about sexual practices, preferences, or identities with close friends, they still restrain from discussing these topics in more serious, formal contexts or with strangers. In other words, sexuality is a topic that is "easy to joke about, but hard to talk about" among many Vietnamese (Khuat, Le, and Nguyen 2010). Because vignette allows a certain distance between participants' experiences and the described situation, the technique provides a subtle, non-intrusive yet time-effective way to examine more intimate and private aspects in migrants' lives such as sexuality, gender, post-migration downward mobility, and discrimination. Moreover, the vignette could be constructed to capture participants' experiences not only in the present but also in the past and different social contexts. In that sense, it helps explore how migrants react to different social norms and values that transcend national and cultural boundaries (Bradbury-Jones, Taylor, and Herber 2014). The vignette employed in this research featured the experiences of a Vietnamese man while living, studying, and working in Japan and while visiting Vietnam. It had an open ending and was formulated based on pilot interviews, public posts and comments on social media by Vietnamese migrant men about their daily lives and relationships in Japan and Vietnam (see Appendix B for the detailed version of the vignette and A. H. Tran (2022) for the reflection on the construction and implementation of the vignette in this research).

Although the empirical evidence is predominantly interview-based, ethnographic observation was also carried out to understand the organization of social structures and interactions that shape male migrants' everyday-life negotiations of sexual and masculine practices. Observations were mainly carried out in social events organized by and for the Vietnamese migrant communities in Tokyo, Saitama, Osaka, and Kyoto from September 2019 until March 2020. The observation sites included musical concerts, several social networking and gathering events organized by different Vietnamese groups in the aforementioned cities such as Karaoke parties, year-end parties (*bounenkai*), new year parties (*shinnenkai*), Lunar New Year events, Sakura flower viewing events (*ohanami*), Buddhist meditation courses, home-cooked dinners, and informal outing trips. During these occasions, the researcher's status and research goal were clearly stated. Photos were taken when the circumstances allowed, and field notes were written either during or immediately after the events.

Observations and socialization were also performed at some Vietnamese restaurants and coffee shops in Tokyo that were popular among Vietnamese communities. Participating in these events not only provided better insights into participants' social lives and interactions within different social settings but also helped diversify the group of potential research participants in terms of age, social class, sexual identity, and occupational background. In addition, online observation was conducted online, mostly on Facebook as this is the most popular social media platform among not only Vietnamese migrants in Japan but also Vietnamese in general (McCauley et al. 2016). Observations were made on different Facebook groups for the Vietnamese migrant communities in Japan, in which various information was posted ranging from personal stories, questions regarding migrating to or living in Japan to information about immigration policies or cultural events in Japan.

1.4. "Charing Migrants" and the Social Meanings of Transnational Migration

This dissertation's initial focus point is the ways in which male migrants negotiate their sexual and masculine identities, performances, and statuses in different stages of migration. However, the collected empirical evidence has shown that migrants' negotiation of sexuality and masculinity means more than just navigating the sexual and gender selves between different social milieus. Such negotiation is curtailed by the correlation between transnational migration, transformation, and social mobility because many Vietnamese migrant men embarked on their journeys to Japan with certain aspirations for transformation in terms of gender status as well as upward mobility in terms of social, gender, and sexual statuses. I argue that a lens through which the sexual and gender aspects of migrants' social experiences as well as the effects of migration on migrants' transformation and social mobility can be critically examined is the notion of "charging migrants". This notion points to the different perceptions at the micro, meso, and macro levels that the social body of the Vietnamese migrant men is charged with in different contexts, and how these male migrants make sense of such circumstances. In addition, the notion suggests the process of migrants' resources and social status being charged up through migration, which can then deliver positive transformations and upward social mobility after returning to the country of origin. This dissertation illustrates such a notion in the theoretical chapter and the three subsequent empirical chapters.

Chapter two explains the dissertation's theoretical venture point by digging deeper into the different conceptual perspectives through which the charging male Vietnamese migrants are analyzed. It provides a reading of relevant existing literature in migration, sexuality, and gender studies to prove that researching migrant men's sexualities and masculinities means more than just looking into individuals' sexual desirability and/or gender performances. Rather it connects the research topic to the notions of transformation and social mobility and makes clear the link between transnational migration, personal changes, and upward mobility. In doing so, the chapter looks at different theoretical and conceptual approaches that have been previously utilized in researching migration, sexuality, and gender. It then discusses how charging migrants can be a theoretically appropriate and sufficient concept to untangle the intertwinement between migration, sexuality, gender, mobility, and transformation that the empirical evidence of this dissertation features.

Chapter three engages with the first manifestation of the "charging migrants" notion, which suggests the process of accumulating capital and resources in the transnational migration journey to Japan of male Vietnamese migrants. It illustrates how migrating to Japan can be a rite of passage or a pathway to idealized manhood for many Vietnamese men through the metaphor of the salmon men. In particular, the chapter takes the critical comparison between the migration journey of many Vietnamese men and that of the salmon fish as a starting point to illustrate the mobility and gender trajectory of migrating out, gathering capital and becoming more mature in a foreign context, and eventually returning to the place of birth. It argues that during migration to Japan, Vietnamese migrant men can accumulate different kinds of capital including cultural, economic, social, and also masculine capital to subsequently live up to the Vietnamese hegemonic masculine ideal of the "true man". In this sense, the chapter elucidates how Japan can be a temporary charging station for several Vietnamese migrant men where they stock up on resources that can help them claim social, gender, and even sexual privileges upon their eventual return to the home country.

Chapter four focuses more on the sexual aspect of migration as well as the second connotation of the "charging migrants" notion. Taking the body as the unit of analysis, this chapter analyses the social and sexual body of male Vietnamese migrants at three levels: subjective, social/ inter-subjective, and institutional. This multi-level analysis shows how the migrants' bodies are charged with different perceptions, tensions, and expectations in the

contexts of Japan and Vietnam. Engaging with the sexual field approach, the chapter provides evidence to show that the body of many Vietnamese migrant men is charged with negativity and discrimination in Japan, and is consequently placed in relatively low positions within the Japanese sexual fields. On the other hand, these migrant men's bodies are charged with positive assumptions in the Vietnamese social context and, therefore, can be highly appreciated within the Vietnamese sexual fields. The chapter thus explores how migrant men make sense of and navigate such a charging situation by examining the tactics and strategies that migrants employ to negotiate their sexual status in transnational contexts. It also proposes a model of transnational sexual mobility to illustrate the possible positions and movements of the Vietnamese migrant men within and between the sexual fields.

Chapter five pays attention to the migrants in the context of return migration and explores not only the reasons, expectations, and consequences but also the social meanings of return migration in male migrants' experiences. It sees return as an event in which the "charging" effects of transnational migration to Japan are anticipated and performed. Specifically, empirical evidence proves that returning to Vietnam after some time living, working, studying, and accumulating resources in Japan is a commonly predestined trajectory that promises migrant men upward mobility in terms of social, sexual, and gender statuses. In order to better conceptualize the nuances that are featured in the return of the men in this study, the chapter proposes the framework of the "return diamond" that considers the factors of aspiration, capacity, expectation, and reality in return migration and discusses the different return outcomes accordingly. I also critically discuss the degree and length of the "charging" effects in return migration by questioning whether return migration always leads to positive transformation and experiences and under which conditions the charging effects of migration do not turn out as expected.

Chapter six combines the concepts and frameworks proposed in the previous empirical chapters together and discusses how the sexual and gender aspects in the transnational migration of male individuals are closely linked to transformation and social mobility. It pushes the theoretical contribution of this dissertation forward by critically reflecting on the social meanings that such transformation and social mobility have on the shifting gender, sexual, and class hierarchies in the transnational migration context. It argues that transnational migration is an effective means for men from places with an emerging culture of migration (like Vietnam) to be charged with resources and agencies and

subsequently claim certain social, sexual, and gender privileges. The notion of "charging migrants", thus, denotes not only a condition or a social status but also an aspiration and a social process.

Chapter Two

The Charging Male Migrants and the Entanglement of Transnational Mobilities

Transnational migration is an event that can have major impacts on several aspects of a migrant's life. As a result, extensive reading and understanding of contemporary migration processes will unlikely be achieved by relying on the tools of one discipline alone or by focusing on a single level of analysis. Rather, their complex, multifaceted nature requires a combination of theories from more than one discipline to incorporate a variety of perspectives, levels, and assumptions (Castles 2010; Massey et al. 1993; 1999). In that sense, migration study is and should inherently be an interdisciplinary field. Albeit the continuous developments in research on contemporary migration, few theories and conceptual frameworks in migration studies have sufficiently taken the aspects of sexuality and gender into their conceptualization. This chapter addresses such an issue in migration literature by elaborating in detail the proposed framework of the "charging migrants", which not only extensively links transnational migration to sexuality and gender but also goes beyond to connect these dimensions to other prominent factors commonly seen in conventional social studies such as social mobility and transformation. Such a proposed framework is the result of this dissertation's theoretical attempt to combine and engage with dissimilar and interdisciplinary theories, concepts, and frameworks to make sense of how sexuality and gender inform transnational migration and vice versa. This chapter, thus, serves as the theoretical venture point for the whole dissertation, in which I will explain how the framework of the "charging migrants" can provide suitable approaches to the study of not only the negotiation of sexuality and masculinity among male Vietnamese migrants in contemporary Japan but also the social meanings, consequences, and lived experiences of transnational migration. In order to do so, the chapter initially provides a systematic review of existing and relevant literature and theories on social mobility, transformation, transnational migration, sexuality, and gender as I argue that these notions are closely interlinked, especially in the case of the male Vietnamese migrant men in Japan. Based on the identified theoretical and empirical gaps, the chapter will then elucidate how the framework of the "charging migrants" is inspired and constituted by other theories and concepts from different disciplines. It then discusses how this framework can be suitable for the investigation, clarification, and

understanding of male migrants' transnational experiences, negotiations of sexuality and masculinity, transformation, and social mobility. Such a focus will allow this chapter to lay the theoretical groundwork for the empirical analyses in the chapters that follow.

2.1. Transnational Migration, Transformation, and Social Mobility

Historically, the main research unit of the social sciences has been bounded to the society within a specific nation-state, which led to the confinement of data sources, contextual material, empirical research population, and/or policy recommendations within one national society (Castles 2001). Scholars have called such a pattern in scientific analyses "methodological nationalism", a term that refers to approaches that postulate "the nation-state and its boundaries as a given in social analysis, which territorially confines the study of social processes to the political and geographic boundaries of a particular nation-state" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1007). Because of its characteristic, methodological nationalism clearly hinders the understanding of social phenomena that cross national borders and happen simultaneously in more than one nation-state (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Nowicka 2020; Weiß and Nohl 2012). The emergence of a "transnational turn" in migration studies in the late 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s has been one of the most prominent forces in tackling the issue of methodological nationalism in researching mobile populations, especially the group of transnational migrants. Basch et al. (1994:8) defined transnationalism in the context of migration as "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement". An essential element in such a process is "the multiplicity of involvements that transmigrants sustain in both home and host societies" (ibid.). In everyday life, transnationalism is experienced and comprehended in popular consciousness by a growing number of people living dual lives, anchoring in two or more nation-states through engagements with actors, cultures, languages, identities, and interpretive frames of reference from various national contexts and civil societies (Portes et al. 1999; Sinding and Zhou 2017). From a transnational perspective, migration is understood not anymore as a permanent move from one nation-state to another, but rather as a process taking place within fluid social spaces that are constantly reworked and negotiated through migrants' simultaneous embeddedness in multi-layered and multi-sited arenas (Faist 2000; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007).

Such characteristics of transnationalism have allowed this approach to become one of the most fundamental frameworks to understand not only contemporary migrant practices and identities but also various social changes in both sending and receiving contexts (Yeoh et al. 2003). While it has long been known that international migrants maintain close ties with actors and networks in their home countries, only with the transnational turn in migration studies did these connections and other previously hidden aspects of migrants' lives become a more visible interest for researchers (Nowicka 2020). Adopting the analytical lenses that go beyond the confinement of one nation-state, the transnational perspective has critically questioned and challenged the "receiving country bias" (Castles 2010: 1571) among conventional migration theories, which often assumes and expects migrants' incorporation and assimilation of migrants in host societies. For transnational migrants, success is thus increasingly achieved not through the abandonment of the social ties, practices, norms, and identities that they had in the home country to adapt to the new ones in the migration destinations, but rather through the ability to simultaneously take part in transnational activities, socio-cultural, and socio-political spheres (Levitt et al. 2003; Portes et al. 1999: 229). In order to clarify some of the conceptual muddiness about what could and should be considered transnationalism, particular aspects embedded in migrants' transnational social lives should be taken into account. Levitt, DeWind, and Vertovec (2003) identify nine such premises, including: (1) migrants' embeddedness in multi-layered social fields; (2) continuing states' influences on transnational migration; (3) the question of whether or not transnational migration is truly emancipatory for migrants; (4) the ignorance for certain aspects of migrants' lives such as religion or gender; (5) differences between the actors facilitating and encouraging contemporary transnational ties and those in the past; (6) the variety in sectors, level, strength and formality of migrants' transnational practices; (7) the simultaneity of host country incorporation and transnational practices; (8) the reconsideration of traditional terminologies in migration studies; and (9) the importance of subjective and objective dimensions of transnational practices involving imagination, invention, and emotions. Together, these premises suggest the need for approaches that can fully capture not only the degrees, formalities, and variances of transnational practices but also the range of forms and consequences of such practices.

Three decades after the rise to popularity of transnationalism, the notion has become an indispensable element within the field of contemporary migration studies. Indeed,

migration scholars have moved on from advocating for a transnational perspective to thinking of migration across national borders as inherently transnational since there is hardly any aspect of transnational migrants' social lives that is not influenced by transnationalism. However, as a distinctive perspective on migration, transnationalism has also been continuously criticized for its lack of analytical stringency, theoretical imprecision, and analytical rigor, as well as the definitory confusion and fragmented connection with other concepts and social theories (Lazăr 2011; Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999; Nowicka 2020). Besides, the observational and analytical lenses of transnationalism tend to give more attention to transnational connections and facets that are easily observed or measured. Migrants' economic practices, for example, have been extensively studied because economic considerations are commonly the prime reasons why migrants migrate in the first place. In addition, the visibility and salience of migrants' remittances as well as the emergence of several actors in the transnational economic domains also ignite the academic interest in migrants' transnational economic ties (Guarnizo 2003; Portes et al. 1999; Vertovec 2009). Migrants' economic practices also connect transnational migration to the notions of social development and social transformations, especially in contexts where there is a prominent culture of migration such as the Philippines, Indonesia in Asia or Mexico, and Peru in South America. Scholars, therefore, have approached transnational migration as an integral part of the processes of social transformation and see migrants as a major force in reshaping social and political formations (Glick Schiller and Faist 2009).

The term "social transformation" generally refers to the way in which societies and cultures change in response to factors such as economic growth, war, or political upheavals (Castles 2001). Typical examples of social transformation include the great transformation of the western societies brought about by processes of industrialization (Polanyi 1944) or more recent changes linked to decolonization, nation-state (de)formations, economic changes, and unstable political landscapes. Castles (2001) defined the studies of social transformation as "an interdisciplinary analytical framework for understanding global interconnectedness and its regional, national, and local effects" (p.14). He identified five assumptions that the studies of social transformation emerged from (1) social transformation affects all types of society in the context of globalization, regionalization, and the various forms of supranational governance; (2) new forms of social differentiation at the international and national levels emerged as a result of globalization; (3) the impossibility of a universally-accepted goal for

the process of change due to differing cultures and group values; (4) the need to exam the different ways in which globalizing forces affect local communities and national societies with highly-diverse historical experiences, economic and social patterns, political institutions, and cultures; and (5) social transformation can have both positive and negative consequences for local communities and nation-states. From these five assumptions, one obvious conclusion can be drawn: the processes of social transformation are inherently linked to transnationalism. Consequently, a major focus of the studies of social transformation concerns the identification and understanding of transnational processes and their impacts at different regional, national, subnational, and individual levels (Castles 2001). However, the aforementioned well-established focus on migrants' economic sphere has been pretty much dominating the discussion on the linkage between transnational migration and social transformations. In particular, countless studies have shown how transnational flows of remittances and migrants' transnational economic practices (transnational businesses, transnational trading, etc.) contribute to economic and societal developments in the sending contexts (Carling, Mortensen & Wu 2011; Chan and Tran 2011; de Haas 2007; Gmelch 1980; Oxfeld and Long 2017; Vertovec 2004, 2009). Such a topical concentration might lead to the assumption that social transformations can only be tied to migrants' economic practices and behaviors. In other words, less systematic attention has been paid to the kinds of social transformation caused by migration yet are not (directly) related to pecuniary (Levitt 1998).

Sharing a similar perspective, other scholars have noted that migrants' engagement with transnationalism can lead to transformations in domains that are not limited to economic ones. Vertovec (2004) emphasized that besides the changes in the economic situations, transnational migration can also result in transformations in the socio-cultural and political spheres in the home countries as migrants bring back new patterns of social behaviors or different means of engagement with political or social issues. Feminist scholars have also pointed out how structures of gender and power relations are challenged and also transformed (to a certain extent) as a result of migration, especially among the group of female migrants (Sakka et al. 1999; Hoang and Yeoh 2011; Parrenas 2010; Yeoh and Ramdas 2014). However, while the notion of social transformation can denote changes that happen at different levels, the majority of studies have focused on transformation at the macro and more structural levels. Consequently, transformations at the micro, more individual levels have not been systematically and sufficiently scrutinized within the discussion of

transnational migration and social transformation. I argue that one way to further incorporate transformations at the individual levels into the discussion can be the engagement with the notion of social mobility, which is a concept deeply rooted in the history of sociology (Joye and Falcon 2014).

The concept of social mobility generally refers to the phenomenon of one or more individuals shifting from one social position to another within or between social strata in society. The study of social mobility started to become more systematic since the post-World War II era, with the purpose of determining the rate of mobility of a society, community, or population category as well as standardizing mobility data and analysis to quantify cross-national differences in social mobility (Hout and DiPrete 2006; Matras 1980). Two of the most prominent theories of social mobility coined during this phase included the hypotheses from Lipset and Zetterberg (1956) and Featherman, Jones, and Hauser (1975). In particular, the Lipset-Zetterberg theory (1956) suggested that patterns of social mobility appeared to be similar in Western industrial societies, while the thesis from Featherman, Jones, and Hauser (1975) hypothesized that patterns of social mobility would be "basically the same" in societies with a nuclear family system and a market economy. Studies of social mobility traditionally focused on three categories: occupational ranks (the overall social ranks of individuals), occupational categories or groups (significant strata, status groups, or classes), and intergenerational occupational and career mobility (Matras 1980). Since the 1970s, the topics and themes that the studies of social mobility covered started to expand. Matras (1980) listed at least ten major issues that the literature on social mobility has dealt with. In particular, topics of social mobility included (1) the comparison of the degree of openness among different national societies, (2) the assessment of a society's openness over time, and (3) the factors that created changes in society's openness. Other themes encompassed (4) the effect of specific social origins on mobility, (5) mobility and the composition of the elite class, (6) the connection between education and social mobility, (7) the connection between a given society's economic development and social mobility, (8) the relationship between a given society's political landscapes and social mobility, (9) determinants of mobility values, orientations, and motivations, and (10) the different consequences of mobility/ immobility. Some of these topics are still the main focuses of the studies of social mobility nowadays.

Social mobility can take on many forms and, therefore, can be acquired through different methods. For example, Lipset and Zetterberg (1958) identified four types of social

mobility: occupational mobility (the extent to which a generation achieves occupations of lower, same, or higher prestige than their parents), power mobility (the extent to which a generation wield less, same, or more influence on political decisions than their parents), status mobility (the extent to which a generation associates intimately with persons of lower, same, or higher prestige than their parents), and consumption mobility (the extent to which a generation achieves lower, same, or higher lifestyle than their parents). Scholars of social mobility have also gradually expanded the scope of alternative dimensions of social mobility to include education, income, reputation, prestige, power, influence, community participation, consumption behaviors, knowledge, ownership, and accesses to certain resources (Matras 1980). While social mobility has been one of the most "mature" fields of investigation in sociology over the last couple of decades both in terms of theoretical and methodological approaches (Brown et al. 2013; Castles 2001; Goldthorpe 2007; Joye and Falcon 2014), empirical studies have "chosen to rely entirely or mainly" upon occupational positions or movement among occupational positions as the main indicators of individual social rank and subsequently social mobility (Matras 1980). Due to its central role in occupational achievement, education has been considered the main factor in both upward social mobility and the intergenerational reproduction of status (Betthäuser 2019; Brown et al. 2013; Hout and DiPrete 2006). In other words, the analyses revolving around social mobility have been too often concentrating on notions of education and individuals' positions and participation in the labor markets, to the point that other factors that can also be the resources and causes of social mobility are often ignored. Moreover, the majority of studies have been measuring social mobility through comparisons of social ranks, occupations, and reproduction between at least two generations and, thus, considering social mobility as an intergenerational phenomenon rather than an intragenerational one. Such a perspective has led to the routine neglect of individuals who attempt to transform their social class position instead of reproducing it (Kaufmann 2003).

In fact, social mobility is not only a change in social position but also, very often, a change in social and geographical contexts that is not without impacts on social networks and values. Consequently, the question of spatial mobility of diverse social groups should lie at the heart of any attempt to critically understand contemporary processes of social mobility. Because the fundamental analysis of social mobility is based on the comparison between the original social position (ascribed status) and the attained social position (achieved status), a

common thread of upward social mobility is to maximize capital assets (either organizational or skill one) (Savage 1988). Migration, therefore, can be contemplated as one of the ways in which individuals can achieve social mobility as such an act can potentially provide migrants with different kinds of resource and capital. Clear evidence has been established to show that spatial mobility or geographical relocation can lead to social mobility. For example, using the Longitudinal Census Data, Fox (1985) found that people who were spatially mobile were most likely to experience upward occupational mobility in the 1970s. Similarly, immigration has also been framed as one of the major forces propelling the structure of opportunities and chances of mobility within the host country for migrants and their off-springs (Hirschman 1996; Portes 1996; Massey and Denton 1985; Yaish 2002). This line of research has shown that while not all migration can result in social mobility, there are important links between the act of migrating and the attainment of upward social mobility. Put differently, social mobility is associated strongly with the propensity to migrate. Cote (1983) even went as far as stating that the greater the migration, the greater the social upward mobility (Cote 1983). Consequently, migration can be contemplated as a "mobility strategy", which is a course of action pursued by individuals of differing class backgrounds, typically, though not necessarily, in conjunction with their families of origin, in moving towards their own eventual class destinations (Goldthorpe 2007: 163).

The aforementioned transnational turn in contemporary migration studies has pointed out that migrants' practices in the country of residence are rooted in migrants' transnational networks and identities that take place in more than one nation-state as well as connect mobile and immobile people in those places (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1995; Vertovec 2009). This means that the consideration of social mobility among migrants needs to go beyond the host societies to include their social mobility in the home countries. In an attempt to connect social mobility and spatial mobility within the European Union, Favell and Recchi (2011) wondered whether people can move out of their country in order to move up socially in relation to where they come from. Studies of transnational migration in developing countries have provided a positive answer for such a question. In fact, transnational migrants often find themselves in a "status paradox" (Nieswand 2011) in which they experience a status devaluation in the country of destination while simultaneously enhancing their social position in the country of origin (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001). Studying the post-migration mobility practices of Somalis living in Europe, Moret (2016) found

that migrants used their mobile backgrounds as a resource to achieve certain social and economic advantages in both their countries of residence and country of origin. In countries with an established culture of migration such as the Philippines, migrants are commonly regarded as "national heroes" who contribute to the economic development of the homeland through their remittances and subsequently can enjoy higher social status upon their return (Cassarino 2008; Rodriguez 2010). In such cases, migration itself is a kind of mobility strategy that can yield certain capital and resources in exchange for social mobility within specific sociocultural contexts. Considering migrants' strategies and pathways to achieve higher social positions and rankings through migration is therefore a way in which social mobility can be studied as an intrageneration phenomenon. Investigating migrants' social mobility through a transnational lens also solidifies the link between spatial mobility and social mobility and subsequently contributes to the discussion of the "politics of mobility". Cresswell (2010) defined the politics of mobility as the ways in which mobilities are both productive of such social relations and produced by them. This notion suggests that mobility is an entanglement of movements, representations, and practices that take part in social differentiation through the production and distribution of power relations and inequalities (Massey 1994; Moret 2016). At the same time, social mobility implies possible changes in social and class structures and thus plays a crucial part in the process of social transformation.

This section has drawn the link between transnational migration, social transformation, and social mobility. One of the most convenient ways to study the relationship between transnational migration, social transformation, and social mobility is to inquire into aspects or facets of transnational lives that are easy to observe or measure. Examples of such aspects include migrants' remittances, transnational economic or business practices, migrants' transnational political and religious engagements, or migrants' social networks (Carling and Erdal 2014; Levitt et al. 2003; Vertovec 2009). Unsurprisingly, aspects that are subjectively felt and deeply embedded in migrants' transnational social life yet not overtly expressed such as gender and sexuality might easily get overlooked as relevant factors in the debates about social transformation and social mobility. However, because migrants are bearers of sexualities, gender, ethnicity, class, and nationality who constantly negotiate their self-identities vis-à-vis others in transnational spaces (Yeoh et al. 2003), their gender and sexual practices, subjectivities and identities also take part in the processes of shaping and constructing migrants' social worth and subsequently social positions. As a result, research

on transformation and social mobility can benefit from looking at migrants' negotiations of gender as a part of the processes of social mobility and individual transformation and employing a transnational perspective to the investigation of such negotiations. Similarly, the study of migrants' sexuality in transnational migration can also promise positive addition to social mobility and transformation studies. The next section will point out in detail how studying migrants' sexuality and gender as they cross national borders can be appropriate and fruitful for the investigation of not only the entanglement between migration, social transformation, and social mobility but also the politics of mobility.

2.2. The Politics of Mobility through the Lenses of Sexuality and Masculinity

Intimacies, romance, sexual desires, and identities have always been important factors that trigger individuals' relocation processes. It was, however, only until the late 1990s that a "sexual turn" started to emerge within the field of migration studies to consider love, intimacies, and sexualities to be power dimensions positioned "at the heart of the migration decision making and behaviors" (Mai and King 2009: 296). Researchers who followed this turn have coined the term "sexual migration" to refer to migration that is motivated, directly or indirectly, by the sexuality of those who move (Cantú 2009; Carrillo 2004; Luibhéid 2008). In this sense, transnational migration decisions are not limited to the search for material and social advancement but go beyond laboring gendered agents and highlight "pleasure-seeking migrant subjects" (Manalansan IV 2006). Even when sexual or romantic relationships do not motivate geographical mobility in the first place, they are deliberately sought during migration as a strategy for ongoing trajectories or coping with social exclusion (Baas 2018; Liu-Farrer 2010). The consideration of sexuality in transnational migration studies thus provides "a theoretically nuanced approach that resists rigid distinctions between sexuality and the economic sphere"' in order to understand the dynamics of love, sex, and romance in transnational migration (Ahmad 2009: 309). Such interconnectedness can only be understood by drawing attention away from strict economist interpretations of migration and bringing into the analytical equation the affective, sexual, and emotional dimensions of migrants' social lives.

In addition, sexualities are not monolithic but rather negotiated through complex, conflicting, and fluid social structures and institutions. Transnational migration, therefore, opens up new spaces, in which new or more complex engagements with sexualities are

possible (Carrillo et al. 2014; Hoang and Yeoh 2015; Kong 2002; Paquin 2014; Walsh et al. 2008). These new engagements can sometimes lead to more sexual freedom or liberation, especially if migrants move from perceivably sexually oppressive places to contexts considered to be more open to sexuality-related matters. However, migrating to new national contexts can also bring about the possibilities of sexual constraints, isolation, exclusions, or frustrations. For example, Kitiarsa's study on Thai male migrants in Singapore (2008) showed how migration provides space for the performance of alternative, non-reproductive heterosexual desires and at the same time propels them to come to terms with transient sexual intimacies because of the temporary nature of their employment in the global city. Similarly, Ahmad (2009) observed that Pakistani migrant men's working conditions in the UK and the ways in which their low-wage jobs are perceived also contributed to the common image of these men as sexually undesirable or even asexual. Ang's study on low-wage Chinese migrants in Singapore (2019) also indicated that class differences and discriminations based on ethnicity and nationality are major factors that hindered migrants' chances to cultivate sexual encounters or intimacies. As human sexualities are socially produced, organized, maintained, and transformed based on shifting symbols, contingent contexts, and political processes (Plummer 1998), a focus on the sexualities of transnational migration can illuminate several insights. In particular, it sheds light on an "immigrant culture of sexuality" (Gonzalez-Lopez 2005: 21) that are both responsive to and reflective of the cultures of sexuality in the host countries. Simultaneously, it pays attention to the labor of reinventing and renegotiating sexualities in the new places and reimagining the old ones because migrants' previous ways of thinking about and living their sexualities are not erased after migrating but rather disseminated in transnational interactions (Sanchez-Eppler and Patton 2000).

As the construction of individuals' sexual desirabilities varies by context, migrants are often confronted with new hierarchies of sexual desirability in migration destinations. If migrants want to achieve higher positions within such new hierarchies of sexual desirability, they have to come up with or employ suitable negotiating strategies that take into consideration their personal resources and goals. The focus on the migrants' sexualities and negotiations of sexualities, thus, tells scholars not only about the systems of social meanings, institutions, and practices that condition migrants' sexualities but also about migrants' attempts to improve their sexual status and subsequently social position. In other words, it

elucidates the factors at the institutional level that shape migrants' sexualities in terms of sexual desirability, practices, and subjectivities while at the same time paying attention to migrants' actions at the micro, and individual levels that aim at advancing their social statuses. By employing courses of action that aim at helping them move up the hierarchies of desirability, migrants are in fact engaging with "mobility strategies" to move towards their desired positions (Goldthorpe 2007). Simultaneously, studying transnational migrants' engagements with sexual discourses, norms, and ideologies in various social contexts (the host country, the home country, and maybe elsewhere (Shams 2020; Waldinger 2008)) provides insights into how and where institutions, structures, and ideologies are being transformed in relation to transnational migration. Consequently, the sexual dimension in transnational migration promises relevant and stimulating observations for the study of social mobility and social transformation.

Sexuality occupies a central position in constructing migrants' gender identities (Walsh et al. 2008). It is "through the understanding of masculinity that we construct sexuality, and it is through our sexualities that we confirm the successful construction of gender identity" (Fracher and Kimmel 1995: 142). However, early research on international migration focused predominantly on male migrants and their migration decision-making processes. The typical migrant used to be taken for granted to be a heterosexual male who migrated as a primary mover (Hibbins and Pease 2009). As a result, the main emphasis of migration studies used to revolve around migrants' processes of immigration and integration into different labor markets. In line with such a focus, the traditional study of social mobility was embedded into the conception of the "male breadwinner", to the extent that women's social mobility only got more attention at least until the 1980s and early 1990s (Joye and Falcon 2014). Feminist studies that inquire into the relationship between gender and migration have shown how the experiences of transnational migration could initiate positive changes in migrants' gender and power relations with other social actors and institutions in the home societies (Choi 2019; Hoang and Yeoh 2011; Newhouse 2020; Osella and Osella 2000; Pande 2017; Sakka et al. 1999; Vasquez del Aguila 2014; Yeoh and Ramdas 2014). In that sense, the negotiation of gender relations, subjectivities, and identities in transnational migration is also a process through which migrants can achieve upward social mobility and become the catalysts of social transformation. Connell (1995) discusses the three intersecting sites of the "gender configuring of practice" including individual, ideology, and institutions. Migrants' gender

practices and identities are therefore curtailed on various levels. On the level of individual configuration, the (re)construction of gender in terms of subjectivities and practices is affected by intersecting axes of identity such as sexuality, social class, ethnicity, age, duration of settlement, country of origin, and previous migratory experiences (Yeoh and Ramdas 2014). Gender discourses, ideologies, and cultures in specific contexts can also shape the ways in which migrants adopt and perform certain gender practices and identities (Fung 1996; Luibhéid 2008). On the institutional level, policies from states, schools, or workplaces, labor conditions and regulations, and scrutiny from migrants' ethnocultural communities are among the important factors that condition the ways in which migrants express their gender practices and identities (Baas 2018; Dhoest and Szulc 2008; Vasquez del Aguila 2014). Moreover, from a transnational perspective, these three levels of analysis on gender configuration should take into consideration individuals, ideologies, and institutions in not only migrants' country of residence but also their country of origin. Looking at migrants' changing gender statuses brought about by transnational migration can thus shed light on structures of opportunities and mobilities and subsequently, processes of social mobility and social transformation. Such a prospect would also pave ways to further engage with the temporal and spatial parameters of transnationalism in shaping and giving meanings to gender (Carling and Erdal 2014).

As migrants' negotiation of gender practices and identities in transnational migration depends on the social structures and migrants' navigation of different social statuses, looking at the dimension of gender can provide a non-conventional yet equally stimulating way to study social mobility and social transformation. Moreover, migrants' engagements with gender during and after migration also annotate how they make sense of their movement (spatial mobility), gendered representations as well as practices. Such a perspective is a prime foundation for the investigation of the politics of mobility (Cresswell 2010) because migrants, through the act of negotiating their gender identity, also negotiate, challenge, or (re)produce power relations and social inequalities. Consequently, looking at gender in transnational migration has more connotations than the mere exploration of new and changing traits or dimensions of either masculinity or femininity (Hibbins 2003). Rather, it has important implications for the study of social mobility, social and individual transformations, and the politics of mobility by providing insights into several social domains including the changing nature of gender subjectivities across transnational spaces, the ways in which structures and

ideologies considerably contour and form gender identities at specific times and places, the formations of transnational social fields and new forms of gender subjectivity, the complex relationship between identity, local cultures, transnational norms and the reproduction of power structures (Lu and Wong 2013; Lewis and Naples 2014; Pendleton 2015; Yuval-Davis 2006).

2.3. Migrant Men, the Masculinity of Migration, and Masculine Capital

Men used to be seldom regarded as gender subjects in migration studies, as briefly established in the previous section. Early research on international migration predominantly saw the typical migrant as being male and heterosexual who migrate to fulfill the socially expected role of the main provider of the family (Hibbins and Pease 2009; Pedraza 1991; Sinatti 2014). Such a perception can be observed in conventional migration theories that look at migration from a functionalist perspective such as the New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM), dual labor market, or push-pull model, in which migration was often considered as a strategy to increase the incomes and livelihoods of the individuals and the families (de Haas 2021). This had led to not only the overfocus on the economic and labor practices of migrants but also the constant neglect of the gendered dimensions in individuals' migration experiences. Within the past three decades, however, feminist studies have been successful in both establishing a broad body of literature on female migrants and drawing more attention to the gender and sexual aspects of migrants' experiences. In particular, the feminization of global labor migration and migration in Asia has encouraged studies that scrutinize the diverse effects of migration on the power dynamics within gender relations, individual agency, or sexual expressions among female migrants (Hoang and Yeoh 2011; IOM 2009; Mahler and Pessar 2001; Oishi 2005; Piper 2008; Parreñas 2001, 2005; Yeoh and Ramdas 2014).

Ironically, women studies have developed so far that male migrants as subjects have been ignored almost to the same degree as female migrants had previously been (Pessar and Mahler 2003). Although data on cross-border migration suggests that the number of migrant men exceeds that of migrant women (52% versus 48% respectively) (IOM 2021), quantitative data on the studies of men and women does not show the same tendency. Much of the migration literature also tends to claim that men and women participate differently in transnational social spaces and thus do not experience migration similarly. As a result, the

tendency to study women's migration through the prism of gender does not apply to men's migration. Although gender is relational and experiential, "gender often remains connoted with women and women with gender" (Fresnoza-Flot 2022: 120). Consequently, male migrants have been commonly examined in their economic and labor spheres while female migrants' sexual and gendered dimensions receive more attention. This generic view not only fails to explore the variances in men's experiences but also re-perpetuates the gender-and-sexual-blind analyses and stereotypes of migration studies in the past.

Masculinities are not monolithic, but rather constantly negotiated through fluid and sometimes conflicting social structures, institutions and contexts. Scholars have observed that migrant men's gender subjectivities are likely to be developed, shifted, or reworked during and after the process of transnational migration as these people's lived experiences change spatially and temporally (Carrillo 2017; Hibbins and Pease 2009; Sinatti 2014; Urdea 2020; Vasquez del Aguila 2014). Specifically, the constructionist approach to masculinity emphasizes not only the variation of masculinities between different cultures and within dissimilar historical moments but also the gender differences arising from race, class, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and hierarchies of countries on the globalized world stage. As a result, researchers have observed that migrants' masculine subjectivities are likely to be shifted or reworked during and after the process of migration. Specifically, migrants' understanding and practices of dominant or hegemonic masculinity might be destabilized or reinforced, and new forms of masculinities might be developed or enacted flexibly, often in complex ways depending on the backgrounds of the migrants and the contexts in which they are situated (Carrillo 2017; Thing 2010; Vasquez del Aguila 2014). During the process of reconstructing and redefining gender identities, migrant men might learn new social scripts, symbols, and representations in order to develop, compromise, and enact new forms of masculinity or reconstruct existing masculine identities and performances when faced with unfamiliar masculine behaviors, norms, and expectations in the migration destination (Choi 2018; Lin 2013; Pande 2017; van Hoven and Meijering 2005; Walsh 2011; Wojnicka and Pustułka 2019). On the other hand, ingrained and profound gender ideologies or scripts can be more resistant to modification and the change of masculinity (if there is any) is, therefore, dependent on the difference between the gender norms in the migration destination and those held by migrants themselves (Bell and Domecka 2017; Yeoh and Ramdas 2014). Studies have observed that some migrant men resist the challenges that migration brings to their masculinities by

resorting to means of displaying not flexible but rather more traditional, hegemonic, and even overt masculine behaviors (Pande 2017; Shen 2008; Thai 2014; Urdea 2020; Vasquez del Aguila 2014). For example, in a study of migrant men in South Sudan, Newhouse (2021) observed that some men refused the legal protection and recognition associated with the status of asylum seekers because they wished to express a masculine ideal of being autonomous, responsible, and independent men. Similarly, Hibbins (2005) found out that many male heterosexual Chinese skilled migrants in Australia turned to more conservative, traditional masculine practices and ideologies that are popular in China to negotiate their challenged masculinity in the Australian context.

The concurrent relationship between gender and migration has not only been explored when migrants are in the host countries but also when they have returned to their country of origin. Because some men can elevate their social and gender statuses in the country or society of origin as a result of migration, regular home visits or return migration could be contemplated as strategies to reassure masculine identities or to claim certain masculine privileges (Hibbins 2005; Gallo and Scrinzi 2016; Osella and Osella 2000; Thai 2006, 2014). This means that male migrants can be and, indeed, are gendered actors who actively develop strategies that accommodate changing gender relations and norms while simultaneously maintaining or furthering their material, social, symbolic, and masculine statuses in specific ways. Within the emerging body of literature that examines the interrelation between migrants' situated masculinities and cross-border mobilities, Newhouse (2021) identifies three inquiry patterns: the role of hegemonic masculinities in prompting the migration projects, the reworking of masculinities in migrant-receiving contexts, and the renegotiation of masculinities in return migration. Apart from developing such inquiry patterns, scholars of gender studies also come up with theoretical concepts to better conceptualize how masculinities are (re)constructed or (re)negotiated in migration. For example, Hopkins and Noble (2009: 815) proposed the notion of "mobile masculinities" to capture the changes made to male migrants' gender identities because "migration entails a constant reworking of masculinity". Similarly, Walsh (2011: 518) used the term "migrant masculinities" to "assert the impact of geographies of place on the reproduction of new or hybrid gender identities among migrants". Contesting the centralization of employment and work in masculine identities, she asserted that there is a need to examine migrant masculinities more fully, rather than focus too much on their partial constitution through

employment and worker statuses. Sharing the view on the plurality of masculinity and emphasizing more on the interactions between mobility and gender, Pande (2017: 384) referred to "mobile masculinities" as "masculinities encountered and negotiated during the migration process that, in turn, shape migrants' experiences of mobility". Similarly, notions such as contested masculinities, racialized masculinities, or compromised masculinities have also been used to refer to the newly and contextually constructed masculine subjectivities among different groups of migrant men (Choi 2018; Newhouse 2021; Pande 2017; Urdea 2020).

While these aforementioned concepts are useful in pointing out the spatial and temporal contingency of migrants' masculinities, their objectives mostly focus on capturing the types of masculine practice and subjectivity manifested as the result of the processes of transnational relocation. However, as some scholars have correctly pointed out, the former gender ideologies that male migrants had familiarized themselves with before migrating are not completely erased when these men migrate. Instead, they are either just hindered to some points or not expressed overtly. Therefore, what is still missing in the literature on gender and migration is a systematic framework or concept that ties these new and temporary masculinities to the former ones, how the interactions between these different forms of masculinity affect the ways migrants see themselves and how they are perceived as men by others in transnational contexts. For example, how can marginalized masculinities experienced during migration due to discrimination based on race, ethnicity, social class, and sexuality be translated into certain attributes to construct other forms of more hegemonic masculinities? This chapter proposes to look into such a complex negotiation of masculinities among migrant men through the lenses of masculine capital.

Inspired by Bourdieu's framework on forms of capital (1986), a few scholars have referred to the concept of masculine capital as a kind of capital that can be used to allow the acquisition of idealized masculinity or, in some cases, compensate for non-masculine behaviors (Anderson 2005; de Visser, Smith and McDonell 2009; de Visser and McDonell 2013). A more detailed definition of the concept could be found in Vasquez del Aguila's (2014: 67) study on Peruvian migrant men in North America, where he defined masculine capital as "a form of cultural capital that provides men with the necessary 'masculine' skills and cultural competence to achieve legitimacy and social recognition as respected men". This masculine capital goes beyond basic skills that young boys have to attain as part of their growing-up

process to include the acquisition of certain masculine gestures, tastes, and abilities. In particular, the acquisition of masculine capital requires five processes: (1) rejection of the female world and feminine behavior; (2) rejection of (receptive) homosexuality; (3) boasting about heterosexual performances; (4) risk-taking and gestures of violence; and (5) incorporating male moral values (ibid: 67). Consequently, Vasquez del Aguila saw masculine capital as being learned and gained through culturally appropriating mechanisms and techniques, and thus is strongly linked to an individual's habitus.

Although Vasquez del Aguila's definition of masculine capital has been so far the most detailed version that describes the mechanisms of how masculine attributes can be attained, it has two major shortcomings. First, it associates masculine capital only with facets of cultural capital and, thus, leaves out other important aspects of masculinity that are provided by the accumulation of economic, social, or other different types of capital. Second, it sees the process of acquiring masculine capital as rigidly revolving around performances during one certain transitional phrase of manhood: when boys grow into men. As a result, how masculine capital continues to be attained, challenged, and negotiated in other phases in men's lives remained unaccounted for. The focus on performances of masculine subjectivities and ideologies also risks missing out on markers of masculinities that are more subtle and cannot be observed merely through social behaviors. In addition, all of the definitions of masculine capital to date revolves around achieving and enacting idealized hegemonic masculinity, which is the configuration of gender practices that embodies and allows the legitimacy of patriarchy, the dominance of men over women, and other subordinated groups of men within a given historical context (Connell 1987, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). As the notion of hegemonic masculinity is itself problematic as it replicates a Western-centric approach to studying masculinity (Hearn and Blagojević 2013; Hibbins 2003, 2005; Malam 2008; Wedgwood 2009), the formulation of the masculine capital concept has to be locally grounded to capture the various context-specific masculine traits and attributes.

2.4. The Charing Migrants Framework: Connecting and Unpacking the Engagement of Transnational Mobilities

Because of the complexity of contemporary migration, studying this social and transnational phenomenon requires a multi-perspective approach (Castles 2003). However, conventional migration theories used to neglect the tangled nature of transnational migration and

therefore did not fully recognize the diverse reality of migratory experiences. Approaches such as neo-classical migration theories, the new economics of labor migration (NELM) theories, or dual labor market theory mostly narrowed their focus to income maximization or rational economic decision-making based on adequate sources of information. By not taking into account many other non-economic factors inscribed in transnational spatial mobility, such theories have little to explain the increasingly complex social dimensions in transnational migration patterns nowadays. In other words, there have not been "established alternative conceptualizations that might advance accounts of migration beyond a reliance only on economic rationality and completely involuntary displacement" (Carling and Collins 2018: 911). Migration theories also tended to postulate logical structures that cover migration-related matters only within the theoretical boundary of migration studies. The heterogeneity of migratory behaviors, however, cannot be neatly framed within such a limited structure. Moreover, new approaches or theories in migration studies have a relatively low possibility to stem from existing paradigms. This is because these established approaches were often based on institutional and conceptual frameworks that might be resistant to change and there were also institutional actors that had strong interests in maintaining the paradigms' intellectual status quo (Castles 2003). Put differently, migration scholarship was "still very compartmentalized, with little analytical and methodological collaboration across boundaries" (Castles 2010: 1569).

Another challenge, both in epistemological and methodological senses, for contemporary studies of transnational migration is the nation-state container view of society often referred to as methodological nationalism. This perspective tends to postulate "the nation-state and its boundaries as a given in social analysis, which territorially confines the study of social processes to the political and geographic boundaries of a particular nation-state" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1007). However, the tunnel vision brought about by the nation-state model is a major barrier to understanding contemporary migration. In order to capture, adequately or automatically, the interconnectedness of transnational migration, scholars should remove the blinders of methodological nationalism and accede to the fact that social life and practices are not confined by national boundaries anymore while still simultaneously taking the nation-state and its influences seriously (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Nowicka 2020; Weiß and Nohl 2012). This also means that new approaches from the sociology of migration are required to on the one hand link migration to social relations, ideas,

institutions, and structures while studying the processes of identity and community formation on the other hand (Castles 2003). In order to achieve this, the study of contemporary migration has to cross not only national but also disciplinary borders to look at broader social theories and different perspectives of examining social phenomena that occur during various migratory phases. Burawoy (2009) referred to such disciplinary crossing as the extension of theory. Similarly, Vertovec (2009) called for a "theoretical cross-fertilization" of concepts and frameworks across disciplines when examining the complexities of transnational processes. Such an interdisciplinary approach helps develop not a grand theory of migration but rather "mid-range theories" that can be useful in explaining specific empirical findings by connecting them to appropriate bodies of historical and contemporary research (Portes 1997).

Taking into account the aforementioned gaps in the literature that connects sexuality, masculinity, and transnational migration as well as the theoretical necessity to transcend discipline boundaries when studying migration, this dissertation proposes the notion of the "charging migrants" as an interdisciplinary framework that informs and reflects its investigation of the interconnectedness between sexuality, masculinity, and transnational migration. Specifically, this notion is constituted from the critical engagement with existing and well-known theoretical concepts in the fields of migration, sexuality, and gender studies to extend the conceptual understanding of how migrants negotiate their sexuality and gender (masculinity in the particular case of this study) during transnational migration and, subsequently, the social meanings of transnational migration among male migrants. As mentioned in the Introductory chapter, I conceptualize the notion of the "charging migrants" as a social process, condition, and also action. Specifically, the notion suggests looking at transnational migration as a process during which migrant men "charge" up their socioeconomic, gender, and sexual statuses through the accumulation of different resources including economic, cultural, social, masculine, and sexual capital (see chapter three). Furthermore, the notion explores the different perceptions and sentiments that the social and sexual bodies of male Vietnamese migrants are charged with in the social contexts of Japan and Vietnam. It also encourages the investigation of the ways in which migrant men negotiated such a "charged" circumstance through the adoption of suitable social actions, tactics, and strategies (see chapter four). In addition to such conceptualizations, the notion of the "charging migrants" in this research also supports the development of a sub-notion which I refer to as the "charging effect" of transnational migration. This sub-notion refers to the effect that the aforementioned charging process and charged

conditions during transnational migration can cast on migrants' mobility trajectories and lived experiences. It pays attention to the mechanisms through which migrants negotiate and make use of their accumulated resources and "charged" statuses in migration, with a focus on return migration (see chapter five). Figure 3 below provides an overview of the different approaches that this dissertation considers theoretical foundations and inspirations to develop the notion of the "charging migrants". In other words, while they are not the overarching theoretical framework that connects the different chapters in this dissertation, these concepts and approaches provide the theoretical groundwork for a better and deeper understanding and engagement with the proposed "charging migrants" notion. I group these concepts and approaches into two theoretical domains based on their analytical scopes and perspectives.
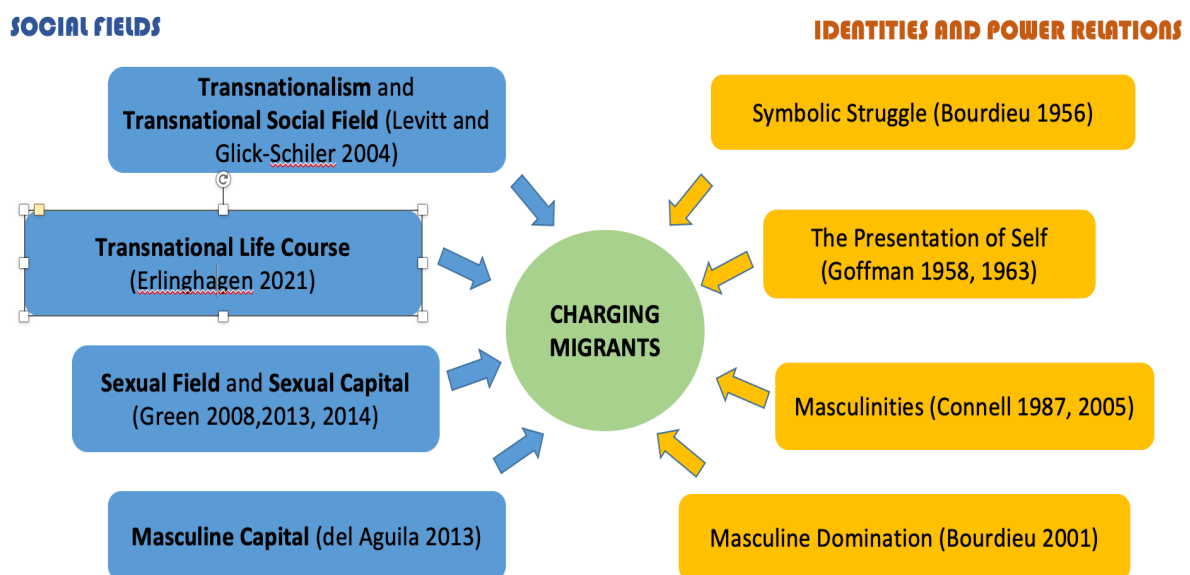
Figure 4. The Notion of the Charging Migrants and it's Interdisciplinary Theoretical Stimuli

2.4.1. Theories of social fields

The first domain features theoretical concepts including transnationalism and transnational social field (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), transnational life course (Erlinghagen 2021), sexual field and sexual capital (Green 2008, 2015), as well as masculine capital (del Aguila 2013). All of these concepts were influenced by the theory of social field and the concept of capital (Bourdieu 1977, 1979/1984, 1993) to a certain extent. Pierre Bourdieu used the concept of

"social field" to call attention to the relational character of the social world, in which various "fields" exist. For Bourdieu, a field is a relatively autonomous domain of activity that responds to rules of functioning and institutions that are specific to it and through that defines the relations among the agents. Each field, therefore, is a relational space of its own and is dedicated to a specific type of activity. It has specific internal logics, regulative principles, and institutionalized modes of interaction and self-management (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Green 2014). Consequently, the interpretation of a social event should depend on the whole social field and its systems of relation rather than some selected elements. Moreover, the boundaries of a field are fluid and a social field itself is created with specific sets of rules by field participants who struggle for social recognition within it. From this view, society is the intersection of various fields within a structure of politics, and the field is an analytical space defined by the power relations among entities that occupy different positions in the field's structure. The struggle in a field is subsequently a struggle to impose a definition of legitimate recognition, in which victory leads to more or less monopolistic control of the definition of the forms of legitimacy prevailing in the field (Hilgers and Mangez 2015). The idea of individuals' struggles for higher positions within a specific social field is in line with the mechanism in which social actors strive for upward social mobility by improving their social status, ranking, and class. As social mobility can take on different directions of either upward mobility (when an individual improves his/her social status and ascend his/her social class) or downward mobility (when an individual's social position is degraded or diminished), an actor's movement within a social field can also either ascend or descend.

Within a particular social field, the positions of agents or field actors are distributed according to their overall possessed resources and the structure of capital based on "the relative weight of the different species of capital, economic and cultural, in the total volume of their assets" (Bourdieu 1989: 17). Therefore, capital, as important field-specific resources that field actors draw on, has the capacity to yield profits and to inscribe in the subjectivities of things so that struggles in the fields are not equally impossible or possible (Bourdieu 1986). Capital possesses three fundamental forms namely cultural, economic, and social capital, and they confer advantage(s) to those who possess them by providing the possibility to gain the reward of the field (ibid.). These forms of capital are interconnected and the real logic of the functioning of capital lies in the ability and mechanism of conversion from one form of capital to another, either within the same field or between fields. In other words, the convertibility

between different forms of capital is "the basis of the strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital (and the position occupied in social space)" (Bourdieu 1986: 252). In order to better explain how field actors employ certain practices, Bourdieu's field approach presents the concept of habitus which refers to a cognitive structure of "strategy-generating-principle(s)" of action "composed of durable and transposable dispositions" produced by the objectification of social structure at the level of the subconscious (Bourdieu 1977: 72). Put simply, the habitus guides an actor's social practices and behaviors in a manner that him/herself is not aware of. According to the field approach, social practices are the site of intersection between the internal cognitive structure (the habitus) and the external configuration of relations of the social field and its specific capital distribution (Lizardo 2004). With the social field theory, Bourdieu brought together the core concepts of field, capital, and habitus to frame action as a form of practice, in contrast to the individual-level, scripted and rule-abiding behaviors previously proposed by social learning and rational action theories (Green 2014). While there have been several critical discussions about whether the field theory should be regarded as a nomological theory or as a strictly methodological one (Hilgers and Mangez 2015), Bourdieu's underlining argument with the field approach about the relational nature of the social world and the necessity to take into account systems of relations, power structures, and symbolic orders is fundamental to the development of many other social theories and concepts.

One of the most well-known theoretical developments of the social field theory is the approach of the transnational social field (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). This approach resonated with the transnational turn in migration studies in the 1980s and has been one of the most well-known theories in contemporary migration studies. In the context of globalization, many issues that appear to concern a specific national society cannot be properly understood without the analysis of their transnational dimensions (Castles 2001: 23). The transnational social field approach thus proposed a reformulation of the concept of society and social membership across national borders. Specifically, a transnational social field is "a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 1009). A transnational field is "multidimensional, encompassing structured interactions of differing forms, depth, and breadth that are differentiated in social theory by the terms organization, institution, and social movement" (ibid.). While the initial

conceptualization of social fields stays within the national boundaries, the concept of transnational social field connects actors through direct and indirect relations across national borders. By conceptualizing a transnational social field as transcending the boundaries of nation-states, scholars of transnational social fields see individuals within these fields, through their everyday activities and relationships, as being influenced by multiple sets of norms and institutions. The analytical lens hence must necessarily be broadened and deepened, and the meanings and definitions of social institutions need to be re-visited because migrants are often embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move and those who do not. As a result, the concept goes beyond the direct experience of migration to inquire further into domains of interaction between actors, social relations, structures, and ideologies from both sides. Engaging with a transnational social field perspective, therefore, allows a more systematic study of the social processes and institutions that have been routinely obscured by conventional migration theories and the national container of methodological nationalism (Weiss and Nohl 2012; Levitt and Jaworksy 2007).

From the perspective of the transnational social field approach, migrants are simultaneously situated in different yet intersecting (and sometimes overlapping) fields of sexuality, gender, race, and class within more than one nation-state. For example, when migrants migrate to a new social context, they may be preserving their gender status in one location while navigating and constructing a new status in another location within the transnational social field (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Recognizing that migrants' behaviors are a result of these simultaneous multiple statuses of race, class, sexuality, and gender makes certain social processes more understandable. In addition, the concept of transnational social fields allows the conceptualization of the social relations linking migrants/ mobile individuals with non-migrants/ immobile individuals in both sending and receiving contexts (Pessar and Mahler 2003; Thai 2014). This also allows the investigation of the dynamic of power relations and inequalities across borders, which is a core component of the politics of mobility (Cresswell 2010). Simultaneously, looking at migrants' participation in transnational social fields also helps tackle the "mobility bias" in migration studies, which is the tendency to concentrate only on mobility and mobile actors and subsequently ignore the interactions between the mobile and the immobile ones (Schewel 2020). The lens of the transnational social field, therefore, is suitable for the consideration of the effect of

transnational migration on sexual and gender hierarchies, collective identities, ways of being, and senses of belonging while not undermining the salience of the nation-states, membership, and citizenship. Such a perspective supports the conceptualization of the "charging migrant" notion as a transnational social process in which migrants accumulate resources from one social field in order to claim advantages from another social field that does not lie within the same nation-state.

However, while the concept of transnational social field correctly points to the existence and the significance of transnational identities, multiple ways of belonging, and social connections that span across national borders, it does not account much for the aspect of temporal changes and (re)configurations. Taking such a necessity to look at migrants' transnational engagement from a more longitudinal perspective, Erlinghagen (2021) proposed the unified theoretical concept of the transnational life course. This perspective merges the understanding from the transnational social field approach that contemporary migrants live in multiple social and cultural spaces with the life course approach that chronologically examines the migration project through the processes of migration decision-making, actual migration, and the possibility of return migration or onward migration (Erlinghagen 2021). Using the empirical of migrants' integration process and social network development, Erlinghagen argued that "the gradual change in the value of resources in the course of the migration process can only be analyzed in connection to the actual event of border crossing" (2021: 1356). By combing these two usually separated conceptual strands of research on migration and migration outcomes, Erlinghagen's transnational life course approach thus accounts for the time dependencies in studying migrants' lived experiences, development, and/or transformation of social statuses and identities. Such an approach speaks appropriately to this study's focus on the ways in which the "charging effect" of migration unfolds after migrants have accumulated sufficient resources from abroad and returned to their home country. The notion of "charging migrants" therefore provided an additional theoretical framework that would not only complement but also be in conversation with the transnational life course approach.

Another conceptual development inspired by Bourdieu's social field theory that informed the notion of the "charging migrants" is the sexual field approach. Proposed by Adam Isaiah Green to understand how sexual desire and desirability are organized in contemporary societies, a sexual field "emerges when a subset of actors with a potential

romantic or sexual interest in one another congregate in physical or virtual space and orient themselves toward one another according to a logic of desirability imminent to their collective relations and this logic produces, to greater and lesser degrees, a system of stratification" (Green, 2013: 27). Put in a simpler way, a sexual field is craved out of a particular set of physical or/and virtual networks and social sites orienting individuals (field actors) around a shared logic of desirability whereby actors seek out and yearn for sexual partnership, social significance, and self-esteem. Within these sites, desire and desirability are understood as products of ecological, social learning, and social psychological processes associated with the field. However, they are not just a mere collection of individual desires but rather "field effects that represent the transformation of individual desires into 'hegemonic systems of judgment', or, in the language of the sexual field framework, structure of desire" (Green, 2014a: 14). The structure of desire articulates desire and desirability in a manner that exceeds the purview of any single actor but for which all actors are obliged to consider if they wish to be part of the field. It eroticizes and assigns value to certain bodies, effects, and practices while appointing others as neutral or undesirable even. A sexual field, therefore, serves both as a field of forces that shapes individuals' tastes and as a field of struggle within which actors compete for better or dominant positions. This conceptualization resonated with the Bourdieusian take on field theory but also goes beyond to highlight the collective nature of social interactions and structures in explaining the construction of sexual desire, desirability, and practices in contemporary society. Because a sexual field functions based on a system of stratification, actors who participate in the field also have to navigate their possible and expected positions between strata. In this sense, sexual field actors' possible movement within a field is pretty much similar to the movements between social strata when individuals achieve social mobility.

Similar to socially mobile individuals who have to employ mobility strategies to attain their desirable social rank and status, actors within a sexual field also have to strategize to acquire a position in higher field strata that allow them to claim the rewards of the field. Within a specific sexual field, the ability to claim rewards is largely dependent on resources articulated within the field's structure of desire. While some of these resources could feature social, economic, or cultural capital, field significance of a sexual field is mainly acquired through the possession of sexual capital (Green, 2008). Sexual capital is a kind of capital mainly associated with attractiveness that can confer advantages upon those who possess it

within a sexual field, including field significance and the ability to find intimate partners of one's choosing (Green, 2015: 36). Conversely, an actor who does not possess much sexual capital might be subjected to invisibility, marginality, and possibly even stigma within a specific sexual field. Sexual capital may take a variety of novel and heterogeneous forms, including physical traits, affective presentations, or eroticized sociocultural styles, and hence is both an individually embodied resource and a property of the field. Like other forms of capital (cultural, economic, and social capital), sexual capital can be converted into and from other resources. For instance, within a sexual field that takes place in a hostess or host club, a customer's sexual capital can be dictated by his/her economic resources (through the act of buying or paying for drinks) while the sexual capital of a host or a hostess might be reflected through either his/her cultural and social capital (the skills to start and maintain conversations) or physical appearances (Hoang, 2014, 2015; Parreñas, 2011; Takeyama, 2010). The acquisition of sexual capital thus highlights resources and interactional works that field actors have to navigate in order to fit in with the field's objective structure (Green 2008).

Since its development, the approach of the sexual field has been receiving considerable attention from sociologists of sexuality and was even referred to as one of the most important developments in contemporary sexual sociological theory (Taylor 2014). However, the sexual field scholarship has rarely been engaged either from a transnational perspective or in the context of transnational migration. As such, transnational migrants and their simultaneous participation in multiple sexual fields which either are situated in different social contexts or span across national borders have not been a big focus among sexual field scholars. Except for the works of Farrer (2010) and Farrer and Dale (2014) on the interactions between Western expats and Chinese locals in the Shanghai's ethnosexual contact zone, migration scholarship has seldom been in conversation with the sexual field framework. Applying the approach of the sexual field to the transnational migration phenomenon could be theoretically, epistemologically, and methodologically stimulating. Specifically, a transnational take on the sexual field approach allows a conceptual analysis of the organization of the sexual fields in transnational migratory contexts and sheds light on migrants' struggles and strategies to navigate the institutionalization, strata, and hierarchies of desirability within different sexual fields in both sending and receiving societies. Simultaneously, the notions of the sexual field and sexual capital can provide a foundation for the exploration of different sexual statuses and hierarchies of sexual desirability that migrants

have to navigate throughout different phases of migration. Because the approach retains the pragmatist and symbolic interactionist insights regarding micro-interactions while simultaneously accounting for broader macro-level structures, discourses, and processes (ibid.), it is a suitable theoretical lens to engage with when studying migrants' negotiation of body and sexuality at different levels. Such characteristics of the sexual field approach then inform the conceptualization of the "charging migrants" notion as a social condition in which the migrants' social and sexual bodies are charged with different sentiments and perceptions in different sociocultural contexts.

The last concept that belongs to the first theoretical domain that inspired the conceptualization of the "charging migrants" notion is the concept of masculine capital. Taking into consideration both the advantages and shortcomings of the ways masculine capital as a concept has been defined by del Aguila (2014), I propose a working definition of masculine capital in a more comprehensive sense, which is going to be used also in other chapters of this dissertation. In particular, I consider masculine capital as *the attribute(s) and resources that allow individuals to attain and negotiate their masculine status and identity within certain time(s), in given socio-cultural and historical context(s), and among specific social group(s).* In this sense, masculine capital could be considered a type of currency that allows the male individual who has it to either move up the socially constructed ladder of manhood or to replace and make up for the lack of other qualities normally associated with manhood. Once sufficiently accumulated, masculine capital would allow the possessor the ability to either claim certain privileges associated with idealized manhood or even challenge some aspects that are normally expected by the hegemonic masculinity discourse.

I identify three main characteristics of masculine capital. First, because the ways in which masculinities are constructed vary greatly, masculine capital can take several forms. On the one hand, they can be tangible forms such as social behaviors, abilities, and appearances. On the other hand, masculine capital can take less visible forms expressed through emotions, ideologies, statuses, or ways of thinking. Second, following the convertibility between different forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986), masculine capital can also be converted into other types of capital such as economic, cultural, and social capital, and vice versa. For instance, a person can turn his strong pecuniary power (economic capital) into high masculine capital in social contexts where men are expected to earn a lot of money. Such a pattern can be observed in the business or corporate world where the hegemonic ideas of

masculinity are commonly affiliated with the businessman (Connell 2010). Another example of the other direction of the conversion between masculine capital and other forms of capital can be found in the work of male models, in which models turn their masculine capital in the forms of looks and gestures into economic capital in the form of salary for their works. Third, since the constructions and performances of masculinities are context-dependent, any particular expression of masculine capital might not yield the same value when it is placed within different social fields. For instance, while the singers of a K-Pop boyband can be considered very masculine in their looks and moves during on-stage performances by members of a global female fandom (Jung 2011; Louie 2012; Oh 2017), the same looks and behaviors might be considered feminine outside of the K-Pop fandom. Similarly, although taking care of the aesthetic appearance through different grooming practices has been considered normal and even desirable among many modern Japanese men (Miller 2006; Monden 2019; Tso 2021), such attention to appearance might not be perceived as an expression of manliness in other social contexts including Vietnam. The utilization of the masculine capital concept, thus, should be context-sensitive and mindful of the malleable nature of the value and convertibility of this kind of capital. It is also noteworthy that although masculine capital allows individuals to acquire the (self-)recognition and perception of being men, the concept does not equal manhood. It, however, can be a useful tool to explain how manhood and masculinities are constructed, challenged, adjusted, and (re)negotiated. Such a theorization of masculine capital then allows the "charging migrants" notion to explain how migrant men can elevate their masculine status in the Vietnamese social context through the accumulation of resources that can convey masculine significance.

2.4.2. Theories of identities and power relations

The second theoretical domain that the notion of the "charging migrants" notion draws on comprises four concepts that explain how individuals construct and negotiate identities and navigate power relations. These theories include Goffman's notion of the presentation of self in everyday life (1956), Bourdieu's take on social space and symbolic power (Bourdieu 1989), Connell's idea on the plurality of masculinity (Connell 1987, 2005), and the framework of aspiration and ability in making mobility happen (Carling 2002; Carling and Collins 2018). Specifically, in order to acquire sexual capital and become a relevant participant in a given sexual field, one has to cultivate certain personal attributes such as lines of actions, body

types, or appearance that can confer good sexual currencies. Studying individuals' situational interactions, Erving Goffman (1956) stated that a person sometimes acts in thoroughly calculated manners and expressions to give out impressions that are likely to evoke specific responses from others. This person might try to perform his/her social actions in coherent manners and appearance in a suitable social setting with the aim of obtaining the desired responses and impressions from the audience (other social actors). From a dramaturgical perspective, Goffman found that each social performance has a division between the "front region" and the "back region". In particular, the "front region" is where the social performance is presented by the performer and the audience also give reaction(s) and feedback(s) toward such a performance. On the other hand, the "back region" is where all the preparations for the social performance take place or where the performer show aspects of his/her social identities or behaviors that are not meant to be seen by other social actors. To acquire sexual capital and subsequently high positions within a given sexual field, actors then have to strategically adjust their self-presentation by manipulating the front region and back region to articulate with the field's structure of desire and corresponding tiers of desirability (Green 2008: 45). The negotiation and cultivation of sexual capital thus require the efforts of carrying out proper self-presentation(s) through certain social performances within specific social establishments for particular groups of social audience. Engaging with the theoretical lens of self-presentation subsequently allows the capture of the manifoldness of strategies employed by migrant men in distinct temporalities and spatialities to negotiate their sexual resources and statuses. Moreover, focusing on self-presentation implies an emphasis on the body and the possibility of investigating how gendered and sexual selves as well as discourses and norms are expressed and made concrete through the presentations of the body (Baas and Yang 2020; Carrillo 2017; Gorman-Murray 2007; Quero 2014). Simultaneously, examining the ways in which migrants' bodies are presented, negotiated, and perceived in different contexts can shed light on structures of oppression, freedom, agencies, and hierarchies that affect migrants' negotiation of sexuality and gender. This is also highly relevant in unpacking transnational migrants' lived experiences as they are commonly prone to (in)direct discrimination based on their nationalities, ethnicities, genders, sexualities, or social classes.

While Goffman's notion of self-presentation offers insights into how individuals manipulate their self-images in everyday-life social interactions, it overlooks how the act of

self-presenting constitutes relations and structures of power within dissimilar social fields. The dissertation thus turns to Bourdieu's perspectives on symbolic struggles (1989) to make sense of how individuals' strategies of self-presentation could be seen through the lens of field struggles. According to Bourdieu, the perception of the social world is the product of a double structuring from two forms of symbolic struggle: socially structured on the objective side and structured by relations of symbolic power on the subjective side. On the objective side, a person may act through conducts of representation designed to manipulate one's self-image and especially the image of one's position in social space. On the subjective side, a person may act by trying to transform categories of perception and appreciation of the social world and the cognitive and evaluative structures through which it is constructed. These symbolic struggles "have a specific logic which endows them with real autonomy from the structures in which they are rooted" (Bourdieu 1989: 21). It is within the symbolic struggles that agents put into action a symbolic capital, which is defined as "the power to impose upon other minds a vision, old or new, of social divisions depends on the social authority acquired in previous struggles" (ibid: 23). In other words, the struggle in a social field is a struggle to impose a definition of legitimate recognition, and such action could be supported with the acquisition of symbolic capital. The approaches of self-presentation and symbolic struggle then help understand the "charging migrants" notion as a social action that features migrants' agency in negotiating their "charged" social status in dissimilar social fields and in making sense of their mobility trajectories.

Moreover, a theoretically ripe discussion about migrants' gender identity (masculinity in the specific case of this study) cannot exclude Connell's idea of masculinities or the plurality of masculine identity. Arguing that there is more than one single form of masculine identity, Connell (1987, 1995) outlined five forms of masculinity, namely: hegemonic, complicit, subordinate, marginalized, and protest masculinities. These forms of masculinity are embraced by men of dissimilar social positions, classes, races, and sexualities, during certain times and within certain contexts. Building on such an idea about the pluralist nature of masculinity, scholars have also suggested other concepts such as hybrid masculinity (a mixture of marginalized and subordinate masculinities) (Bridges & Pascoe 2014) or flexible and strategic masculinities (Batnitzky, McDowell & Dyer 2009) to refer to the different ways in which men selectively incorporate gendered performances and specific components/ markers of identity to either consciously or unconsciously construct certain masculine identity

under given social circumstances. In addition, the diversity of masculinities is heavily characterized by hierarchies and exclusions. A comprehensive understanding of masculinities could only be achieved when we take into consideration the crucial influences of hierarchies of class, race, ethnicity, and sexuality on men's construction of gender subjectivities and behaviors. Because masculinity is fluid and, therefore, susceptible to ongoing changes, migrant men might adopt or develop different masculinities as discursive strategies within dissimilar contexts and situations addressed to differing audiences in different historical periods. In transnational migratory contexts, the concept of masculinities allows the understanding of the ways in which migrants are confronted with dominant forms of masculinity in the host society and have to come up with suitable tactics or strategies to negotiate their "masculinities at the margins" (Frühstück and Walthall 2011). This is of particular importance as most migrant men are subordinated and marginalized within the hierarchies of localized male dominance (Hibbins and Pease 2009). Moreover, migrants' former engagements with gender norms and discourses in their home country are not erased as they migrate. Studies have shown that migrants' old way of living and engaging with gender could heavily affect their acceptance and perceptions of the local gender culture, norms, or behaviors (Hibbins 2005; Sinatti 2014; Sinding and Zhou 2017; Urdea 2020; Walsh 2011). The transnational connections and maintenance of social networks that migrants have with families, acquaintances, and people in the home country also allow the continuity of certain gendered practices and ideologies. Consequently, Connell's idea of different forms of masculinity allows the investigation of potential friction(s) between gender norms, discourses, and expectations in the host and sending societies that the male "charging migrants" in this study have to navigate.

This section has presented the approaches and concepts that I engage with to inform, refine, and better the conceptualization of the "charging migrants" notion as an overarching theoretical backbone for this dissertation. However, it should be noted that this dissertation does not strictly apply these theories and concepts to the empirical observations but rather consider them as theoretical venture points for further engagements and conceptualization. There are two reasons for this choice. First, engaging with several theories and conceptual frameworks at the same time goes in line with the aim for an interdisciplinary take on studying transnational migration, which I argue that the "charging migrants" notion also reflects. Instead of being bound to the strict implementation of given theories, treating existing

paradigms as theoretical (and sometimes methodological) foundations gives the researcher leeway to be more creative and reflective about the ways and the degree to which he/she uses such theories in the research. Second, all of the aforementioned frameworks and concepts were conceptualized and constructed based on observations of social phenomena taking place within Wester, modernized societies. Given the chosen research site and population of this study, whether these theoretical concepts and frameworks could offer thorough and sufficient explanations for the negotiations of sexualities and masculinities among Vietnamese migrant men in the social contexts of Japan and Vietnam remain to be tested. For example, there is a multitude of dominant sexual and gender identities, subjectivities, and norms in Asia that are not in alignment with the Western idea of hegemonic masculinity (Ford & Lyon 2012; Jung 2011; Lin, Haywood & Mac an Ghaill 2017; Louie and Low 2003; Roces 2022; Taga 2013). The rigid utilization of theories without paying attention to their suitability to context-specific structures and factors might risk overlooking variances or encountering mismatches between theories and realities. This does not mean that the dissertation undermines the explanatory capacity of the previously mentioned theories and concepts. Rather, it points to the necessity of engaging with theories from a context-sensitive and reflective approach in order to make sense of social phenomena and realities in nuanced and satisfactory ways. With such a consideration in mind, I, therefore, believe that the notion of the "charging migrants" can allow an approach that has sufficient explanatory capacity while paying extensive and reflexive attention to the local contexts within which the research participants of this study are situated.

In general, the notion of the "charging migrants" and its theoretical development (the sub-notion of the "charging effect" of transnational migration) suggest an interdisciplinary perspective to study the entanglement between transnational migration, sexuality, and masculinity. The notion also links migrants' transnational negotiation of sexuality and masculinity to processes of transformation and social mobility, with adequate attention paid to the temporal variances. "Doing theory" is not merely a matter of employing concepts and adapting new metaphors (Favell 2001). The usefulness of theoretical concepts brought into a study field should be observed in the ways they shape the processes of gathering, interpreting, and analyzing empirical data (Levitt and Jaworksy 2007; Pries 2008; Weiß and Nohl 2012). In the following chapters, more empirical evidence will be presented and put together in order to further explain how the Vietnamese migrant men in Japan are "charging migrants" whose negotiation of sexualities and

masculinities is tied to the aspiration for social mobility and social transformation in their migration journeys to Japan – the land of opportunities and the charging station for Vietnamese migrants' accumulated resources.

Chapter Three

Salmon Men or Charging Men – Masculine Capital and the Negotiation of Masculinity in Transnational Migration

I first met Tung years ago in Vietnam when he was still a university student, during an exchange program. At that time, Tung was a young man eagerly wanting to prove his abilities by enthusiastically taking part in every activity of the program, sometimes even with a child-like curiosity and energy. After the program, we rarely kept in touch and I only met Tung again years later in Tokyo. It turned out that Tung got a scholarship to study for his Master's degree in Kyūshū – a region in Southern Japan and he was in Tokyo to attend an event from an organization that funded his scholarship. In a coffee shop near Tokyo station, I was impressed by how Tung had changed and matured. Tung was calmer in his gesture and ways of talking, and he also shared that he was just gotten married to his long-time girlfriend in Vietnam before going to Japan to start his degree. However, I was even more impressed with Tung's changes when we conducted the interview for this research in the summer of 2020. Tung met me online via Skype, wearing a comfortable hoodie in front of the laptop in his apartment. He looked more grown up and a bit tired and explained that he was exhausted from his work shift at a local butcher shop. Seeping a cup of Vietnamese green tea and smoking his Vietnamese tabaco, Tung confided that his life in Japan was not easy. During the time of his Master's Degree, Tung managed to bring his wife to Japan to join him. When Tung decided to continue his study at the doctoral level, he and his wife unexpectedly had their first child. Although he received a scholarship, Tung still had to take up two part-time jobs – one as a cashier at a supermarket and the other as a helper at a local butcher shop in order to support his family. All of this made him feel that he became "two hundred percent more independent" and subsequently a "more masculine and grown-up man".

Even though Tung planned to stay and work in Japan for a few years after his doctoral study, he wished to return to Vietnam eventually:

I will go back to Vietnam. But first, I have to equip myself with enough finance, skills, and experience. But I will go back… It's like the salmon. I cannot be away from where I was born. I will always find my way back home. My parents are still in Vietnam… Moreover, I have Vietnamese blood running in me, I feel that I have to go back to

contribute to the country and the Vietnamese society… This (migration journey) is like going far away to be able to go back one day.

What is interesting in Tung's narrative is that he associated his migration trajectory with that of the salmon, a fish species well-known for its migration patterns. While Tung's comparison of his migration trajectory to that of the salmon fish only stemmed from his eventual wish to return home after migrating to Japan, I argue that the salmon life cycle can be an appropriate venture point to engage further with not only migrant men's negotiation and articulation of masculinity in different phases of migration, but also their migration aspirations, expectations, and experiences. Specifically, it engages with the concept of masculine capital and proposes the metaphorical notion of salmon men to suggest that transnational migration to Japan is not only an explorative pathway to adulthood but also a gender strategy for Vietnamese men to accumulate different capital and subsequently move up the status passage of an idealized Vietnamese manhood. In this sense, the chapter elucidates how migrant men are charged with cultural, economic, social, and even sexual and masculine capital during migration to Japan. In other words, it provides evidence for one of the analytical perspectives for the notion of the charging migrants, which sees migrant men as individuals accumulating resources in migration to subsequently be able to elevate their social, sexual, and gender statuses. Furthermore, the chapter shows that masculine subjectivities are deeply engraved in transnational migration and how migration provides a site for the performance and achievement of masculinity for male individuals. It also critically questions the extent to which migrant men's masculine practices, perceptions, and identities are reconfigured throughout transnational migration. The arguments in this chapter would be clearer when they are considered and understood against the background of what are the dominant masculine perceptions and ideologies among Vietnamese migrant men, and how can migrants' masculine identity is charged through migration. As a result, this chapter starts by providing contextual information on the prominent masculine ideologies and norms in modern Vietnamese society and among Vietnamese men. It then explains how the Vietnamese salmon men charged up their masculine capital during migration to Japan, before discussing the subsequent outcomes of such a charging process.

3.1. The "True Man" and Masculine Capital in the Vietnamese Context

In the past, gender ideologies in Vietnam were heavily influenced by Confucianist values, the tradition of patrilineal ancestor worship, and the ideology of *Âm-Dương* (Yin-Yang) (An, Waling, and Bourne 2022). Specifically, Vietnamese men used to be entitled to privilege and dominant economic, social, and power statuses over women in both the context of the family and society. Men help up the gender role of the "family's pillar" (*Trụ cột gia đình*), which gave them the power to have the ultimate decision and controlling power over all family-related matters but also the responsibility of taking care of the family as a whole including the family's livelihood and the education of young male kins. Their family responsibility also included duties such as performing ancestor worship rituals, taking care of the parents' well-being, and leading important events such as marriage, funeral, and death ceremonies, among others (An, Waling, and Bourne 2022; Horton and Rydström 2011; Rydstrom 2006). The Confucianist influences also suggested the masculine norm of *Ngũ Thường* (The five cardinal virtues), which urged men to uphold attributes of benevolence (*Nhân*), righteousness (*Nghĩa*), propriety (*Lễ*), wisdom (T*rí*), and trustworthiness (*Tín*) (An, Waling, and Bourne 2022). At the same time, women were expected to follow the *Tứ Đức* (The four virtues) moral guide, which emphasized housework (*Công*), physical appearance (*Dung*), appropriate speech (*Ngôn*), proper manner and behavior (*Hạnh*). In terms of social relations, men had to pay special attention to *Tam Cương* (The three rules) that highlighted the relationships between the head governor and his followers, between the father and the son, and between the husband and the wife. In 1943, Hoang Dao Thuy, one of the most influential cultural scholars in Vietnam during the colonial period wrote a book named "What should Vietnamese men do?" (*Trai nước Nam làm gì?*) to give suggestions to young Vietnamese men regarding their ways of living (D. T. Hoang 1943). In this book, Hoang claimed that the most important things for men include the will (*Chí*) and the wish to serve the country. This meant that young Vietnamese men were also encouraged to have a strong will and sentiment of nationalism and patriotism. While men were expected to follow the three rules, women should uphold the *Tam Tòng* (The three obediences) ideology which asked them to be obedient to the three figures of the father, the husband, and later on the son. In addition, the ideology of *Âm-Dương* (Yin-Yang), especially predominant in the rural areas, marked the male body as being physically hot, strong, aggressive, and hard to control, which is in opposition to the female's cold, soft, weak

and subsequently inferior body (Rydström 2003, 2004). Such ideologies gave men in pre-1986 Vietnam gender anchors that guided their gender identities, subjectivities, and performances.

In 1986, the Vietnamese Communist Party launched an extensive economic reform named *Đổi Mới* (Renovation) that led to several changes and developments in not only the economic sphere but also several other facets of Vietnamese society. As a result of the reform's promotion for opening up the country's economic market to foreign investors, industrialization, and modernization, post-1986 Vietnam witnessed impressive economic growth and developments. From one of the world's poorest countries, Vietnam has gradually been able to enter the group of middle-income countries. In comparison to the per capita income (GDP) in 1986, Vietnam's GDP in 2021 was more than ten times higher (World Bank 2021). Contributing a significant part to the economic development of Vietnam were flows of remittances from Vietnamese abroad. Word Bank estimated that the total amount of remittances that Vietnamese migrants sent back home reached around 17 billion USD in 2019. Such flows of remittances have been contributing significantly to the elevated living infrastructures and quality in Vietnam, especially in rural and sub-urban areas. The Post-*Đổi Mới* economic and social developments have extensively transformed not only the Vietnamese economy but also several aspects of the country's political, cultural, and social domains. Drastic economic and social changes provided Vietnamese women with more chances to achieve financial gains and subsequently enhance their roles in and contributions to the family. Simultaneously, the increased living standard and social gaps also put more burden on men's role as the head of the family in terms of ensuring the household's stable income and keeping up with swift social changes (An, Waling, and Bourne 2022; Earl 2014; ISDS (Insitute for Social Development Studies) 2020; Knodel et al. 2005; Tran 2014).

During the transition period after 1986, however, conventional gender ideologies were still popular due to the structural influences of the Vietnamese state. From the late 1980s until the early 2000s, state-led social campaigns made several efforts to regulate the ideals of the body, gender, and sexuality in Vietnamese society (Horton 2019; Horton and Rydström 2011; Khuat, Le, and Nguyen 2010). For example, during the 1990s, the "Social Evils" (*Tệ Nạn Xã Hội*) campaign demonized prostitution, pornography, and drugs by associating them with pathways to HIV/AIDS to indirectly regulate sexual acts that were deemed undesirable (Newton 2017; Tran 2014). With regard to gender norms, the state-endorsed program of "Cultured Family" (*Gia Đình Văn Hoá*) during the post-*Đổi Mới* period encouraged

the general public to embrace traditional gender norms and practices through the upholding of essentialist feminine and masculine attributes. Women were encouraged to tend to the household and keep the family happy, while men were prompted to be responsible for bigger matters such as building houses or taking care of the family's major income and moral status (An, Waling, and Bourne 2022; Tran 2014). These state-driven campaigns thereby rendered the dominant gender and sexual norms in Vietnamese society in several ways, and whoever did not adhere to these ideologies would risk being seen as a threat to Vietnamese cultural and social values.

In tandem with the processes of globalization, growing transnationalism, and the increasing popularity of the Internet and smartphone in Vietnam[8] in the last three decades, the engagements with sexual and gender norms and discourses in contemporary Vietnamese society have been altered. The emerging consumption culture and booming usage of social media also introduced people to foreign media and cultural products that were not available in the past and consequently questioned conventional views on gendered practices and identities that used to be dominant in society (Gammeltoft 2002; ISDS (Insitute for Social Development Studies) 2020; Khuat, Le, and Nguyen 2010; Martin 2010). At the same time, Vietnam has been working its way up on the list of significant migrant-sending countries in the Asia-Pacific in recent years. With regard to overseas workers alone, Vietnam has been a major sending country to destinations in east Asia. According to the Vietnamese Department of Oversea Labor, around 650,000 Vietnamese workers were working abroad by 2020, and the three biggest labor markets for Vietnamese workers included Japan, Taiwan, and Korea (Lao Dong 2020; VAMAS 2020; 2021). The United States, Japan, China, Australia, and Canada are the major migration destinations that house significantly considerable Vietnamese diasporas (Mcauliffe and Triandafyllidou 2021). Because transnational migrants are normally exposed to foreign cultures as well as new social norms, ideologies, and practices, their interactions with members of the social networks back in the home country can introduce new ways of perceiving social actions, identities, and phenomena. All of these factors combine to expose both Vietnamese women and men to new perceptions of and ways of doing genders. More Vietnamese women have been able to gain financial autonomy, become

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[8] Vietnam has become one of the world's major hubs in terms of Internet and smartphone users. According to national reports, more than 65 percent of the Vietnamese population have access to the Internet and actively use social media platforms (ISDS 2020).

more progressive in their views of gendered roles and expectations, and actively follow global feminist discourses of independent and capable modern women.

Modern Vietnamese men, therefore, had to negotiate their gender ideologies and practices in accordance with such new realms and trends of gender practices, especially those who belong to the younger generation. Many young Vietnamese men have been growing doubts about the traditional ways of achieving manhood via the embracement of patriarchal and Confucianist values such as having a son to continue the family's lineage or devaluing women's working ability outside of the household. Several men, especially those in the urban areas, struggle to adjust to women's increasing and more extensive engagement in the labor market and financial autonomy (L. A. Hoang and Yeoh 2011; Horat 2018; Vu 2015). The increasing emigrant rate of women from rural areas engaging in transnational marriage has also reconfigured traditional gender roles and perceptions, especially the role of women in contributing to the family's general income and their subsequent elevated family status (Bélanger and Tran 2011). In other words, there have been growing ambivalence, contradiction, compromises, and discontinuities in the ways men perceive masculine identities, practices, privileges, and discourses in Vietnam nowadays (An, Waling, and Bourne 2022; ISDS (Insitute for Social Development Studies) 2020; Martin 2010; 2018).

It would be, however, too simplistic (and even naïve) to conclude that new, modern ways of looking at gender in the current Vietnamese society have completely replaced existing traditional gender ideologies. Indeed, several conventional gendered values still linger despite the social, economic, and cultural changes and developments in modern Vietnamese society. For example, the Confucianist value of patrilineal ancestor worship still appears as a critical gendered organization and discursive backdrop to which various men and women of different age and social backgrounds aspire (Horton 2018; Horton and Rydström 2011; 2019; Rydstrom 2022; 2006). Several men still consider themselves to be the sole and main decision-makers for important issues in family life, while women are still largely expected to take care of child-rearing responsibilities and day-to-day, smaller activities such as household chores (Knodel et al. 2005). Scholars have also pointed out that regardless of the recent reconfigurations in perceiving and doing gender in Vietnam, the general structure of the nuclear family is still unchanged and family members have mostly maintained traditional masculine and feminine roles rather than confronting them (L. A. Hoang and Yeoh 2011; Horat 2018; Vu 2015). For example, even when young Vietnamese men nowadays are

facing a "contested field for the ongoing negotiation of gender relations and identities" with different approaches to masculine norms and behaviors to previous generations, their life goals or the expected gendered outcomes are still the same, being: having a wife, building a family, and fulfilling the family's material needs (Martin 2018). Moreover, drinking, smoking, gambling, premarital and extramarital affairs are all seen to largely be normal activities for men, while women who engage in such activities would be looked down upon as having bad morality (ISDS (Insitute for Social Development Studies) 2020; Khuat, Le, and Nguyen 2010). Such a view indeed reflects the heavily gendered viewpoint of sexualities, masculinities, and femininities during the wartime period, during which monogamy and sexual faithfulness were only expected from the wife whose husband was fighting on the front line (Khuat, Le, and Nguyen 2010). Social transformations have thus resulted in the co-existence and ongoing interaction between several value systems and perspectives towards gender such as Confucianism, socialism, war-time austerity, revolutionary spirit, and other Western influences in modern Vietnamese society (ibid.).

Furthermore, the traditional expectation for men to perform the role of being the "family's pillar" is also still omnipresent. In modern times, this masculine role is yet commonly associated with the ability to take care of the family either materially, mentally, or even morally and spiritually. Because a large part of being the "family's pillar" is determined through the ability to take care of the family, work plays a crucial role in helping men fulfilling such a role. In the latest large-scale report on men and masculinities in Vietnam carried out by the Institute for Social Development Studies (ISDS) in 2020, it was found that work is strongly associated with masculine norms and patriarchy among Vietnamese men. Success or failure in career would, therefore, be one of the main principles that dictate men's pride, physical and mental health, and subsequently masculine subjectivities. There is also a firm belief that a man's financial status mirrors his level of masculinity. Consequently, many Vietnamese men try to affirm their masculinities by showing their financial abilities and resources through acts such as buying sex, paying for meals and drinks, or buying expensive gifts for women (K. K. Hoang 2014; 2015; Horton and Rydström 2011; Martin 2010; 2018; Thai 2006; 2008). It should be noted here, that such a notion of the "family's pillar" is not unique to the Vietnamese society and similar notions can be found in other East Asian countries. For instance, the concept of *daikokubashira* (the central pillar of the house) in Japan has a comparable meaning that also refers to the traditional masculine expectation of men fulfilling

the role of being the main economic provider for the family (Dasgupta 2009; 2013; Frühstück and Walthall 2011; Itō 1996; Roberson and Suzuki 2003; Tokuhiro 2010).

The role of the family's pillar also constitutes a large part in the construction of the Vietnamese hegemonic masculinity which is represented through the notion of the "true man" (*đàn ông đích thực*). A "true man" would be an individual who possesses good characteristics and accomplishes the socially expected attributes in all four domains of career, capability and personality, sexuality, and family duties (ISDS 2020). Specifically, a "true man" has to have a successful career that he prioritizes and achieves through having good education degrees and credentials. In terms of capability and personality, this man has to have a healthy and able body, a wide and well-connected social network. He also has to express decisive, confident, and strong mannerisms, he dares to take risks and challenges, and he does not show weakness in both physical and mental terms. Nguyen's study on domestic migration showed that taking up risks and challenges is one of the ways that Vietnamese young working-class men in rural areas assert their masculinity (M. T. N. Nguyen 2018). In addition, a "true man" should also be able to consume large quantities of alcohol, as drinking alcohol is not only a means by which men prove their manliness but also a way of expanding and strengthening male bonds (Lincoln 2016; T. T. H. Nguyen et al. 2021). Furthermore, a "true man" should possess a strong sexual ability, rich sexual experiences, and is always in charge of leading sexual acts. Engaging in sexual practices such as visiting female sex workers, having extramarital sex, and demonstrating sexual potency are commonly seen in Vietnam as means through which men prove their manliness (K. K. Hoang 2014; 2015; Phinney 2008; 2010; K. L. Nguyen and Harris 2009). Last but not least, and most importantly, he has to successfully realize the role of the family's pillar who provides a sufficient and good life to his wife and offspring, pays filial piety to the parents, and takes the responsibility to take care of family members (sometimes even in-law and extended family members).

Such a notion of the "true man" provides a deeper view of what the "family's pillar" role means in the social context of Vietnam and how such a notion is perceived and enacted differently in comparison to similar concepts in other contexts. For example, while the *daikokubashira* ideology in Japan expects men to take care of the direct family (wife and children), the "family's pillar" role in the Vietnamese context anticipates men to be responsible for not only the direct family but also the extended family including parents, siblings, or sometimes even relatives. As a result, this ideology also applies to young,

unmarried men who realize it by taking care of other family members through various means. Similar to the case of the hegemonic masculinity that refers to an idealized image of manhood that most men find hard to fully attain, the Vietnamese notion of the "true man" is also a peak that is challenging to reach, especially when one wants to be qualified in all four domains of this idea. Moreover, such a fully-attained hegemonic masculine ideal of the "true man" can be extremely hard to realize among various groups of men such as young men, men with disabilities, or men who belong to the lower, working classes. However, one of the differences between the notion of the Vietnamese "true man" and the Western idea of hegemonic masculinity is the position where masculine identities, subjectivities, and performances are situated in social relations. While Western scholarship positions hegemonic masculinity in the relations between men and other men, or between men and women (R. Connell 2005; R. W. Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), the Vietnamese masculine value is firmly situated within family and kinship relations (An, Waling, and Bourne 2022). Understanding such a core Vietnamese masculine value is crucial in making sense of how Vietnamese migrant men, as people who might experience shifts in masculine subjectifies and values through encountering new gendered ideologies and norms in the destination country, negotiate their masculinities in relation to their migration. It also provides a suggestion for the interconnectedness between males' migration decisions, behaviors, trajectories, and their gender expectations and performances. At the same time, such a consideration of the Vietnamese dominant ideals and discourses of masculinity would allow a thorough analysis of the interactions between the deep-rooted masculine ideologies that many migrant men have become familiar with growing up in Vietnam and the new masculine practices and identities that emerge during and after transnational migration. As the following sections in this chapter will show, the trajectory of transnational migration can be a strategy for several Vietnamese young men to fulfill the gendered expectation of the "true man" to some extent. In that sense, this chapter will respond to the need to provide more nuanced perspectives of Vietnamese masculinities beyond the commonly portrayed negative traits such as violence, excessive alcohol drinking, and extramarital sex (An et al. 2022) to bring out the potentially "positive, transformative and altruistic" facets in masculinity (Haywood 2020). In order to better unpack the entangle between masculinity and transnational migration in the journey of the male Vietnamese migrants in Japan, I propose to first look at the notion of masculine capital. I argue that this notion can be a suitable working concept to account for the ways in

which Vietnamese migrant men accumulate resources, articulate masculine attributes, and subsequently make their way up the ladder of manhood and hegemonic masculinity with their migration decisions and experiences.

3.2. Masculine Capital and the Masculinity of Transnational Migration

Masculinities are not fixed or monolithic but are rather constantly negotiated and reconfigured as individuals are situated in changing social structures, institutions, and contexts. As a result, research on masculinity needs to explore the relationship between hegemonic ideologies of "being a man" and the mismatches, tensions, and resistances evident in daily life (R. W. Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Because transnational migrants cross not only national borders but also social and cultural ones, studies on the gender aspect of transnational migration also should take into account "how gender identities travel and how these identities are remade at each stage of the migration project in relation to a range of different and often contradictory gender regimes encountered in different places" (Datta et al. 2009, 857). The negotiation of masculinities in transnational migration is, therefore, a contingent and continuous process that features not only the doing and undoing of gender but also the intersection of personal losses and gains, power dynamics, understandings of hegemony and patriarchy (Bell and Domecka 2018; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Wojnicka and Pustułka 2019). As the previous chapter has pointed out, a concept that systematically makes sense of not only the interactions between forms of masculinity in dissimilar life stages and the ways in which male individuals see and perform themselves as men and how they are perceived by others as men in different socio-cultural contexts can help understand how masculinity is negotiated in transnational migration. This chapter, therefore, engages further with the concept of masculine capital, which was proposed to be the *attribute(s) and resources that allow individuals to attain and negotiate their masculine status and identity within certain time(s), in given socio-cultural and historical context(s), and among specific social group(s).* In the previous chapter, I conceptualized masculine capital to be a type of gender currency that allows its male possessor to either move up the socially constructed hierarchy of masculinity or to make up for the lack of other qualities normally associated with manhood. Based on this working definition of masculine capital, the following parts of this chapter would utilize this notion as a lens to make sense of how Vietnamese migrant men

negotiate their masculinity in conjunction with their migration decisions, experiences, and trajectories.

To begin with the analysis of how Vietnamese migrant men's masculine capital is shaped in migration, this chapter comes back to the previously mentioned story of Tung, a doctoral researcher in his late twenties who studies and lives in a mid-size city in Kyūshū – a region in Southern Japan. It chooses Tung's narrative as a venturing point because he referred to the salmon when sharing about his wish to eventually return to Vietnam: "I will go back… It's like the salmon. I cannot be away from where I was born. I will always find my way back home." This narrative of Tung was intriguing at first because of the comparison between his migration trajectory to that of the salmon, a fish species well-known for its migration patterns. While such a comparison was not compatible in both biological and motivational terms and the goal of this dissertation is also not comparing human and animal migration patterns, I argue that the reference to the salmon can provide a good starting point to further explore how many Vietnamese migrant men make sense of their masculine practices, capital, identities, and aspirations during the processes of transnational migration. This venture point can then provide a platform to further discuss how masculine capital could be acquired during transnational migration from Vietnam to Japan. As the following section will show, the patterns of maturing during migration and return migration are (at least on the surface) relatively similar between the salmon fish and several Vietnamese migrant men in Japan (not only Tung). While salmon mature as part of their migration from smaller streams to the big open ocean, many migrant men consider their journey from Vietnam to Japan as part of a process of becoming mature adults and, later on, independent, capable, and well-articulated men. It is during their migration to and their stay in Japan that Vietnamese migrant men accumulate different resources and attributes that can be converted into masculine capital.

3.2.1. The salmon fish and the infamous homing migration pattern

Migration is a behavior that is not only exclusive to the human world. It is common knowledge that various species in the animal world migrate, and the reasons, patterns, and mechanisms of migration among animals can be as complex as those of human migration. For some animals, migration constitutes a significant part of their life cycle, and the salmon fish is one among them. Salmon are highly migratory and are native to tributaries of the North Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean. As typical anadromous fish, salmon migrate up to rivers or streams

from the sea to spawn and reproduce. The life cycle of salmon is typically characterized by three main different migration patterns: downstream migration (out-migration in some studies), feeding migration, and homing migration (Ueda 2011). Most salmon hatch in freshwater streams, rivers, or lakes and stay there for months (the length of this period varies depending on specific salmon species) before starting to migrate downstream to the ocean. Before or during the downstream migration, specific factors such as the odors or visual cues of the natal stream are imprinted to the nervous system of juvenile salmon, which would be then utilized in the homing migration pattern later in their life cycle. Young salmon spend a portion of their downstream migration time in brackish water bodies commonly found where rivers or lakes meet the ocean. During this period of staying in brackish water, salmon's bodies adapt to hormone-driven changes to allow the fish to endure the transition from the freshwater environment to the oceanic environment. After this preparatory phase, salmon migrate to the ocean where they would spend from six months to up to seven years in the open sea. This period is called the feeding migration phase, during which salmon have to survive in a bigger environment and subsequently become mature both in size and sexuality.

Once they reach adulthood, salmon would start their famous homing migration journey of swimming from the ocean back to their natal rivers or streams to spawn. Sometimes, they could move thousands of kilometers from the open ocean back to their natal place, even after several years of out-migration to the sea. The previously imprinted sensory and visual cues of the natal streams or lakes in the nervous system in their juvenile time are evoked during this period of homing migration to help grown-ups orient and navigate their way back (Dittman and Quinn 1996; Ueda, Yamamoto, and Hino 2007). Unlike downstream migration, homing migration is more difficult as salmon have to swim upstream, against strong water currents and rapids. They also face several challenges when having to leap up waterfalls to reach higher waterbodies (the word salmon comes from the Latin word *salire*, which means to leap) while at the same time avoiding being caught by predators such as bears or eagles. Because of such a challenging homing journey, not all salmon make it back to their natal stream successfully. Nevertheless, the majority of salmon would keep trying to get back to their birthplace to reproduce, unless their journeys are terminated due to the aforementioned tiring and dangerous challenges and obstacles. There is little difference in the number of male and female salmon in homing migration. However, male salmon maintain a high level of aggressive behaviors to compete for access to females, and male salmon that

carry out homing migration earlier are observed to be able to secure higher chances of looking for female breeding partners (Ueda 2011). Whether the circle of downstream-feeding-homing migration would repeat after the first successful homing migration journey would depend on the specific salmon species. Some species of salmon such as the Atlantic salmon would repeat such a migration circle after spawning, while others such as the Pacific salmon would, unfortunately, die after this process and therefore only make the circular migratory trip only once in their lifetime.

The unique patterns and mechanisms of migration of the salmon fish have caught the interest of not only biologists and ecologists but also folklores and mythologies in various cultures. In particular, the figure of the salmon fish has been commonly mentioned in literature and folklore. For example, a fiction novel named "Salar the Salmon" (Williamson 1936) told the life story of a salmon that migrated from the sea to its spawning ground in the rivers of England's Devonshire area. In this story, Salar was described to be a persevering creature as he never gave up on his goal of reaching "home" to create a new life cycle, despite the various difficulties and challenges that he faced during the migration journey such as humans' fishing hooks, predators like otters, or strong water currents. In the folklores of Nordic, Scottish, Welsh and Celtic cultures, the salmon fish and its characteristics symbolize wisdom, power, transformation, endurance, and dedication. In Finnish folklore, salmon also represents masculinity. In some Asian countries like Japan, China, and Vietnam, similar mythologies to the salmon's story can be found in the tale of the strong carp fish (Koi fish in Japanese mythology) swimming upstream, leaping its way up the waterfalls, and eventually turning into a dragon. In Vietnam, the story of the carp fish transforming into a dragon represents strong will, persistence, and success, and has thus been a common mythological aspiration for generations of students who wish to pass different exams, especially the annual national university entrance examination. While such stories about the carp fish and Koi fish are more common and well familiar in many East Asian contexts including Vietnam, the salmon's life cycle provides better resemblances of the transnational migration journey from Vietnam to Japan of many Vietnamese migrant men because of the homing migration pattern and process of maturation through sojourning in an unfamiliar environment. The next section points out in detail the reasons why the salmon's migration patterns can be a useful starting point in making sense of Vietnamese men's transnational migration trajectories and negotiation of masculine capital and status.

3.2.2. Salmon men? Migration as a maturing pathway

When taking a look at the migration pathway of male Vietnamese migrants in Japan and those of the salmon, several commonalities in terms of migration trajectories can be observed. The similarities include the patterns of out-migration and return migration as well as the process of maturing during migration. At the first glance, many male Vietnamese migrants in Japan could be metaphorically referred to as salmon men because of these similarities in migration trajectories and the developments in migration. In order to provide a better idea of how such a metaphor is constructed, Figure 5 illustrates and juxtaposes the migration patterns of the salmon fish and those observed among the Vietnamese migrant men in Japan and former migrant men who have returned to Vietnam from Japan.
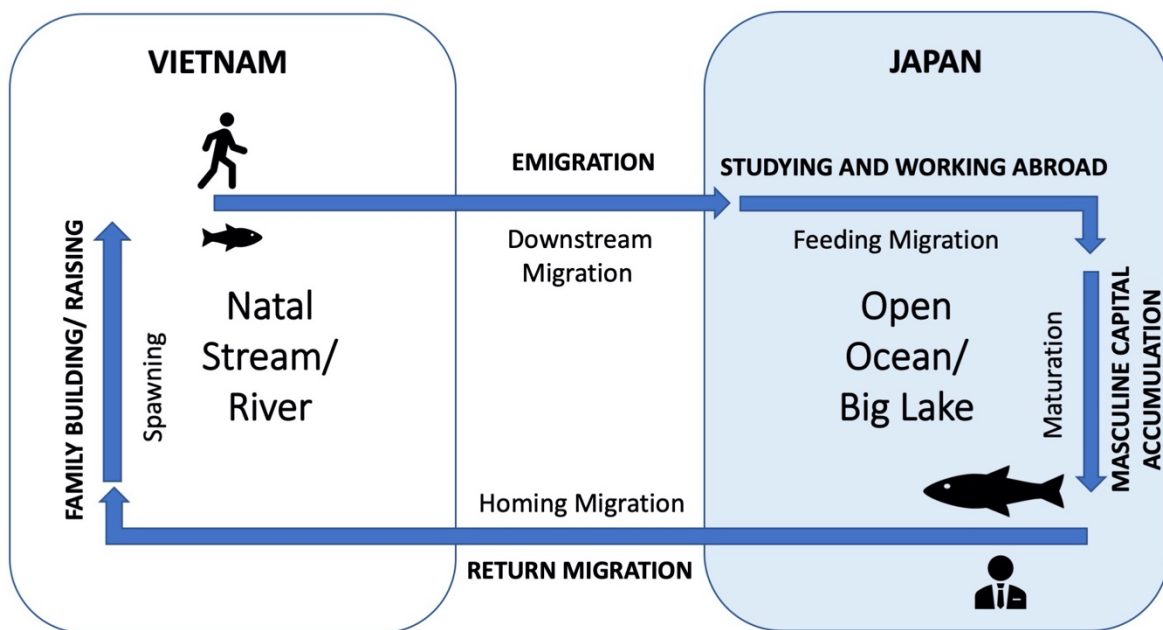
Figure 5. A Comparison of Migration Trajectories between Vietnamese Migrant Men in Japan and the Salmon Fish.
Source: The author 2022.

As previously mentioned, the salmon's life cycle revolves around three consecutive migratory phases namely downstream migration, feeding migration, and homing migration. Figure 5 demonstrates this migration pattern with arrows starting from the left side of the graph (natal stream/ river) to the right side (open ocean/ big lake) and then going back to where the

migration begins (natal stream/ river), forming a close circle. Such a pattern resembles the different stages in the transnational migration journey of many male Vietnamese migrants in Japan. Specifically, the salmon's downstream migration from the streams to the ocean, feeding migration within the ocean's open environment, and homing migration back to their natal streams respectively correspond with Vietnamese migrant men's patterns of emigrating from Vietnam to Japan, studying/working and living in Japan, and returning from Japan to Vietnam. Moreover, figure 5 also indicates the similarities in the process of maturing during migration as well as the purpose of return migration in the migration journey of the salmon fish and the male Vietnamese migrants in Japan.

To begin with, many male Vietnamese migrants started their migration journeys to Japan at a relatively young age. Most of those who are language students migrated at the age range of nineteen to twenty-one as they went to Japan either just shortly after graduating from high school or after the first few years in universities in Vietnam. Those who migrate to Japan as technical intern trainees or high-skilled labors (mostly as IT engineers, salesmen in transnational trading companies, or labor managers) are usually a few years older than the majority of those who migrate as language students. Many of them have finished vocational training or college in Vietnam but could not secure sufficiently paid jobs and, therefore, decided to find better and higher-paid working opportunities in Japan. In fact, the economic impulse is one of the most common migration impulses for Vietnamese men when considering migrating to Japan. Even when they initially migrate as students, the common goal is to acquire adequate credentials to then become employable in the job markets and subsequently be able to earn money. In fact, the majority of the working Vietnamese migrant men in this study who were in their late twenties or early thirties started as student migrants, either in Japanese language schools or Japanese universities. Because these men were normally equipped with sufficient Japanese cultural and linguistic knowledge after having studied in Japanese education institutions, it was a possible and common pathway for them to look and apply for jobs in the Japanese labor market. In addition, entering the Japanese labor market is also a logical step for Vietnamese migrants when considering their economic motivation for migration in the first place.

Besides such an underlying economic aspiration of transnational migration, several men also mentioned the wish to explore the world outside of their hometowns or outside of Vietnam as their motivation to take on the migration journey to Japan. For instance, Phuong,

a thirty-two-year-old office worker in Tokyo said that emigrating was "the right thing to do as a young man" when recalling his decision to go to Japan. At the age of nineteen, Phuong wanted to get out of his hometown in northern Vietnam and learned about a scholarship that could bring him to Japan via an advertisement at his high school. Phuong "did not know much about Japan" other than what he had read in books about Japan's post-war rapid economic growth and the country's technological advances, but decided to apply for the scholarship program anyway. He thought that it was a chance to see more of the world, which his "young and curious self" wanted to take. Similar to Phuong's reference to migrating as the right thing to do as a young man, numerous other men in this study framed their migration to Japan as a youthful expedition to gain independence and explore themselves and the world outside of Vietnam. In their narratives, emigrating is an action that allows young men to "step out to the world"[9], "learn new things"[10], "acquire new perspectives"[11], and through that gain new skills. Some also implied that migrating allowed them to be seen as more independent individuals since they would have to migrate alone. Embarking on a transnational migration journey, therefore, can be perceived as a passage that marks the entry point into a transitional phase leading to adulthood, a track to attain masculine capital, and subsequently a pathway to mature manhood for several young Vietnamese migrants.

Similar to the young salmon having to prepare for the feeding migration in the big ocean by staying in brackish water to adjust to the new water environment, Vietnamese migrant men also have to go through preparation processes before migrating to Japan. Because the majority of Vietnamese migrants migrate to Japan with the help of migration agencies (international education agencies in the case of student migrants and labor recruitment agencies in the case of technical intern trainees), the preparation processes for migration are normally conducted by both the migrants themselves and the agencies that support their visa applications. Specifically, most migrants would have to take part in introductory Japanese language courses before departure. These courses commonly last from six to eight months, depending on the departure time, migrants' previous Japanese skills, and migrants' status in Japan as students or technical intern trainees. In addition to the Japanese language, these pre-departure preparatory courses sometimes provide knowledge of

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[9] Interview with Anh, 24, student in a *Senmon Gakko* (vocational college) in Tokyo, 29th July 2020.
[10] Interview with Tay, 30, Master's Degree student in Kagoshima, 28th July 2020.
[11] Interview with Minh, 27, office worker in Tokyo, 23rd June 2020.

Japanese lifestyles and culture, and the necessary skills to prepare migrants for interviews with representatives from language schools or employing companies/firms from Japan[12] (Liu-Farrer and Tran 2019; Muranaka 2021). If migrants are migrating to Japan under the scheme of the technical intern training program (TITP), depending on the specific work categories, the preparation process before departure may include training in necessary working skills (mechanical skills or electronic skills for example). Since many migrants have never been outside of Vietnam before migrating to Japan, the aforementioned steps of pre-departure preparation are necessary to ensure a smooth transition into a new phase of the migration journey – life in Japan. In some cases, the pre-migration preparation process even included physical training. Thanh, a 29-year-old office worker in Tokyo remembered going to the gym before migrating to Japan:

> On top of studying at the (Japanese) language center, I also went to the gym…I knew that I would have to work a lot in Japan, and they are all going to be hard work. So for a few months before my departure, I went to the gym regularly to improve my health, endurance, and build up my muscles.

Thanh then migrated as a student at a Japanese language institute in Tokyo and took on part-time jobs immediately after he arrived in Japan. Because of his lack of Japanese language skills, Thanh's first part-time job was at a warehouse and his main task was moving and sorting out parcels. Recalling having such a heavy labor job, Thanh jokingly said that his preparation with the gym had paid off. While not every Vietnamese man would go to the gym before migrating to Japan like Thanh, for those who are going to work in industries that require heavy manual labor upon their arrival, preparation for a good physical and health status can be useful and necessary groundwork for migration.

Furthermore, in most cases, the pre-departure preparation period also involves making sure that migrants would have enough financial resources to pay for the initial tuition fees and living expenses once they have arrived in Japan. This step is usually carried out by migration brokers or migration agencies, commonly via checking migrants' financial backgrounds. However, this kind of financial check can be forged and most agencies in

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[12] It is a normal practice that representatives from Japanese language schools and employing companies would go to Vietnam to interview and select prospective students or trainees. Consequently, a lot of recruitment and education agencies in Vietnam provide trainings/ mock interviews for migrant candidates to make sure they perform well in the real interviews with the representatives from Japanese side.

Vietnam do not care much about such an aspect as long as their service fees are paid (Kato 2019; Liu-Farrer and Tran 2019). As a result, many Vietnamese migrants financially prepare for their journey to Japan with forged bank statements or by borrowing money from different sources. Several men in this study, especially those who came from rural areas in Vietnam or families with working-class background mentioned that their parents had to borrow money from relatives or migration brokers to pay for the initial fees of migration. Being aware of this situation would then help better understand migrants' men economic impulses during their migration journey to Japan and their need to find paid-employments as soon as possible after arriving in the country.

Similar to the salmon that have to navigate and survive the new environment once they reach the open ocean, Vietnamese migrant men also face several unfamiliar challenges when they first migrate to Japan. Language barriers, differences in culture and lifestyles, higher living expenses, difficulties when using public transportation, stricter social rules, and regulations in Japan are the few obstacles among many others that migrants have to overcome after relocating to Japan. On average, it takes the participants in this research approximately six months to learn new social scripts (social manners and behaviors) and adapt to the new life situations in Japan. It is during this period that migrants settle down in the new living environment by looking for accommodations (even though in many cases, migrants' initial accommodations have been pre-determined by either the sending agencies or Japanese employers), registering themselves with at the city or ward office (*shiyakusho* and *kuyakusho* respectively), figuring out working situations and opportunities, and establishing new social networks. Among these activities, work is normally the most prioritized concern. Numerous Vietnamese migrant men start working as soon as they arrive in Japan regardless of the visa categories they possess. Specifically, technical trainees and those on working visas would be introduced to their jobs by either the responsible *kanri dantai* (managing organization) or their employers, while student migrants would start looking and applying for part-time jobs within the first few weeks following their arrival. Most of the time, they have to rely on guidance, support, and suggestions from brokers or other fellow migrants who have had more experiences of living in the country. Such a situation of having to be dependent on others is among the first disturbances to migrant men's gender identities, as it contradicts their initial migration expectation of becoming more independent. In addition, migrant men's dependency on other people during the initial phases also speaks

against the Vietnamese masculine attribute that expects men to be capable and independent. Consequently, several men in this research referred to the first few months in Japan as one of the most difficult and stressful periods in their whole migration experience. For instance, Thanh, a young language student in Osaka, shared that he felt not only helpless but also frustrated during his first few months in Japan:

> I had to ask for help from either my friends or my *senpai* (superior fellow students) whenever I went out. I did not know the city, my Japanese skill was still very weak, I could not understand what other people said… I felt like a baby… so helpless… It was very frustrating and stressful.

In addition to the frustration of having to rely on other people for help and supports, Vietnamese migrant men also have to adopt new gender practices in the few months that follow their arrival in Japan. Many participants started taking on tasks that would normally be carried out by women in the Vietnamese context such as doing grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning the house, or washing their own clothes. Phan, a thirty-one-year-old former technical intern trainee who used to work in Chiba – a prefecture adjacent to Tokyo, recalled sharing chores with other fellow trainees in his dormitory:

> During the first month, we (the Vietnamese technical intern trainees) shared the housework. It was funny because we were all males… So there were times when the food was not cooked very nicely… I remembered having to call my mother and my (ex)girlfriend back home to ask for cooking instructions… We shared the kitchen with a group of Chinese trainees and they cooked better than us.

Similarly, several participants shared how they learned to do works that were mostly taken on by their mothers or other female family members back home after having migrated to Japan. Not only do they have to take on unfamiliar domestic tasks, but many Vietnamese migrant men in Japan also faced constant loneliness during this initial phase of living in Japan. While in Vietnam, men actively take part in social life to expand social resources and enact gendered behaviors such as drinking and smoking (ISDS 2020), migrant men's new living and working situations in Japan do not normally allow such practices, especially when their linguistic skills, social networks, and financial resources are still limited. Moreover, many participants shared that they were overwhelmed and always tired during the first few months as they got used to the repetitive daily routine of going to work, going to school (in cases of student migrants), and going back home. Some were even too pressured with earning money

that they took on several jobs at the same time, leaving little free time left. For instance, the aforementioned Thanh who went to the gym before going to Japan eventually applied for two more part-time jobs within his first six months in Tokyo. He then worked three simultaneous jobs: moving parcels in a warehouse, cleaning hotel rooms for a hotel chain, and waitering in a Karaoke bar to fund his study and living costs.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, numerous Vietnamese men in this study felt that it was through these difficulties that their independence, skills, and capabilities grew significantly. Moreover, the majority of migrant men in this study chose not to talk about such difficulties in their lives in Japan with their close family members and friends back home, especially the parents. "I didn't want them (the parents) to worry more about me" was a common narrative used to explain such a choice. This choice of not disclosing the initial challenges and difficulties not only shows the concern that migrant men have for their families back home but also reflects the gendered expectation towards many Vietnamese men to appear strong and show no weakness - two of the many qualities considered to represent masculinity in Vietnam. The act of not sharing, complaining, or whining about their struggles with family members in Vietnam is also a means through which migrant men claim a certain amount of masculine capital.

The process of accumulating masculine capital continues as migrant men try to acquire either education credentials or paid employment in Japan. Most participants who went to Japan to study decided to continue staying in Japan and join the Japanese labor market after attaining their educational credential(s). For many men, trying to find jobs in Japan was even an unwritten norm or a necessary step in the migration project that they did not question. Many even talked about returning to Vietnam without having worked in Japan as "a failure" or "a waste" of their study in the country. There are two main rationales behind such thinking. The first one is the wish to "gather working experiences in Japan", which can be used to negotiate migrants' employability in the job market when they return to Vietnam in the future. In this case, the experiences of working abroad (especially in a developed, modern country like Japan) can be an advantage for these migrants' profile and help them secure supposedly better, higher-paid jobs upon future return to Vietnam. Thanh, the aforementioned twenty-two-year-old student at a language school in Osaka told me about his plan to go to a vocational college after finishing his language program and to subsequently find a job in Japan. Although Thanh had always known and planned that he would go back to

Vietnam in the future, he determined to "gather working experiences" by "working in Japan for a few years" first. Like many other young participants in this study, Thanh believed that the skills and knowledge gained from working in Japan would help make his future CV look better and more impressive, especially to future employers in Vietnam.

Second, the preference to seek work in Japan after having attained sufficient education credentials among this study's participants is also fueled by economic and masculine motives. While the majority of research participants who migrated to Japan initially as student migrants had already begun working part-time in Japan when they were still students, full-time employment allowed them to increase their income significantly. The Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO 2021) estimated that a foreign student's average income from the legally allowed amount of part-time work was around 50,000 Japanese Yen per month (450 USD) in 2021. The average monthly salary for full-time jobs in Japan in the same year was more than four times higher, at the rate of 210,000 Japanese Yen (1900 USD) (National Tax Agency 2021). As a result, full-time paid employment in Japan means migrants can have a more stabilized and higher salary. Within the body of literature on work and migrants' masculinities, securing paid employment and being able to deliver good performances in particular tasks or jobs have been pointed out to have big meanings for migrant men's self-esteem and masculine identities (Ahmad 2009; Datta et al. 2009; Urdea 2020; Walsh 2011). The narratives from the male Vietnamese migrants in this study also suggest the same effects of the ability to navigate the Japanese labor market on the construction of migrants' dignity and masculine identity. Despite the efforts to internationalize and diversify the labor forces, the Japanese working culture and labor regime remain relatively ethnocentric and offer limited opportunities for foreign workers to climb up the corporate ladder or to stay permanently in working positions (Liu-Farrer and Shire 2021). Studies have also pointed out that the Japanese labor market requires most foreign workers to adhere to certain formal procedures and rigid working rules (Conrad and Meyer-Ohle 2018; Liu-Farrer 2011). Even with decent Japanese language skills, foreign labors still have to navigate a handful of difficulties within the Japanese working environment. Consequently, being able to find a job and working in Japan can be considered to represent migrants' cultural, social capital and abilities. As a result, navigating the Japanese labor market can be another step in becoming capable and well-articulated men for a lot of male Vietnamese migrants.

In addition, getting a job in Japan also enables many migrant men to afford more practices that deliver masculine capital, such as sending remittances more regularly or with higher values. For those who migrants as technical intern trainees, sending regular remittances starts the moment they receive their salary as their main migration motivation was to earn money in the first place and some also have to pay for debts resulting from the money they borrowed to migrate to Japan (Bélanger and Tran 2013; Kato 2019; Tran 2020). Besides the financial values, remittance also upholds important gender meanings for migrant men. Such an act not only fulfills economic obligations with family members who are left behind and immobile (Guarnizo 2003; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Vertovec 2009) but also fashions men's gendered roles and their symbolic privileges in the home society (Batnitzky et al. 2009; Datta et al. 2009; Hibbins 2003; Hoang and Alipio 2020; Thai 2014; Urdea 2020). Studies on female migrants have found that sending remittances allows migrant women to negotiate their roles and power within the family structure and subsequently even challenge traditional gender norms (L. A. Hoang and Yeoh 2011; Pedraza 1991). In the case of the Vietnamese migrant men in Japan, sending remittances is an act of adhering to or fulfilling gender norms and expectations because it allows them to perform the aforementioned duty of the "family's pillar". Specifically, sending remittances to families back home can grant Vietnamese migrant men the ability to construct the image of responsible, family-oriented males and prove that they have successfully survived the challenges and hardships of migration.

For instance, Hien, a twenty-nine-year-old engineer in Tokyo has been sending remittances back to Vietnam every month for close to five years at the time that I met him. Hien first migrated to Japan in 2014 to study in a Japanese language school at the age of twenty-four, with the hope of finding better-paid employment in the country after finishing his study. Hien started to find part-time jobs during his first month in Tokyo and ended up working in the kitchen of a fast-food chain restaurant. His eagerness to find a job after the arrival in Japan stemmed from the fact that Hien's parents had to borrow some money from relatives to pay for his migration to Japan and his initial tuition fee at the language school. Despite his limited income from this part-time job, Hien managed to send remittance to his parents in Vietnam from the second month by maxing out the allowed working hours for international migrants, sharing accommodation with other fellow student migrants, and paying close attention to his daily spending. After the first one and a half years, Hien was able

to pay back the borrowed money in Vietnam with his remittances. Since he had already got a bachelor's degree from a university in Vietnam before going to Japan, Hien was able to find a job at a Japanese construction company following his graduation from the two-year language course. This full-time job allowed Hien to earn more money, and he started remitting to his parents more frequently. The frequency and amount of the remittances also increased after Hien's elder brother, who was also working in Japan as a technical intern trainee at that time, unexpectedly passed away at his workplace in southern Japan. After his brother's death, Hien was "the only son left" and he thus felt that he was "even more responsible for taking care of the family", which included his parents and his brother's left-behind children. As a result, not only did Hien send remittances more often but he also visited home regularly and got more involved in taking care of family matters back in Vietnam. These actions subsequently allowed Hien to gain more respect from other family members alongside a higher masculine status.

Similar to Hien, a large share of other research participants reported sending remittances or sums of money back home for family members (mostly parents) either on regular basis (once every month or every two months) or on special and necessary occasions such as the Lunar New Year, the birthdays or weddings of important family members. A lot of men saw remittance as an important financial contribution that makes up for their absence or fillings in their gender role at home. For example, Minh-a twenty-six-year-old office worker in Tokyo considered the act of sending remittance a reciprocal means to compensate for not being near his parents in Vietnam. Being the oldest son in the family, Minh felt that he had a strong duty to be by his parents' side and take care of them. When Minh graduated from a Vietnamese university with a Japanese major and got a job at a human resource firm in Japan, he was thrilled yet also worried about leaving his parents. After his first month of working in Tokyo, Minh started voluntarily sending money back home, even though his family in Vietnam was doing well economically and he did not have any financial debts to attend to. For Minh, remittance was a substitute for his absence at home:

> I send remittances back home every month. My mother said that they (the parent) did not need it, but I kept sending anyway… I told my mother to just keep the money and if she is not spending it, just consider it a saving that she keeps for me or an emergency fund… Since I am here (in Japan), it's my way of making sure that I contribute to my family and take care of my parents.

While Minh did not specifically refer to the "family's pillar" role, it could be seen as the rationale behind his act of regularly remitting. Such observation can be reflected in his wish to contribute to the family or take care of his parents. The practice of sending remittances, therefore, allows not only Minh but a lot of other migrant men to perform their expected gender role in the Vietnamese context. Even some married research participants who were living in Japan with their wives and child(ren) still send money back home to take care of or contribute to the life of the parents or other family members in Vietnam. Others recalled not being able to send remittances when they were still students because of the pressure to pay for the tuition fees but wired money back home right in the first month after starting their full-time jobs. Consequently, sending remittance back home can render migrant men dutiful sons or responsible "family's pillars", and can thus be seen as a strategy for migrant men to gain masculine capital and subsequently masculine status.

While salmon become mature during the feeding migration phases in the open ocean, the Vietnamese migrant men also refer to their times in Japan as a period of skill, intellectual, perspectival, and mature development. When asked about their biggest changes during and after migrating to Japan, most participants in this research mentioned the transition to grown-up and independent manhood. For example, Tung, the doctoral researcher in Kyushu who initially compared himself with the salmon, declares that migrating to Japan led to some of the biggest changes in his life. Tung got married to his university girlfriend before migrating to Japan in 2017, and the couple stayed in a long-distance relationship during most of the first year of Tung's stay in Japan. His wife eventually joined him in Japan on a student visa and studied in a language school in the same city. Although Tung received a scholarship and subsidized rent, the money was only enough to sustain the life of the couple on a basic level as they also had to pay for the tuition fee of the wife's language course. Tung, thus, took on a part-time job as a cashier in a supermarket on the side while his wife also worked at a convenience store and helped out at a small local vegetable vendor. When the couple unexpectedly had their first child, Tung's wife had to stop working and Tung started taking longer shifts at the supermarket and also a new job at a local butcher shop to earn more money. The work was labor-intensive and exhausting. Tung recalled that because he had to move and arrange heavy packs of meat at the butcher shop, there were days when he returned home with aching arms and an overtired body. He also rarely had a day off, having to juggle between two side jobs and his main job as a researcher at the university's lab. Tung

also did not spend money on himself anymore but rather on clothes for his wife and child instead.

Despite such hardships, Tung felt proud because he was able to take care of his wife and son and even sent money back home to his parents on some important occasions. Reflecting on his time in Japan, Tung felt that he had grown "both physically and mentally" because of the work, education, and broadened social perspectives. He also thought that he had "become 200 percent more independent and mature" as he had been able to take care of his own family. For Tung, it was good that "these changes happened" as a part of his life in Japan, and they had made him "a more masculine and grown man". Tung is not the only man in this study who feels more mature and grown up as a result of migrating to Japan. Many other research participants also referred to their experiences of living, studying, and working as migrants in Japan as the catalyst for the process of maturing. Most of the time, it was through the process of overcoming the challenges and difficulties posed by living in a foreign context that migrant men claim their maturity and growth in different kinds of ability. Many migrant men only shared the difficulties in their migration journey with their parents or other family members at home once they had overcome them. This would reflect the image of these migrant men as independent, strong-will, and capable adults who can survive in a new and foreign environment, and subsequently, also allow them to gain more masculine capital. In other words, it is by prevailing the difficulties and challenges of migration that these Vietnamese men accumulate a certain type of masculine capital, which subsequently allows them to claim mature manhood. The narrative of maturing during migration reflects the view of migration as allowing men access to adulthood and shaping men's further opportunities to progress along the socially legitimized passage leading to mature manhood and recognized masculine statuses. Such an observation is not exclusive to the group of male Vietnamese migrants in Japan but can be seen among migrants originating from places with an established or growing culture of migration (Osella and Osella 2000; Sinatti 2014).

Although migration literature in the past predominantly focused on emigration and patterns of assimilation in the destination countries, contemporary migration studies have paid more attention to the pattern of return (Battistella 2018; Carling, Mortensen, and Wu 2011; Carling and Erdal 2014; Carling et al. 2015). Similar to the decision to migrate in the first place, return migration is a process that requires extensive negotiations and calculations. While the salmon migrate back to their natal streams after having matured in the ocean, the

Vietnamese migrant men in this study either plan to return to Vietnam or have returned to Vietnam in their late twenties or early thirties. Although the desired length of stay in Japan varies depending on personal wishes and circumstances, the majority of migrant men in this research (63 out of 70 participants) plan to return to Vietnam eventually. Many had planned for their return even before migrating to Japan. Except for migrants who are only allowed to stay in Japan within a pre-designated timeframe such as interns who take part in the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP)[13] or student migrants in short-term exchange programs, most Vietnamese migrant men would only consider returning to Vietnam after they have achieved markers of maturation and success such as education credentials, financial accumulation or sufficient working experiences. While the salmon use certain sensory cues imprinted into their nervous system to navigate the ways back in their homing migration, the Vietnamese migrant men in this study talked about the "sense of home" as one of the main elements that guided their decision to return to Vietnam. Several participants shared that although they enjoy living in Japan, Japan was not their "home" due to a lack of sense of belonging. This was not a surprising narrative as studies have pointed out the constant lack of a sense of belonging among foreign residents in an ethnocentric Japanese society (Achenbach 2017; Chiavacci 2020; Chitose 2021; Liu-Farrer 2020). Many also longed for the more relaxed and carefree lifestyle in Vietnam, which is in stark contrast with the stressful, rules-obeying, and strictly regulated working and living styles in Japan. Strong senses of familism and nationalism are also determinants that encourage many men to return to Vietnam eventually. Specifically, the presence of family members in Vietnam, the prospect of building and raising a family as well as the nationalistic views of having "Vietnamese blood" and the duty to contribute to the homeland (as cited from Tung's interview at the beginning of this chapter) are strong magnets that pull male migrants in Japan back to Vietnam. Until now, the Confucian-influenced family value that expects sons (especially the first-born son) to dutifully take care of the parents as they grow older and to continue the family's lineage still lingers in modern Vietnamese society. It is also upheld by many Vietnamese including the various men in this study, reflected through their wish to return to Vietnam to be nearer to their parents and to be able to take

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[13] Participants of the Technical Internship Training Program used to be allowed to stay in Japan for the maximum period of three consecutive years. This period has been extended to give years since 2019. After finishing the program, unless trainees are able to change into other visa categories, they would have to return to the home country.

care of them. Moreover, both groups of single and married men reveal the wish to provide adequate Vietnamese linguistic and cultural education for their (future) Vietnamese or half-Vietnamese children and therefore wish to go back to Vietnam eventually. Strong nationalist sentiments like the wish to contribute to the development of the country or the duty to pay back to the motherland are also commonly cited as reasons for several men to return after having accumulated sufficient resources in Japan.

Besides, sexuality also plays an important part in Vietnamese migrant men's return intention because - as the following chapter on the negotiation of migrants' sexuality will show – many of the men in this research were faced with difficulties while trying to cultivate intimate relationships with either Japanese locals or fellow Vietnamese migrants in Japan. In addition, several shared their preference for Vietnamese marriage partners – an ethnocentric ideal of marriage and family that also prompted their decision of return migration. The case of Phu, a businessman in his mid-thirties living in Hanoi, provides a demonstration of how the preference for a Vietnamese marriage partner, gender expectations and norms, and the wish for return migration intertwine. Phu was born in a working-class family in a province in northern Vietnam. He went to Japan at the age of nineteen after securing a scholarship program that paid for his tuition fee at a language school, in exchange for his work at a newspaper station. After graduating from the language school, Phu studied at a Japanese university for four years. While he had always wanted to go back to Vietnam, Phu looked for jobs in Japan after graduation because of the need to "accumulate working experiences" and the "peer pressure" from university classmates who "were all looking for jobs". Phu ended up working for a Japanese IT company in Tokyo for one year before deciding to go back to Vietnam to start up his own trading firm. During his seven years of staying in Japan, Phu had been in a few intimate encounters and relationships with fellow female Vietnamese migrants. However, admitting that he is "a man of tradition", Phu expected to get married to a woman who is not only ethnically Vietnamese but also culturally Vietnamese:

> When I think about foreign women, I simply think about having sexual experiences with them, but not about getting married…. I mean I value stuff like taking care of the parents, worshiping the ancestors, or handling social relationships with relatives. Only a Vietnamese woman could understand that. Therefore, I had never thought about getting married to a non-Vietnamese wife, even to a Japanese woman… Deep down inside, I am a traditional man. So I want my wife to just take care of family matters,

and I take care of the finance. It is better that she is dependent on me… So it is quite difficult with Vietnamese women in Japan, they are too independent and sometimes a bit arrogant… So I preferred (to date or marry) a Vietnamese woman living in Vietnam… I dated a few women when I returned to Vietnam.

It could be seen that Phu had a clear idea regarding his intimate and marriage partner that conforms to the traditional gender norms in Vietnam that expect men to be the main decision maker and earner of the family and women to be financially dependent on men. In addition, he also wanted to get married to a Vietnamese woman who would be willing to follow the conventional feminine norms and expectations in Vietnam such as devoting time to taking care of the direct and extended family and being responsible for matters within the household (ISDS (Insitute for Social Development Studies) 2020; K. L. Nguyen and Harris 2009). Because of this view, he perceived the group of foreign women as culturally unfamiliar and the group of female Vietnamese migrants in Japan as being "too independent and arrogant" as these migrant women were more financially autonomous, independent, and willing to challenge conventional gender stereotypes. Returning and finding a Vietnamese partner in Vietnam, thus, became a sensible choice for Phu's preference.

Later on, Phu's younger brother introduced him to a woman in Vietnam and the two started dating initially via the Internet. Phu met her for the first time during one of his home visits from Japan. While he was dating this woman, Phu also met and hung out with a few other women in Vietnam. His status as a person who had experienced living and working abroad indeed allowed him to attract quite a few local women in Vietnam (more details on the sexual statuses and marriageability of the male migrants in the Vietnamese context can be found in chapter four). However, he felt that the woman who his brother had introduced to him was the most suitable marriage candidate. At that time, Phu had already planned for return migration and the couple organized their wedding right after Phu moved back to Vietnam. Phu revealed that apart from "more obvious reasons" for his return decision such as the abundance of business opportunities in the Vietnamese developing economy, the duty to take care of the parents, the longing to be back in the homeland, another reason that he considered was to get married and build a family. Such an idea of getting married and building a family among single Vietnamese migrant men in Japan indeed resembles the homing migration pattern among salmon, in which salmon migrate back to the natal place for the ultimate purpose of reproducing. The wish to build a family in Vietnam is not explicit to single

migrant men. Many married migrant men in this research also talked about moving their families back to Vietnam in the future, especially when the children reach the age of going to elementary school. Thus, the reproduction purpose in the return migration pattern among the Vietnamese migrant men is not bound to only the sexual sphere (unlike the salmon), but rather can be understood also in a cultural sense. With their preference of building a family in Vietnam, many men in this study wished to reproduce or maintain the Vietnamese culture and identity among their family, and especially among their off-springs. While such a wish was without a doubt a "must" among migrant men who got married to Vietnamese nationals, this desire was not as strong among a few men who got married to Japanese women or foreign nationals living in Japan.

This section has laid out the commonalities in the migration trajectories of the Vietnamese migrant men in Japan and the salmon fish. While salmon migrate from the natal stream to the bigger ocean and become mature during the feeding migration in the bigger and new environment, the migrant men in this study also grew more mature not only in age but also skills and life experiences through their migration journey. In that sense, Japan was the vast, open ocean filled with promising opportunities to which Vietnamese migrant men migrated hoping for a better livelihood. During such a journey, these migrant men had to navigate and survive in an unfamiliar environment and ethnocentric society, through which they became more mature, independent, and capable. Moreover, while the salmon conduct the homing migration pattern to their natal stream for the purpose of reproduction, several Vietnamese men in this study plan to either get married or raise their families after going back from Japan to Vietnam. As a result, many of the male Vietnamese migrants in Japan featured in this research can be metaphorically rendered as salmon men. While such a metaphor can help illustrate the migration trajectory of the Vietnamese migrant men in Japan as well as the processes of accumulating masculine capital and transforming from young, inexperienced men to more capable, independent, and grown-up men, this chapter takes it only as a starting point and goes beyond to further engage with migrant men's negotiation of masculinity in transnational migration with more suitable and critical perspectives. The next section will point out the shortcomings of the metaphor of the salmon men and propose a more fitting notion to analyze Vietnamese men's engagement with masculinity in their transnational migration journey.

3.3. Beyond the Salmon - Charging Men and the Accumulation of Capital as Masculine Strategy

While the migrant men in this study and the salmon fish share the common patterns of circular migration and maturing during migration, fundamental divergences exist. First and foremost, most species of salmon would end their life cycle after having finished the return migration journey and spawning. This is not the case in the journey of the male Vietnamese migrant men who return from Japan to Vietnam. For many of them, the time that follows return migration to the home country is the start of a new period in their life course, in which they make use of the resources and capital accumulated from abroad to gain and claim certain economic, social, gender and sexual privileges (chapter five will detail and evaluate the post-return experiences of men who have returned to Vietnam from Japan). Second, while salmon's migration orbit is purely instinctive, the transnational migration trajectory of the Vietnamese migrant men in this study features more than just the instinct to go back home but rather the entanglement between structural factors such as the influences of the socio-cultural contexts and labor markets and individual calculations and planned strategies (a comprehensive and multi-layered analysis of the motivations and experiences of return migration among Vietnamese migrant men in Japan can be found in chapter five). In other words, Vietnamese migrant men's transnational migration trajectory is an intersecting site of multiple factors and possibilities which consists of much more complex aspects than the instinct pattern of downstream – feeding – homing migration among the salmon. Moreover, the narratives from the research participants suggest a process of accumulating different kinds of resources and capital during migration to Japan, which is a process that the metaphor of salmon men would not be able to take into account. Consequently, this chapter proposes to look at Vietnamese migrant men in Japan not as salmon men but rather as charging men – men who migrate to charge up capital. The capital accumulated during these men's migration to Japan includes but is not limited to cultural, economic, social, sexual, and masculine capital. The following life story of An, a thirty-two-year-old heterosexual office worker in Tokyo, will provide an entry point to further and deeper engagement with the analytical notion of charging men.

I first met An in the winter of 2019 at a small Vietnamese restaurant in Tokyo, during a *bōnenkai* (year-end party) of an association for Vietnamese migrants living in Japan. An was one of the few Vietnamese staff working for the association and had been living in Japan for

eleven years at that time. When An learned that I was a researcher studying male Vietnamese migrants in Japan, he jokingly asked: "Are you going to study the hardships that Vietnamese men in Japan have to endure?" I answered that my research looked into different aspects of the lived experiences of the Vietnamese migrant men in Japan and, therefore, deflected a direct yes-or-no response to his question. Nevertheless, An automatically decided to keep the "hardships of Vietnamese men in Japan" part from his question as his main takeaway from our conversation that day. Later on, whenever An introduced me to new people or potential research participants, the first thing that he told them was always that I was studying the hardships of Vietnamese men in Japan. It was only when we sat down in an *Izakaya* (Japanese drinking bar) a month later for our interview that I asked An why he usually said that Vietnamese men in Japan had to endure a lot of hardships. An lit up a cigarette, poured himself a new glass of warm sake, and told me that he was actually not joking when he said such a thing. He elaborated:

> Vietnamese men have a big and heavy burden of family responsibility. They always have to take care of the family, and they have to go through big troubles for such a responsibility… But well, I think what makes a man a true man are troubles and challenges in life. And I have experienced a lot of challenges and troubles while living here (in Japan) in the past eleven years.

An's migration experiences in Japan were indeed not serene. He migrated to Japan at the age of nineteen as a language student since he wanted to discover more about the world outside of Vietnam. When Tuan was contemplating the decision to migrate, he was worried that his mother who was a divorcee would have to manage everything by herself in Vietnam. Being a former migrant herself, his mother encouraged An to pursue his journey abroad. An then applied to a scholarship program well-known among Vietnamese students, which trained the selected students for a few months in Vietnam with Japanese language skills, before sending them to Japan. As part of the program, An worked for two years as a newspaper deliveryman for a newspaper shop in Kanagawa (a prefecture bordering the south of Tokyo) in exchange for his accommodation and the tuition fee that allowed him to study in a language school in Tokyo. Because the scholarship only covered two years of language learning, An had to save up money to fund himself when he started his bachelor's degree at a university in northern Japan.

The four years in university were challenging yet rewarding for An. On the one hand, he was always under financial pressure since he had to pay for the university tuition and the accommodation cost in Japan himself while still managing to send some remittances to his mother back home in Vietnam. As a result, there were times when An had several part-time jobs simultaneously and felt physically exhausted. On the other hand, An got new social experiences, learned new skills such as photographic skills or how to drive a car, and expanded his social networks in Japan. After graduating from university with a degree in construction engineering, An moved back to Tokyo to work for a Japanese construction firm. In the following three years, he changed his job twice: first to a Tokyo-based foreign company and then to a non-governmental association for Vietnamese living in Japan. An explained that such changes in his employment were due to his distaste for the Japanese hierarchical and non-flexible working environment as well as his wish to push his limit by challenging himself with different jobs. A part of his former job in the Japanese construction firm involved organizing field trips to Vietnam for Japanese supervisors and colleagues. An recalled that whenever he went to Vietnam during such business trips, he "attracted many girls… because Vietnamese people have certain expectations and positive views towards people going back from abroad". On top of the attraction that he had to local women in Vietnam, An also noticed that he received more social respect from family members, relatives, and old friends whenever he visited home from Japan. "They would suck up to me", in An's words. In contrast to the positive social attitudes that he received in Vietnam as a person coming back from Japan, An's social relationships in Japan were not that smooth. An thought that "Vietnamese people were looked down upon by Japanese in many different ways… Many Japanese people consider Vietnamese to be an inferior race". Such a negative view towards Vietnamese people in Japan was an obstacle that hindered not only An but also other Vietnamese men that he knew from cultivating social and/or intimate relationships with Japanese nationals. Even when An had a Japanese girlfriend, his status as a Vietnamese migrant was a major barrier in his relationship with his girlfriend's family since her parents did not like him. An also felt that he was not financially well-off enough to become a good match for his former Japanese lover: "even though I am very progressive about gender equality, I still think that as a man, you have to take care of the woman, so that she could financially rely on you. You also have to be able to take care of the family."

The ability to be able to "take care of the family" was indeed not only a crucial principle in An's expectation of the performance of gender roles but also his migration trajectory. He intended to stay and work in Japan until having gained sufficient professional skills, working experiences, social connections, and most importantly, financial capital so that he could take care of the well-being of his mother. Only after having achieved these goals that An would plan for his return to Vietnam. However, the eventual return was never questioned. An wanted to eventually return to Vietnam permanently or lead an active transnational lifestyle between Vietnam and Japan but would like to be mostly based in Vietnam. For him, Japan was only a "boarding house" (*nơi ở trọ*) while Vietnam was always his "root" and, therefore, his "home". Moreover, returning to Vietnam or having a transnational lifestyle between Vietnam and Japan would also be good for An's plan of building a family in which his child(ren) would be able to maintain the Vietnamese heritage. Although An admitted that returning to Vietnam in the future would be very difficult for him because he had been away from the country for too long and most of his social and professional networks were in Japan, he was confident that his experiences of living and working abroad could be positively valued in the Vietnamese social context and labor market. Reflecting on his migration journey from Vietnam to Japan so far, An considered his stay in Japan "challenging yet worthy". It was challenging because he was faced with several difficulties stemming not only from the initial financial situations and the pressure to live abroad and send remittances back home but also from structural components such as discrimination based on race and nationality or the Japanese working culture. However, it was through these "hardships" and challenges that An gained important skills such as handling social and work relations or managing his finance. As a result, An felt that these hardships encouraged him to become a better and more competent man. Moreover, he also believed that the skills and capital that he gained through overcoming the hardships and challenges in Japan might pay off and yield benefits when he goes back to Vietnam in the future.

An's story and how he made meanings of the hardships in his migration journey suggest a rite of passage through which he transformed from a nineteen-year-old boy to an independent, capable, and more mature man. During migration, An accumulated different kinds of resources and abilities that help him realized such a transformation. These resources include cultural capital (through the acquisition of education credentials, linguistic and cultural skills, working competencies, etc.), social capital (social networks), and economic

capital (financial resources and savings). It was through the sufficient accumulation of these capital that An had the necessary resources to claim the title of a more capable and better man. In addition, An also said that he thought troubles and challenges in life make a man, and he had had enough of those during his stay in Japan. As a result, the "troubles and challenges" while living in Japan as a foreign migrant forced An to develop suitable skills and knowledge to overcome them, which subsequently allowed An to gather more cultural, social, and human capital and feel more mature. Similar to An, many other research participants in this research also talked about growing into more capable men through migration. For instance, Tung – the aforementioned doctoral researcher in the previous section confessed that he felt "two hundred percent more independent" as well as "more masculine and grown up" after having overcome several difficulties while living in Japan and being able to take good care of his family. I argue that the feeling of becoming more capable, independent, and mature men after migrating to Japan and spending a certain time in the country stems from three main reasons.

First, several Vietnamese men in this study entered a rite of passage that leads to mature manhood through their migration journey. Many of them were young men who were either just graduated from high school or were in their early twenties when they first migrated to Japan. By the time these men have gathered sufficient experiences and resources in Japan and contemplate the return migration to Vietnam, they would have been in their late twenties. As a result, they biologically grow more mature. However, the maturing process through migration of these men also has an important gender implication. It was during the migration journey to Japan that these migrant men cultivated and gathered different resources such as self-confidence, personal growth, independence, financial, economic, and cultural capacities. All of these attributes are important markers of masculinity that can subsequently allow migrant men to reach higher steps toward the apex of idealized manhood according to a Vietnamese standard of "true man". Furthermore, their migration trajectories and social actions during transnational migration such as attempting to gain education credentials, looking for jobs in Japan, and sending remittances back to Vietnam were also indications of the performances of gender. Specifically, migration aspirations are commonly formed in specific social contexts and they are very often shaped by the wish to fulfill certain social roles (Hernández-Carretero and Carling 2012). As the pressure of fulfilling the masculine role of the "family's pillar" is commonly high among the group of young

Vietnamese men (ISDS 2020), the prospect of migrating to Japan can be considered as one step toward realizing this gendered expectation. The adventurous impulse and the courage to explore new places and contexts that characterize the journey of transnational migration also offered migrant men in this research currencies to constitute their masculine selves. In her study on the waste-trading community in the Red River Delta in Northern Vietnam, Nguyen pointed out that taking on migration (domestic migration in this case) means being able to take risks and aspiring for better financial incomes, which renders a new "shifting" masculinity among young male migrants of lower socio-economic class (M. T. N. Nguyen 2018). The transnational migration journey from Vietnam to Japan had the same effects on the masculine subjectivities and identities of the migrant men in this research. Such an effect could be reflected through the perception of migrating as the "right thing to do as a young man" as some participants expressed. As discussed in the previous case of An, being able to overcome the challenges posed by transnational migration is also another factor that made the men in this study feel more masculine and mature.

In addition, the majority of them also took on domestic tasks such as cooking or doing house chores, and many also worked in service sectors as waiters, which required calm and polite mannerisms. While all of these stand in contrast with the characteristics commonly associated with the dominant image of manhood in Vietnam such as taking care of big, non-domestic matters, possessing loud, strong, and decisive manners, many migrant men do not see themselves as being emasculated. In contrast, most of them narrated the undertaking of tasks considered to be feminine in a proud way and perceived the overtaking of these new practices as performances of adaptability and thus also as indicators of masculinity. Furthermore, migration to Japan can also potentially provide migrant men with the image of modern and well-mannered individuals. Many men talked about how they had developed and embraced manners such as being punctual or being polite after having lived in Japan, which they saw as positive traits of character and masculinity when juxtaposed with the manners of several Vietnamese people such as not being on time or being direct or impolite in social interactions. Being able to find jobs and to work in Japan either full-time or part-time and sending remittances back home also allow migrant men to acquire markers of maturity and masculinity during migration because work and financial capacity constitute a large part of the construction of the Vietnamese notion of the "true man" as well as men's masculine subjectivity. These acts of working abroad and remitting can, therefore, be evidence that

migrant men employ to prove their migration achievements and subsequently maturity and masculinity.

Second, the feeling of becoming more capable and mature men during and after transnational migration can also be explained through the notion of masculine capital, which is a kind of capital represented through attributes believed to be associated with ideal masculine traits. In fact, common features in these men's migration such as taking on the adventurous journey to explore the world outside of Vietnam, overcoming the challenges and difficulties in migration, remitting, or returning to Vietnam in order to take care of the parents and contribute to the development of the homeland all adhere to ideal masculine attributes that a Vietnamese "true man" should have. Besides, according to the conceptualization of masculine capital in chapter two, masculine capital can be converted from other types of capital such as cultural, economic, or social capital. As a result, the masculine capital of the migrant men in this research is also converted from and amplified through these men's cultural, social, and economic capital. Specifically, the men in this study used their foreign education credentials, their abilities to earn money, work, and live abroad, their transnational social connections, as well as their financial capability as indicators of manliness. Such a converting process can be observed through the ways in which many young migrant men try to stay in Japan until they have sufficiently accumulated economic and cultural resources before contemplating going back to Vietnam or the ways in which they sent remittances back home despite having to live thriftily in Japan. The result of this converting process can be seen through the elevated social respect and increased gender roles in the family when migrant men return from Japan to Vietnam, either for the purpose of short-term visiting or permanent resettlement. Having their economic and cultural capital gained in Japan converted into masculine capital in the Vietnamese social contexts, these migrants then can achieve upward mobility in terms of masculine and subsequently social statuses as they move between national borders and along the pathway to mature manhood tied to transnational migration. Masculine capital, thus, can also grant migrant men a certain symbolic capital associated with male privileges such as respect and appreciation from members of family or social network, especially in case of successful return migration.

Reversely, there are also cases in which masculine capital is converted into other forms of capital. For instance, some participants' healthy bodies and muscular strength allow them to handle tasks or jobs that require heavy labor in Japan and turn such masculine capital

into economic betterment. Such a converting mechanism can be observed in the cases of men who migrated as technical intern trainees whose jobs in Japan required physical fitness and stamina. Moreover, the masculine capital connected to physical and muscular strengths, the ability to work diligently and think flexibly can also be means for Vietnamese migrants to juxtapose and negotiate their masculine identities in parallel with those of other migrants in Japan or Japanese local men. Kiet, a twenty-two-year-old technical intern trainee working in a butcher shop in Kitakyūshū (a city in southern Japan) shared that he often outran the other male Japanese co-workers in his workplace when it came to working. Kiet thought that not only his co-workers but a lot of other local Japanese men are "not physically strong" and, therefore, referred to them as "effeminate" and not as masculine as him. Kiet had already gotten into arguments with his Japanese co-workers a few times in the past, but he "had never let the Japanese bully" him and never showed hesitation to confront them, knowing that he was physically stronger. Kiet's physical strength, in this case, can be considered as an indicator of masculine capital that helped him not only earn economic capital but also negotiate his masculine identity in relation to other local Japanese men in his social surroundings.

Third, migrant men's feeling of becoming more mature and capable during migration to Japan is also cultivated through their perseverance. I observed that many migrant men in this study used perseverance and resilience as indicators of masculine subjectivity and capacity. For example, when I met Ben, a language student in his early twenties at his tiny apartment in Saitama for an interview in early 2020, one of the first things that I noticed was a piece of paper hanging on the wall on top of Ben's *futon*.

Picture 1. Ben's handwritten note to himself on the wall of his apartment.

Photo taken by the author in Saitama, February 2020

On this paper, Ben had written a note to himself: "If you feel like giving up, think about the reason why you started" in Vietnamese (*Nếu cảm thấy chán nản thì hãy nghĩ tới lí do bắt đầu*) Below this motto was a line written in Japanese: "Japanese (learning) schedule, please do your best/ hang in there" (*Nihongo no yoteihyō, ganbatte kudasai*). Then followed Ben's schedule for self-studying Japanese on top of his normal study hours at a language school in central Tokyo. A normal day for Ben started at half-past three in the morning when he had to wake up to go to work. His job as a newspaper delivery man required him to work from four to six in the morning and then from one to three in the afternoon. Ben worked six out of seven days per week and went to language school from Monday to Friday in the morning after his initial work shift. Ben had a bit of time to rest in the late afternoon and early evening, and that was the period when he called his family, girlfriend, and friends back home in Vietnam and studied Japanese on his own. According to Ben's Japanese study schedule (picture 1), he would study Chinese characters (*Kanji*) from five to six, grammar (*bunpō*) from seven to eight, and vocabulary (*kotoba*) until ten, before going to sleep to wake up early on the next day. Because of such a working and studying schedule, Ben was always in need of sleeping, yet had gotten used to it. Pointing to the dark circles under his eyes and the pimples that covered his cheeks, Ben said that those were the result of him not having enough sleep. There was

even one time when Ben almost crashed his motorbike while delivering newspapers because he was too sleepy.

Despite these challenges, Ben never thought about giving up the job or his study program. His prime goal when migrating to Japan at the age of twenty was to study and eventually find a job that allows him to earn good money so that he could support his parents back home. Such an aspiration grew even bigger when Ben's father passed away due to a sudden heart attack. Ben had just gone to Japan for four months when that happened, and he felt that he had even more responsibility towards his mother and sister after his father's passing. Whenever Ben felt tired, he reflected on these goals (just like the motto on the piece of paper above his bed) and carried on. Similar to Ben, several other participants in this research also mentioned perseverance as an important factor that delivered the feeling of becoming more mature and capable during the migration journey to Japan. While these migrant men often alluded to the difficulties and challenges that they had to face during their stay in Japan in the interviews, none of them mentioned giving up or abandoning their initial goals. Such an aspect in these men's social behaviors then suggests another perspective from which the notion of "charging migrants" can be understood: migrants who keep on charging and moving forward. In this sense, male Vietnamese migrants become mature and capable men by charging through the difficulties presented in migration and keep charging forward to reach their migration goals.

In general, this section has provided empirical evidence to show why the metaphorical notion of the salmon men, albeit novel-sounding and convincing to some extent, can not sufficiently account for all the nuances in Vietnamese migrant men's gendered pathway through transnational migration. Instead, it argues that the notion of "charging migrants" offers a more suitable theoretical lens to explain how Vietnamese migrant men make sense of their gender practices, subjectivities, identities, and statuses through their migration motivations, decision, experiences, and trajectories. The research participants in this study are indeed charging men who, through transnational migration, charge themselves up with resources and capital that would eventually allow them to negotiate for better masculine statuses and identities. These resources include cultural, economic, social, and masculine capital gained through migrants' linguistic and cultural knowledge, foreign credentials, experiences of working abroad, and also the ability to overcome the many challenges posed by migrating to and living in a foreign context. It is through this "charging up" process that

male migrants transform into more mature, capable, and masculine men. Furthermore, the men in this study also become more mature and capable males by not giving up on their migration goals and keep charging forward to achieve their aspirations. In that sense, transnational migration serves not only as migrants' rite of passage into adulthood but also as a gendered strategy that helps male migrant affirm their masculinity and increase their gender value as men (Pessar and Mahler 2003; Thai 2008).

3.4. Conclusion: Charging Migrants as a Social Process and Mobility Strategy

The narratives shown in this chapter have reemphasized the fluidity of migrants' masculinities and how gender (masculine in this case) norms, discourses, and identities can facilitate transnational migration while being simultaneously conditioned by migratory contexts. It is important to reflect not only on the significant effect(s) of migration on the configuration and reconfiguration of masculinity but also on the importance of particular sociocultural settings that contour certain performances of masculinity (Walsh 2011). Taking such a context-based characteristic of masculinity and the concomitant relationship between transnational migration and gender practices, subjectivities, and identities into consideration, this chapter has shown that transnational migration is a social process during which migrant men actively and strategically charge up different kinds of resources. It engages with the concept of masculine capital to understand how male Vietnamese migrants in Japan negotiate their masculine practices, subjectivities, and identities throughout the different stages of transnational migration. Encompassing the attributes and qualities that allow individuals to acquire aspects of the dominant ideal of masculinity in particular socio-cultural contexts, the notion of masculine capital provides a useful theoretical lens to examine migrants' engagement with gender expectations, norms, ideologies, subjectivities, practices, and identities in the context of cross-border mobility.

It has been well established that migration can challenge and/or transform male migrants' dominant ways of engaging and performing gender as they might have to compromise with new normative ideas of gender or new gender relations in the migration destinations (R. Connell 2005; R. W. Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Pande 2017; Wedgwood 2009; Wojnicka and Pustułka 2019). Several Vietnamese migrant men in this research indeed reported being exposed to new and different ways in which different masculinities are perceived and performed as a result of their stay in Japan. For instance,

practices of extensive grooming are considered normal and even necessary among Japanese men in practicing and expressing their masculine identity (Miller 2003; Monden 2020; Tso 2021). Extensive grooming, however, is not commonly seen as a marker of masculinity by the Vietnamese general public and also by many of the men in this study. However, several research participants recognized the normality and (sometimes) necessity of such a practice, and even also carried out grooming when they were in Japan. Social manners commonly regarded as not masculine in Vietnamese contexts such as talking in polite and calm manners or paying attention to details were also adopted by many participants during their stay in Japan. The majority of them also took on domestic tasks such as cooking or doing house chores, and many also worked in service sectors as waiters, which required calm and polite mannerisms. While all of these social practices and performances can contradict characteristics commonly associated with the dominant image of manhood in Vietnam such as taking care of big, non-domestic matters, possessing loud, strong, and decisive manners, several participants did not see themselves as being emasculated during their migration to Japan. In contrast, they perceived executing these new practices as a performance of adaptability and thus as a marker of masculinity. In other words, they embrace a kind of flexible masculinity through the adoption of new masculine practices in the Japanese social contexts and keep charging up their masculine capital through such ways of engaging with gender.

One can guess that such practices might lead to changes in migrant men's gender ideology and identity. However, scholars have questioned whether these changes are permanent or only temporarily exist during migration (Choi 2018; Urdea 2020). The narratives of the participants in this research show that such flexible masculine practices are not permanent as many migrant men only consider them as coping mechanisms for challenges presented in a certain life stage – the migration stage. For example, Phu - the aforementioned businessman who considered himself to be "a traditional man" took on housework such as cooking, cleaning, and doing grocery shopping when he was still in Japan. However, he rarely did such chores after returning to Vietnam and getting married because he was "too busy" in Vietnam and, most importantly, his wife "would not let" him do the housework. Similarly, several other returned migrant men claimed that they switched back to some of the Vietnamese ways of performing gender after the return migration including practices such as drinking, cursing, leaving housework for women, and behaving in more macho manners. This

means that the gender ideologies and expectations tied to the Vietnamese dominant masculinity are not faded away during migrant men's stay in Japan even though these men are exposed to new gender norms and practices in the Japanese context. In the case of the Vietnamese migrant men in Japan, the dominant gender ideologies challenged during migration are only oppressed and replaced with new forms of masculinity and masculine performance in a temporary fashion. The Vietnamese masculine ideal of the "true man" that values familism, nationalism, physical and mental capabilities, and pecuniary power is still the masculine lighthouse that orients migrant men in their negotiation of masculinity and acquisition of masculine capital during and after migration. Consequently, the chapter points to the necessity of taking into consideration the temporal dimension when analyzing the link between transnational migration and masculinity.

Moreover, the empirical evidence presented in this chapter also illustrates that much of the strategy to negotiate masculinities among Vietnamese migrant men in Japan revolves around the process of converting between masculine capital and other types of capital such as economic, cultural, social, or even symbolic capital. However, there is yet another capital that migrant men can use masculine capital to achieve, which is sexual capital (Green 2008; 2013). As in the aforementioned case of Phu who dated a few Vietnamese women at the same time during his return to Vietnam, the masculine capital accumulated through migration can also be converted into personal attractiveness, sexual desirability, or even marriageability on the marriage market. Before going into more details about such a conversion in the next chapter where migrants' sexualities are examined, it is necessary to conclude by drawing attention to the ways in which this chapter has responded to the research question of what social meanings transnational migration holds for male Vietnamese migrants in Japan. I argue in this chapter that the journey of transnational migration between Vietnam and Japan can have great not only gender but also social meanings for migrant men. It is through migrating abroad and living, studying, and working in Japan that migrant men accumulate economic, cultural, and social capital. By charging themselves up with these resources, male Vietnamese migrants in Japan can eventually also acquire masculine capital – a process allowed by the convertibility between different kinds of capital. In addition, by overcoming the challenges posed by migration to an unfamiliar social context, migrant men show how they are migrants who keep charging forward despite difficulties. Such perseverance and resilience also provide migrants with more resources to gather and claim masculine capital. The accumulated

masculine capital then helps not only constitute their masculine selves but also their masculine status, especially in the context of the home country. In addition, the "charging men" in this study move along a rite of passage or a transformative pathway that turn them from inexperienced young men to mature, capable, and well-articulated men as they migrate from Vietnam to Japan. Return migration from Japan back to Vietnam is then an event that marks migrants' transformation of manhood as they have gathered and charged up with cultural, economic, social, and masculine resources. Although such a gender aspect of migration is not explicitly mentioned by the men in this study while justifying their migration trajectories (emigration and return migration), it is omnipresent in their narratives of migration aspirations and how migrants plan their trajectories of transnational migration and return migration. In that sense, migrants' masculinity can thus be nurtured and fostered through the migration project.

The observations and arguments in this chapter provide a perspective to look at the notion of "charging migrants" as a social process. It sees transnational migration not only as an economic solution or a survival tactic but also as a strategy to charge up masculine capital and hence a gender strategy for many Vietnamese migrant men. Such a perspective also highlights the entanglement between transnational migration, aspirations, and masculinity. On the one hand, migration to Japan and the experiences of migration are conditioned by migrant men's wish and expectation to achieve a matured and idealized manhood. On the other hand, migrants' masculinity in terms of practices, subjectivities, identities, and statuses is also shaped by what they have experienced and achieved from migration. Making sense of such an entanglement is crucial in understanding not only how migration trajectories are orchestrated but also migrants' formation and embracement of transnational identities. However, the chapter also suggests that while masculine performances or subjectivities can be flexibly constructed and performed during migrants' stay in Japan, deep-rooted Vietnamese gender ideologies and expectations still acts as the underlining guidance for migrant men's migration experiences and trajectories. Transnational migration, for many of the charging Vietnamese migrant men, is then a project in which the social process of accumulating resources and capital is performed with the expectation to achieve upward social and gender mobility.

Chapter Four

The Charged Social Body and The Negotiation of Sexualities

I met Tai at a coffee shop named *Baraen* (Rose Garden) near his apartment in Ho Chi Minh City on a sunny morning in the winter of 2019. Tai had chosen this place to meet because he thought the Japanese theme of the place was fitting with the intended theme of our conversation – his experiences in Japan. Tai identified as a gay man and he was in the process of coming out when we met. At that time, Tai had returned to Vietnam for two years after seventeen years of living in Japan. "I spent my whole youth in Japan", Tai declared. He went to Japan at the age of nineteen as a language student via a scholarship program and continued to stay in the country for higher education and work, before returning to Vietnam in his late thirties. Although Tai had a few homosexual encounters and relationships during his stay in Japan, he was not happy with his lifestyle and sexual experiences during this period. He shared that his sexual experiences in Japan were very limited, mainly because he was reluctant to show his true sexual identity as a gay man and also because it was difficult for him as a Vietnamese migrant to cultivate intimate encounters or relationships with Japanese locals or fellow migrants. Recalling his experiences in Japan, Tai thought that "Japanese people did not like Vietnamese". Such a situation indeed did not change much from the time Tai first went to Japan until the day we met. As a freelance Japanese-Vietnamese interpreter, Tai had chances to go back to Japan regularly to support certain business projects. During one of the business trips back to Japan, Tai opened a gay online dating application and was faced with the same difficulty in finding intimate encounters: "Japanese people look down on us (Vietnamese) now. I used this dating app when I was in Japan the last time. However, after texting (with a few people) for a while, they (Japanese users) all asked me where I come from. As soon as I said that I am from Vietnam, they all slipped away or disappeared".

On the contrary, Tai shared that his sexual life had been very vibrant ever since he went back to Vietnam. "I opened the same application in Vietnam and there were so many people who wanted to flirt with me", Tai explained. He claimed that the number of sexual partners he had had in Vietnam was several times higher than that in Japan. Such an experience gave Tai the impression that "being gay in Vietnam is better than in Japan". While there were several factors that conditioned Tai's engagement with sexuality in Vietnam, one

of the most significant influences on his sexual desirability and status was his status as a returned migrant from abroad. "I think many people were interested in me as soon as they knew I used to spend so much time abroad", Tai elaborated. Tai's different sexual desirability and statuses in the context of Japan and Vietnam suggested the dissimilar ways in which his sexual and social bodies were perceived in different social contexts. Tai was not the only research participant in this research who switched between different and sometimes contradictory sexual statuses as they move between Vietnam and Japan. Several talked about how difficult it was for them to find intimate or sexual partners in Japan although the situation was much easier during their visits to Vietnam or have permanently returned to their home country. Such experiences will be one of the main analyses of this chapter. In particular, this chapter focuses on the sexual aspect of the migration journey of the Vietnamese migrant men in Japan and those who have returned to Vietnam. It takes the social body of the male Vietnamese migrants in Japan as the unit of analysis and provides analyses of the migrants' social body at three levels including the subjective, the social/ inter-subjective, and the institutional level. The chapter then engages with the sexual field approach to locate the positions in which Vietnamese migrant men are situated within the hierarchies of sexual desirability in the Japanese and Vietnamese social contexts. Baas and Yang observed that the migrant body is often "tension-ridden and charged with negative emotions" in the migration destination (2020: 13). The analyses in this chapter explore such a tension-ridden characteristic of the bodies of the male Vietnamese migrants in Japan and move beyond to investigate how these bodies are perceived in the context of the home society. In that sense, this chapter engages with the notion of the "charging migrants" from a perspective that sees "charging" as a social condition and social status. Moreover, it also examines the strategies and tactics that migrant men employ to negotiate such a "charging" condition and further conceptualizes "charging migrants" also as a social practice through which migrants actively assert their individual agencies. The chapter then concludes by mapping its analyses with a framework of transnational sexual mobility that indicates migrants' possible sexual positions and trajectories within and between sexual fields in different social contexts.

4.1. The Male Migrants' Bodies in the Context of Japan and Vietnam

The body has never been outside of history and the history and reality of practice have also never been without bodily presence and effects on the body (Connell 1987). As an entity that

symbolizes social meanings at particular sociohistorical moments, the body itself and how it is perceived can convey different implications. Since the 1980s, sociological studies on the body started to increase in number due to the growing centralization of the body in the formation of self-identity in a modernized world (Shilling, 2003). From being "something of an absent presence" (ibid.:8) in classical sociology, the body has become a core analytical unit when looking at human agency and contemporary social interactions. For example, scholars like Foucault and Goffman placed the body at the center of their analyses of self-presentations, interaction orders, and disciplinary systems (Foucault, 1978; Goffman, 1956, 1963, 1983). As the field of sociology of the body developed, there have been two main conceptual paradigms through which the body has been investigated: the representational and the embodiment paradigm (Csordas, 1994). In particular, the representational paradigm considered the body as "a kind of readable text upon which social reality is inscribed" (ibid., p.12) and as an object through which discourse and power can be analyzed. The embodiment paradigm gave more agency to the body by paying attention to how the body acts as an experiencing and meaning-making agent that shapes individuals' lived experiences and sense of existence. Connell (1987:64) emphasized that the relationship between the body and social practice is a crucial issue that "needs to be clarified before the structure of social relations can be addressed". The representations of the body are thus meant to generate dynamic cultural meanings as well as complex social and power relations (Shilling, 2003; Terry & Urla, 1995). Consequently, analyses of the body can make clear how individuals' gendered and sexual selves are expressed and factors such as cultural differences and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, and body type are made concrete (Carrillo, 2017; Gorman-Murray, 2007). Examining the ways in which the migrant body is perceived and treated, therefore, sheds light on structures of oppression, freedom, agencies, and hierarchies that surround and condition not only migrants' lived experiences but also their continuous negotiation of (shifting) identities.

Despite the development of sociological studies on the body and corporal meanings in the last four decades, the body of the migrant population has not been actively and sufficiently examined. While it is acknowledged that the migrant's body is a container for identity formations and changes, the ways in which the body are imprinted by these experiences as part and parcel of the migration process remains understudied (Baas & Yang, 2020, p. 9). At the same time, the voices of male migrants regarding the ways these men

experience and utilize their bodies as part of migration trajectories are still by and large absent. In other words, male migrants' accounts of their bodies as part of their trajectories of crossing borders, working abroad, and navigating migration pathways are less studied (ibid.). This chapter takes such a gap in the literature into consideration and provides a detailed analysis of how the social body of the male Vietnamese migrants in Japan is perceived and experienced as part of their transnational migration journeys. It is important to note that the ways in which the social body of migrants takes up social meanings and perceptions are heavily context-based and yet also subjected to factors at transnational and global levels. Therefore, it is necessary to provide background information on the contexts in which the social bodies of the Vietnamese migrant men in this research are situated to have a more substantial understanding of the analyses that follow.

4.1.1. Male migrants' bodies in Asian contexts

To date, studies on how the body of Asian migrant men is perceived have mostly taken place in Western/non-Asian contexts. Research has revealed how numerous structural factors in the Western contexts including legacies of white hostility and colonialism, Western gender ideologies, degrading media representations, and hierarchies based on race, ethnicity, and class have led to negative portraits of the male Asian body (Chua & Fujino, 2008; Fung, 1996; Han, 2006, 2008; Poon & Ho, 2008; Proschan, 2002; Ruez, 2017; Wei, 2017). For example, the Western hegemonic masculinity ideal that favors strong, well-built and muscular male bodies often renders and stereotypes Asian males as having effeminate, asexual, undesirable, and, therefore, "failing bodies" (Hibbins, 2005; Kong, 2002, 2007). Studying Pakistani migrant men's low-wage labor practices in the UK, Ahmad (Ahmad, 2009) observed that the bodies of these male Asian migrants are often considered "poor" and "don't matter" by local British. Consequently, Asian migrant men often have difficulties cultivating intimate interactions or relationships with locals, and they are commonly faced with anxiety, stress, and hardship in developing self-confidence (Lu & Wong, 2013). However, it is important to note that how the bodies of Asian men are perceived also differs depending on social group. For instance, the male Asian body can be an object of exoticization, fetishization, and even desire for certain individuals. Studies have shown how some gay Asian men strategically take advantage of their physical and cultural attractiveness to facilitate their social and sexual encounters with white men who are attracted to their Asian bodies (Collins, 2009; Han, 2006, 2008; Kong, 2002;

Kosnick, 2008; Modesti, 2017). Subsequently, some Asian gay migrants can have better sexual statuses and find it easier to fit in with the new sexual environments after migrating to Western countries in comparison to their heterosexual peers (Hibbins, 2005).

In the context of Asia, the perceptions of the Asian male's body are sometimes still influenced either by Western ideologies of gender and sexuality or by the aspiration and desire for Western bodies. For example, Farrer (2010) observed that heterosexual local Chinese men in Shanghai found it difficult to compete with white European and North American male expatriates when looking for female partners in the city's transnational sexual fields. Such difficulty was a result of the favorable views that local women often had toward Western men due to their "glamour and sex appeal" or their economic and cultural capital (ibid.). In tourist-packed bars in Thailand, local Thai men are often seen as lacking equivalent masculinity to Western tourist men because of their smaller and less-hairy bodies (Malam, 2008). In Japan, while heterosexual Caucasian-Japanese marriages have often been viewed with admiration and/or envy, liaisons between Japanese and non-Japanese Asians have been representationally mocked (Suzuki, 2008). Due to the prevalence of literature on Asian men's experiences in Western contexts, studies on Asian men's sexualities within the Asian contexts could easily fall into the mold of East-West comparisons, with Western sexualities being standardized or being the standard of comparison (Louie, 2012; Mackintosh, 2010; McLelland, 2000, 2005; McLelland & Mackie, 2015; Suganuma, 2012). Such a focus can lead to a major theoretical risk: the overlooking of the variances and interactions between the Asian bodies of different classes, ethnicities, nationalities, and sexualities. As a result, juxtaposing the male Asian bodies to the Western ones within Asian contexts can reinforce Western-centric approaches of looking at sexualities, in which the Western body universally stands as the normative body in both scholarly and public discourses (Grewal & Kaplan, 2001). Apart from the lack of empirical observations, the studies on the male Asian migrant bodies within Asian contexts also suffer from the insufficiency of systematic theoretical and analytical approaches. The following sections in the chapter, therefore, contribute to the necessary empirical and theoretical discussions on the male Asian migrant's body in the Asian contexts by engaging with the case study of how Vietnamese migrant men experience and utilize their bodies in negotiating their sexualities during migration to Japan.

4.1.2. The Asian migrant bodies in Japan

Despite its well-known reputation of being a homogenous and little-to-no immigration country, Japan's shortages of human resources in the education and labor markets have urged the country to adopt a more open attitude to immigration. With the constantly rising population of foreign residents in the past three decades and various migration channels that allow migrants to come, Japan has turned into a de facto "immigration country" (Liu-Farrer 2020). Although the population of foreign residents has been growing and become more visible in the country, it is often assumed that most of the discourses on sexuality and gender in Japan "concern only ethically Japanese members" (Suganuma 2017: 248). Unsurprisingly, studies on male sexual and gender identities in Japan still mainly focus on Japanese nationals (Baudinette 2017; Dasgupta 2015, 2017; Kazawa and Kawaguchi 2003; Lunsing 2001; McLelland 2000; Robert and Suzuki 2003). From the status-based differences of early modern Japan to the occupation-based identities in contemporary society, what is considered the Japanese hegemonic masculinity has varied greatly. Until the mid-19th century, Japanese masculinity was conceived primarily based on maturity, and the samurai (*bushi*) constituted the epitome of hegemonic masculinity (Frühstück and Walthall 2011). During the Meiji Era[14] in the 19th century, the Japanese embarked on a program of Westernization, in which Western ideas of masculinity were appropriated (Russell 1996). This served to "distance the Japanese from their Asian neighbors and showed European nations that Japan was a world power worthy of respect" (ibid: 82). With the process of Westernization, the Japanese became more "white". Contempt for other Asian bodies was prevalent and the Japanese bodies were perceived and portrayed as superior to other Asian bodies. For example, woodblock prints depicting the Sino-Japanese War (1894-5) showed the "Chinese in a cowardly light, with protruding cheekbones, mouths agape and effeminate pigtails". In contrast, the Japanese were portrayed more nobly, with "European facial features, smart haircuts, and military-style mustaches", which differentiated the Japanese bodies from other Asian bodies (Low 2003: 83).

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[14] The Meiji Era in Japan lasted from 1868 to 1912 and featured major changes in Japanese society as the country opened up for interactions with the Western World and embarked on a program of Westernization. This era represented the shift of Japan as a nation from an isolated feudal society to a modern, industrialized national state with emerging economic and military power.

Such scorn towards other Asian bodies was also boosted in the era after World War II when a new image of Japan emerged as "a self-contained, unique and ethnically 'pure' nation" (Morris-Suzuki, 2010) and the discourse of *Nihonjinron* that gave way for the essentialized myth of Japanese uniqueness (Befu, 2001). However, the bodies of Westerners have been perceived in a very different light. The embarkment of a Westernization program in the Meiji period and the postwar U.S. occupation in Japan have imposed great influences on how Western bodies have been considered in Japan. For example, fundamental to the construction of postwar Japanese identity as well as the perception of manliness and sexuality was "the imposition of a raced and gendered neo-colonial hierarchy in which the very presence of white men during the Occupation and the legacy of this presence" had indelible influences (Mackintosh, 2010, p. 95). The postwar Japanese domestic gay media also predominantly featured and fetishized white Western bodies, which led to the erasure of other foreign bodies such as those of black or non-Japanese Asian individuals from the surface of Japanese gay subcultures (Mackintosh, 2010; Suganuma, 2012).

After the Second World War, the Japanese' perception of masculinity underwent transformations, in which American culture and ideas of masculinity and sexuality were major sources of influence. Fundamental to the construction of postwar Japanese identity was "the imposition of a raced and gendered neo-colonial hierarchy in which the very presence of white men during the Occupation and the legacy of this presence indelibly influenced the measurement of manliness" (Mackintosh 2010: 95). This Western influence was clearly visible in the Japanese gay media, where Western bodies and gay culture were fetishized, which led to the erasure of black and non-Japanese Asian bodies from the consciousness of Japan's gay sub-culture (Suganuma 2012). Furthermore, Japan's postwar economic development gave rise to the dominant masculine image attached to the white-collar, middle-class, and heterosexual salaryman who dedicated wholeheartedly to his corporate work. At its narrowest, the term salaryman refers to "salaried white-collar male employees of private sector organizations, typically characterized by such features as lifetime employment, seniority-base salary indexing and promotions, and a generally paternalistic concern for the employee on the part of the company in return for steady, diligent loyalty to the organization" (Dasgupta 2000: 192). For most of the second half of the 20th century, the salaryman as well as the sexual and gender ideologies that he embodies marked the epitome of Japanese masculine maturity (Dasgupta 2017; Roberson and Suzuki 2003; Taga 2013).

The bursting of the bubble economy in the 1990s and transnational flows of culture and people from and to Japan, however, paved the way for new forms of manhood, which significantly challenge the subscription to the salaryman's dominant masculinity. Transnational flows of culture and people from and to Japan also gave rise to new representations of masculinity, through which the traditional and dominant masculine ideology of the salaryman was contested or resisted. For instance, scholars have observed the masculinities emerge among the group of young Japanese men who are increasingly concerned with their "softer" aesthetic appearance or sexual appraisal (Charlebois 2017; Louie 2012; Miller 2003, 2006), among working-class/ blue-collar workers whose specific sets of working skills are an important part in constructing masculine identities (Roberson 2003), or among male high school and university students with the participation in sports activities (Light 2003). All of these documented forms of gender performativity and identity have, therefore, widened the ideological sphere of reference to masculinity and also sexuality in Japan. However, they have mostly focused on the group of Japanese nationals. Despite the growing population of foreign men residing in the country, little is known about the ways in which traditional and new forms of Japanese masculinity interact with non-Japanese men, even though the label of "foreigner" might foster various gendered connotations with regard to how the bodies of Asian foreign migrants in Japan are perceived and experienced.

Similar to the case of the gendered body, scholars have pointed out that the bodies of foreigners are perceived differently and sometimes contrastingly in Japan based on the factors of race, ethnicity, and nationality (Kazawa and Kawaguchi 2003; Paquin 2014). For example, while Western gay men might find it easy to enjoy homosexual encounters in Japan (Suganuma 2012; McLelland and Dasgupta 2015), foreigners of Asian descent might have to face difficulty in finding intimate encounters or relationships while in the country (Baudinette 2016; Quero 2014). Foreign bodies that possess foreign physical traits and characteristics considered to be opposed to those of typical Japanese men can also be considered attractive in the sexual and marriage market with Japanese women (Vitale 2015). Examining the group of Japanese women who married Pakistani male migrants, Kudo (2009) discovered that one of the main reasons behind such marriages was the perception of a caring Pakistani husband, which starkly contrasted with the image of the "absent Japanese husband". Similarly, Vitale (2015) asserted that Latin American male migrants who married Japanese wives credited themselves as having more romantic attributes and therefore could provide a "more

humanistic heterosexual relationship than a cold and rationally driven life or business-like approach of a stereotypical Japanese marital relationship" (ibid.: 113). It is, however, important to note that all of these perceptions were constructed based on cultural stereotypes circulated by either the media or individuals' subjectivities. Whether the interactions between Japanese nationals and Asian male migrants fit in with these stereotypical images would require further and deeper inquiries. Moreover, while the majority of foreigners residing in Japan are from neighboring Asian countries such as China, Vietnam, Korea, and the Philippines (Liu-Farrer 2020), the sexual and gender dimensions in the everyday life of these Asian men in the country are still by and large understudied. Discussing the experience of race in modern Japan, Majima (2014) stated that the Japanese race emphasized its self-image as Caucasian through institutional body projects of mixing with westerners and promoting the western body type as the ideal body type (cited in Törngren and Sato 2021). As a result, one can assume that the body of foreign Asian migrant men in contemporary Japan is a social site charged with the intersection of discrimination and contradictions.

4.1.3. The male Vietnamese migrant body in the home society

The social perceptions and bodily experiences attached to the body of male migrants in the Vietnamese social context have rarely been studied. Similar to scholarship on gender and sexuality in Japan, studies on the sexual and gendered body of individuals in Vietnam have mostly looked at the Vietnamese population residing in Vietnam. Research in this line of study has established that the male body is generally seen as being filled with sexual desires and needs, hot temper, violence, and gendered expectations such as fulfilling the masculine role of the family's pillar (Horton, 2018; Horton & Rydström, 2011; Martin, 2010; Rydström, 2002, 2006, 2022). While the country has been having an increasing number of people migrating out of the country and returning to the country from abroad, studies that looked into how the body of Vietnamese migrants who return or visit from abroad is perceived in Vietnamese society still remain limited. Most existing studies on the topic examined the perceptions associated with the body of returned migrants who went back from the United States as this is the country that houses the most significant population of Vietnamese abroad. For example, studies have shown how the body of Vietnamese returnees from the U.S. as being perceived by locals in Vietnam as having higher cultural and economic capital than the average

Vietnamese (Chan & Tran, 2011; Koh, 2014; Long, 2017; Wang, 2013). Specifically, many local Vietnamese saw and expected overseas Vietnamese people who returned to Vietnam either permanently or for short-termed visits to be rich, modernized, and well-educated people because they came back from more developed countries (Chan and Tran 2011; Long 2017; Wang 2013). State-endorse policies and media representations also amplified the positive images of the returned Vietnamese migrants. For example, the Vietnamese government has introduced various strategies and policies that encouraged overseas Vietnamese to either return or to contribute to homeland development, which gave way to some media glorification of this group of people (Chan and Tran 2011).

Because of such favorable depictions, the body of Vietnamese returnees has commonly been charged with positive sentiments. Thai's study on returned Vietnamese Americans showed how returnees from the U.S. have often been warmly welcomed by families and friends in Vietnam because of such positive emotions and expectations (Thai, 2006, 2014). Returnees thus experienced not only a positive shift and elevation in social position but also gender and sexual status. In another of Thai's study on transnational marriage (2008), low-waged Vietnamese American men who returned to Vietnam were observed to experience a drastic shift in social and sexual status as they move across national borders. Contrary to their low sexual undesirability and marriageability in the American context because of their immigrant background and lower class status, these men were seen by Vietnamese people in Vietnam as desirable and highly marriageable partners. In other words, male Vietnamese Americans had a better chance of finding intimate or marriage partners in Vietnam than in their place of residence – the U.S.. Another similar perspective was provided by Müller's study on the return experiences of second-generation Vietnamese Germans (2021). In this research, Müller also observed that most returnees enjoyed positive sentiments associated with their body and status when they were in Vietnam. However, male returnees had more agency, and control over their sexual body than their female counterparts, and, therefore, could enjoy the high sexual desirability that their foreign background conveyed in the Vietnamese context. Studies on the return experiences of female Vietnamese migrants from abroad also pointed out that female returnees have less agency and freedom regarding gender and sexual expressions in comparison to male returnees upon their return (Hoang, 2011; Hoang & Yeoh, 2015; Wang, 2013). Though limited, existing studies have demonstrated important observations on how the social, sexual, and gender bodies of

Vietnamese coming back from abroad are perceived and received in the Vietnamese context. While none of these studies worked with the population of returnees from Japan, their analyses provided a crucial foundation for the analyses of how the body of the male Vietnamese migrants in Japan is positioned within the social, sexual, and gender hierarchies in the Vietnamese context.

4.2. The Charged Migrant Body in Transnational Migration

In this section, a multi-leveled reading of how the body of the Vietnamese migrant men in Japan takes on complex meanings in the social context of Japan and Vietnam will be carried out. Such a reading ventures from a conceptual framework proposed by Baas and Yang (2020) that aims to understand the migrant's body in anthropological and sociological terms by paying attention to the dialectics of embodiment, representation, and subjectivities surrounding the notion of the body. This framework proposes three tiers of analysis including the subjective, the social/inter-subjective, and the institutional levels. First, at the *subjective level*, the body is considered a sensory, material, and physical medium through which migrants interpret their migration experiences and identities. In this level of analysis, the body serves as a site of self-expression and agency and is, therefore, the material and physical anchor for migrants' (trans)formation of identity. The second analytical tier is the *social/inter-subjective level*, in which the body mediates social relationships between the migrants and other social actors in the social context within which they participate socially. This level sees the migrant's body as shaping and being shaped by multiple types of social relationship and interaction between the migrants and other actors within certain social fields. The last analytical level in the proposed framework is the *institutional level* which regards the migrant's body as a site upon which institutional power and regulatory mechanisms are exercised.

While these three levels of analysis are not new in the study of migrants' bodies in different contexts, most studies have either looked at or considered them separately. For example, several studies tended to foreground bodily experiences and associated meanings from the "subject's point of view" (Baas & Yang, 2020, p. 12), through which the migrant body was not analyzed so much in terms of social discourses but rather of how the body was lived, felt, experienced, and enacted by individual subjects (Gorman-Murray, 2007; Hoang & Yeoh, 2015; Parrini et al., 2007). Such a subjective level of analysis is also commonly seen in studies

of queer migrants who assert their queer identities and agencies through the act of migrating or relocating geographically (Collins, 2009; Gorman-Murray, 2009; Manalansan, 2003). Empirical accounts that demonstrate how the migrants' bodies are negatively perceived, stereotyped, otherized, and charged with tension in the migration destinations fall into the second level of analysis – the social/inter-subjective level (Ahmad, 2009; Kong, 2002; Quero, 2014). Studies that look at the institutional level of inquiry often investigate how migrants' bodies are constructed, objectified, categorized, and regulated by institutional actors and authorities (Ang, 2019; Lin, 2013; Mahdavi, 2020). With a broad yet comprehensive scope of analysis, the three-level framework proposed by Baas and Yang (Baas & Yang, 2020) can be a suitable conceptual approach to account for not only how migrants make sense of migration through their bodies and bodily experiences but also how institutional and structural forces at the meso and macro levels in various social contexts can assert influences on the treatment and perception of the migrant's body. This section, thus, engages with such an approach by analyzing the social and sexual meanings ascribed to the Vietnamese migrant men's bodies at the subjective, social/inter-subjective, and institutional levels. Such an analysis not only shows how sexuality and migration are inherently tangled but also provides a more refined approach to understanding migrant men's negotiation of sexuality in transnational migration. In particular, the section that follows will provide a multi-level analysis of how the body of the male Vietnamese migrant is perceived and positioned within both the Japanese and Vietnamese social contexts and subsequently elucidate the social meanings ascribed to such a migrant body.

4.2.1. The subjective migrant body

The majority of Vietnamese migrant men in Japan migrate to the country under the visa categories of either student, technical intern trainee, or labor migrant with specific skill sets. The economic impulse of their migration is obvious. Many of the men in this study frankly shared that they went to Japan "for the money" or "in order to earn money". Even when one migrated as a student migrant, his core migration motivation was still the aspiration for economic betterment because of the possibility to work part-time during school time while

in the country[15] and the prospect of increasing employability in either the Japanese or the Vietnamese labor markets after graduation. While the economic rationale of migration to Japan was omnipresent, other non-economic factors also actively shaped the migration decision among the male Vietnamese migrants in this study. With the emergence and development of the sexual turn in contemporary migration studies, notions such as intimacy, love, and sexuality in terms of sexual identity, desire, and practices have been recognized as important power dimensions that trigger individuals' transnational relocations (Cantú et al., 2009; Carling & Collins, 2018; Farrer, 2008; Gorman-Murray, 2009; Groes & Fernandez, 2018; Liu-Farrer, 2020; Mai & King, 2009). Similarly, there were migration journeys from Vietnam to Japan that featured the influences of intimacy, sexuality, and bodily needs, in which the male migrant's body is a site for individual expression of desire, identity, and agency. Emphasizing the important influences of sexuality, intimacy, and emotion on the migration decision-making process, the following cases illustrate the subjective level of the migrant's body in migration.

Manh, an architectural engineer in his mid-forties in Tokyo migrated to Japan in 2017, together with his Vietnamese wife and two children. Before migration, Manh was the manager of a middle-size company specializing in designing and constructing houses in Hanoi. Manh's job allowed him to be the main provider of the family in terms of financial income and to pursue a middle-class lifestyle as well as enjoy certain privileges associated with his social status. After Manh's wife - a reporter at a state-owned news agency - received an offer for a three-year position at a news agency in Tokyo, the family decided to migrate together to Japan. Manh perceived such a decision as a personal scarify so that his wife could take up the work opportunity and the children could also experience living abroad. Manh subsequently suspended his job and migrated with a dependent spouse visa, which was sponsored by his wife's highly skilled professional visa (*Kōdo Senmonshoku Biza*). While most of the migration literature to date often portrays male migrants as "primary movers" who migrate to increase the financial situation and livelihood of the family (Hibbins & Pease, 2009),

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[15] International students in Japan are legally allowed to work part-time in occupations outside of the adult entertainment sector for 28 hours per week (during holiday time, this limit is increased to 40 hours per week). On the website of "Study in Japan", a government-approved information site for studying in Japan operated by the Japan Student Services (JASSO), it is approximated that around 70.4% of privately financed international students in Japan work part-time and they earn an average monthly salary of about JPY 57,000 (around 405 USD).

Manh's migration journey did not feature such a common trait. During most of his stay in Japan, Manh took on the role of a full-time househusband and his wife's salary was the household's main source of income. Although Manh admitted that later on he felt uneasy with such an arrangement in Japan and longed to return to Vietnam, his motivation to migrate in the first place was the wish to be close to his wife and children. The need for intimacy, therefore, was a pivotal anchor for Manh to relocate even though migrating to Japan meant a possible downgrade in financial and social status for him.

Similarly, some other men in this study also migrated to Japan to be closer to their lovers or partners who were Japanese nationals or had already resided in Japan. Hieu, a product manager in his late 30s, first met his Japanese wife when she took part in an exchange program at his university in Vietnam. The couple fell in love and remained in a long-distance relationship after Hieu's girlfriend went back to Japan when the exchange program ended. After finishing his bachelor's degree in Japanese studies, Hieu decided to apply for a master's course in Japan and migrated to the country to be closer to his lover. The couple got married after Hieu finished his degree and started working in Japan. Another example of how intimate needs or desires can prompt migration among male individuals can be shown through the story of Cong, a researcher at one of the biggest universities in Tokyo. Cong was working as a university lecturer and dentist in Ho Chi Minh City when his boyfriend wanted to do a doctorate degree in Japan. Because the couple had just started dating at that time, Cong was worried that being in a long-distance relationship would not work out for him. He thus applied for a postdoc fellowship in Tokyo and helped his boyfriend apply for a few scholarships at universities in the same city so that they could stay together. Such a migration decision was not easy for Cong because he was earning "very good money" in Vietnam and his combined monthly income from working both as a lecturer and a dentist at some private clinics was higher than the postdoc salary in Japan. However, Cong chose to be closer to his boyfriend and migrate to Japan instead of staying in Vietnam, a decision that made sense for him emotionally and sexually but not economically.

In addition to the importance of intimacy and intimate relationships in making migration happen, studies have demonstrated that international migration can be a strategy to avoid stigma and discrimination or to gain sexual freedom and facilitate the processes of identity development. Such a rationale has been predominantly observed in the migration journeys of queer-identifying individuals who seek to live their sexualities in more liberal ways

(Carrillo, 2004; Hirano, 2014; Howe et al., 2008; Kong, 2002; Mahdavi, 2020; Manalansan, 2006). For example, various queer-identifying migrants moved from south America to the U.S. hoping for a more liberal queer lifestyle because of the image of the American open sexual and gay cultures (Cantú et al., 2009; Carrillo, 2004, 2017; Carrillo & Fontdevila, 2014; del Aguila, 2014). With a well-developed pornography industry and the availability of erotic products in the country (Wong & Yau, 2019), Japan was perceived by many Vietnamese men as a country where sexuality is an open matter and sexual expressions can be freely expressed. For instance, various heterosexual research participants joked about their attraction to Japanese adult videos growing up as young boys in Vietnam and how the representations of sexuality in such video products made them think that Japanese people were very open with sexual encounters. Japanese cultural products also played an influential role in shaping some of the research participant's perception of the sexual body and subsequently their migration decision. Dinh, a thirty-year-old gay IT engineer in Hanoi recalled that one of his first exposures to homosexuality when growing up in Vietnam was from *Yaoi*, a Japanese manga genre that features mostly male homoerotic content. The popularity of the manga genre, together with the images of LGBTQ-related events in Japanese cities circulated on the Internet gave Dinh the impression that homosexuality and sexual diversity were very welcomed in Japan. As he had lived in constant fear of being "outed" as gay in Vietnam, Dinh yearned to "escape from the country" and saw Japan as an attractive destination to migrate to. He then applied for financial aid to study for a bachelor's degree at a university in central Japan and migrated at the age of nineteen.

Similar to Dinh, many non-heterosexual participants in this research also contemplated Japan as a queer-friendly country due to the visibility of queer communities and establishments. Such a perception of Japan stood in stark contrast with how these men remembered nonheterosexuality was perceived, portrayed, and treated when they grew up in Vietnam. Almost all of the non-heterosexual men in this study became aware of their sexual orientations in the 1990s and early 2000s when homosexuality was depicted in an extremely negative light in Vietnamese society. During this time, it was common for the state's official media outlets and public discourses to regard homosexuality as one of the "social evils" [16]

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[16] The Social Evil Campaign in the 1990s and early 2000s was considered to be an effort to reinforce a Vietnamese tradition and social morality by the Communist Party. This campaign focused on the curtailing of

alongside crime, prostitution, gambling, and moral degradability. According to a report in 2009 covering more than five hundred press articles, the image of the LGBTQ community in Vietnam was negatively biased and represented (iSEE & Academy of Journalism and Communication, 2009). Such a representation made many queer individuals face homophobic behaviors. Tai, the returned freelance interpreter in his late thirties in Ho Chi Minh City who was featured in the vignette at the beginning of this chapter described his experience during middle school and high school:

> "I knew about my sexuality at a relatively early age… And somebody might have known somehow and then they teased me… From then until when I was twenty years old and went to Japan, it had been very tough being different from others and having to *gồng gánh* (hold up) in order to hide".

In Tai's narrative, the word "*gồng gánh*" referred to the act of hiding one's true identities and complying with heteronormative expectations by performing bodily behaviors commonly associated with male heteronormativity such as having tough or non-feminine gestures, showing interest in sports and women, etc. It has a similar meaning to the Western notion of being "closeted" and suggests an extremely exhausting social performance. From Goffman's self-presentation perspective (Goffman, 1956), non-heterosexual Vietnamese had to always carry out heteronormative bodily performances in the "front stage" of their social interactions with others and could only reveal their true sexual identities in more private spaces or the "backstage". The everyday life of sexual minorities in Vietnam, thus, was largely affected by homophobia and heterosexism across institutions such as family, the science of sexuality in medicine and psychology, and the state in Vietnam (Khuat et al., 2010; Newton, 2017). As a result, migration or relocation abroad could be a strategy for Vietnamese queers to subjectively express their bodily needs and expressions without facing homophobic and heterosexist sentiments. Tai explained it in detail:

> "I wanted to migrate because I wished to get away from Vietnamese society, from all the stuffiness, the closeness … Sexuality was a matter at that time that urged me to find a new environment and to escape. So when I got a scholarship to study in Japan, I immediately migrated without thinking twice".

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acts that are considered to cause social harms such as drug using, gambling, engaging in prostitution and homosexual sex, etc (Khuat et al. 2010; Tran 2014).

Even when sexuality and intimacy do not motivate migration in the first place, they are still deliberately and strategically considered to shape further migration trajectories (Baas, 2018; Carrillo, 2004, 2017; Carrillo & Fontdevila, 2014; Liu-Farrer, 2010). Gorman-Murray (2009) identified three patterns of emotionally embodied migration, in which mobility was predicated on bodily desires, emotions, and sexualities: (1) yearning to test out new sexual identities, practices, and lifestyles; (2) seeking communities of finding; and (3) finding, consolidating or leaving intimate relationships. How Lam, an IT worker who lived in Tokyo for six years, negotiated his migration trajectories illustrates how subjective needs of intimacy are inherent in migration and can take effect not only in the premigration phase but also during different migratory stages such as during the stay in the host country or the pattern of return migration to the home country. After graduating from a university in Vietnam with a major in commerce, Lam enrolled himself in a language school in Tokyo to improve his Japanese skills. Because Lam had a boyfriend in Vietnam at that time, he initially intended to stay in Japan for only two years for the language course. However, Lam later found out that his partner cheated on him while he was away and, thus, decided not to return as planned. Instead, he made the decision to stay in Japan longer. Lam's stay in Tokyo eventually lasted for four more years, during which he obtained a master's degree and worked for a Japanese IT company before going back to Vietnam. Although structural factors such as education and job opportunities inevitably allowed and shaped Lam's migration trajectory, his former intimate relationship also played a pivotal part in the decision to stay in Japan longer. A few other participants also lengthened their stay in Japan because of either breaking up with former partners/ lovers in Vietnam, having partners/ lovers in Japan, or enjoying their sexual and intimate practices/statuses that they have in Japan. In these cases, it could be observed that economic betterment was not the main reason why these male Vietnamese migrants chose to migrate to Japan or to continue to stay in Japan. Rather, these men's migration trajectories were conditioned and driven by the needs for intimacy, intimate and loving relationships, and sexuality-related concerns such as the desire to live and express sexuality more freely, the need to escape from sexually constraint institutions, or the need to stay with/away from intimate partners. Their bodies, thus, experienced migration as a process of asserting agency and personal needs rather than the economic-oriented body often portrayed in conventional migration studies. Such an analysis of the migrant's body at the subjective level consequently provides an understanding of migrants' agency in shaping their

own migration experiences and trajectories. Moreover, it also shows how the body of the Vietnamese migrant men in Japan is charged with sexual, emotional, and intimate needs. Subsequently, such a level of analysis supports going beyond seeing the male migrants' bodies as being filled only with notions of work, labor, or economic aspiration. However, the study of migrants' lived experiences cannot be fully comprehended without taking into consideration their social interactions and relations with other social actors. A social/ inter-subjective level of analysis of the migrant's body can be of help in this regard.

4.2.2. The social/inter-subjective migrant body

Transnational migration affects the migrant's body in different ways and sometimes could be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, as migration can introduce migrants to new social environments, cultures, norms, and practices in the migration destination, the migrant's body can be perceived predominantly in the light of unfamiliarity or foreignness, which can convey both negative and positive effects. On the other hand, the migrant's body can most of the time take on positive social meanings in the context of the home society. For instance, examining the meanings of corporality and power among Mexican migrant men, Parrini et al. (2007) observed that the bodies of these migrant men are paradoxically perceived in the country of destination and the home country. Specifically, their bodies are marked by "otherness" in the country of destination but are flagged as "successful" bodies in the home country. One of the ways to dive deeper into the conflicting meanings that are ascribed to the migrant's body is to look at the intimate encounters and relationships between the migrant and other actors in the migratory contexts as these are the interactional sites within which the migrant body is carefully and constantly judged, given meanings, and negotiated based on notions of desirability, class, race, ethnicity, and nationality. The narratives and lived experiences of the Vietnamese migrant men in this study suggest that male Vietnamese migrants face several difficulties in cultivating intimate relationships or encounters with Japanese locals while they are in Japan. Such a situation is conditioned by xenophobia-induced discrimination and a hierarchy of racial preference in the Japanese social context. Both the terms "discrimination" and "preference" are used here because individuals' choices of sexual or intimate partners can suggest discrimination, but could also sometimes be merely a matter of personal taste and desire.

Discrimination based on race and ethnicity and xenophobia are hardly myths in Japan. In 2016, the result of a questionnaire from Japan's Ministry of Justice showed that around one-third of the participating foreigners living in Japan experienced derogatory or discriminatory remarks because of their foreign backgrounds (Japan Times, 2017). In other words, many foreign residents in Japan face plenty of anecdotes of casual racism and discrimination in their daily life in the country (Gelin & Wilson, 2020). As a result, scholars have observed that the bodies of foreigners could be charged with negative sentiments when these foreign migrants attempt to cultivate sexual and intimate relationships or encounters in Japan (Kazawa & Kawaguchi, 2003; Kelsky, 2008; Paquin, 2014). However, the bodies of foreign migrants might be subjected to different levels of discrimination or xenophobia based on their races, ethnicities, or nationalities. For instance, while Western gay men might find it easy to enjoy homosexual encounters in Japan (McLelland, 2000; McLelland & Dasgupta, 2005; Suganuma, 2012), foreigners of Asian descent might have difficulties finding Japanese partners (Baudinette, 2017; Quero, 2014). Attributions of male attraction among Japanese heterosexual women also feature either a typical Caucasian look (white skin, blond hair, and blue eyes) or "foreign physical traits and features as opposed to what the Japanese men have" (Vitale, 2016). The accounts from many Vietnamese migrant men in this study also suggested such a hierarchy of sexual desirability and attraction based on race, ethnicity, and nationality within the Japanese social fields. Hieu, the aforementioned product manager who is married to a Japanese woman, shared his observation on such a matter after having lived in Japan for seven years:

> "In general, I think Japanese women do not like other Asian men. When it comes to foreigners, they really prefer White people. You can see such a thing (preference) in bars or nightclubs… But there are also differences between Asian men. For example, Korean guys who are tall, white, and who know how to make conversations could be very successful in flirting with Japanese women. But it might be difficult for Chinese guys and us Vietnamese (men)… South Asian men have the hardest time".

According to Hieu, there are clear preferences for race, ethnicity, and nationality regarding potential dating/intimate partners within heterosexual dating and sexual scenes in Japan. Such preferences render advantages for the white, Western male bodies while hindering the Asian foreign bodies from securing high positions along the hierarchies of sexual desirability or attractiveness. Within the racial category of Asian men, the identity markers of ethnicity

and nationality are next in line to further dictate the attraction of the migrant's body. In that regard, Hieu considered his Japanese wife to be a special woman because she is "more open-minded" and had had a long period of staying in Vietnam, which made her "different from other Japanese women" in terms of making her choice of intimate and subsequently marriage partner.

Confirming Hieu's account, Tai, the gay-identifying man who had lived in Japan for seventeen years before returning to Vietnam also talked about the preference for white Westerners in the sexual fields in Japan and added that there were further divisions for the level of sexual desirability within the Asian racial category. According to Tai, East Asian migrants coming from China or Korea might have better chances of attracting Japanese partners than South East Asians or South Asians because "Korean guys have the look... they have white and smooth skin, and good dressing style... Chinese guys also have whiter skin and they can be very skillful in flirting". Within the group of migrants coming from South East Asian countries, "Thais or Singaporeans would have better chances" in successfully flirting with or attracting Japanese locals than Vietnamese, Tai continued. According to him, such a situation was because Thailand and Singapore are countries that were more developed than Vietnam. The narratives of these men suggested that the sexual attractiveness associated with the body of the foreign migrants in Japan might also correspond with the development status of the countries from which they come. Comparable incidents in which male Vietnamese migrants, regardless of their sexual identity, found it difficult to cultivate intimate relationships or encounters with Japanese locals in Japan were not uncommon among the research participants of this research. Such a situation was often made clear during migrants' participation in physical sociosexual spaces in which possibilities for intimate encounters might arise such as bars, night clubs, or even mundane social interactions. Sometimes, the discrimination toward the migrant body did not come from the intimate partner herself/himself but rather from other actors such as family members or friends. For example, An, an office worker in his early thirties in Tokyo, used to be in an "unclear intimate relationship" with a Japanese woman who he met during college. While An thought that the two were clearly into each other, they never talked about becoming an official couple. When An visited the place of this woman's parents in Osaka, he could sense that her parents disliked him because of his status as a Vietnamese migrant. At that time, An was still finishing his degree at a Japanese university and he felt that his financial status also played a part in the

dislike that the woman's parents had toward him. Eventually, this woman stopped seeing him and started dating her Japanese *senpai* (an older graduate) at the university.

Discrimination or racial and ethnic preferences over the migrant's body existed not only within physical sites such as bars or nightclubs but also within virtual forms of intimate sociality such as online dating applications. Several of the Vietnamese migrant men who took part in online forms of dating and social practice remembered encountering discriminatory reactions and behaviors because of their ethnicity and nationality. Tai, the aforementioned interpreter in Ho Chi Minh City disappointedly shared his experience using a gay dating application during his latest trip to Japan: "Japanese people look down on us (Vietnamese) now. I used this dating app when I was in Japan the last time. However, after texting (with a few people) for a while, they (Japanese users) all asked me where do I come from. As soon as I said that I am from Vietnam, they all slipped away". Comparable incidents were experienced among other research participants on different online dating and social platforms, where migrants' South East Asian ethnic and Vietnamese nationality discouraged Japanese actors from furthering interactions or conversations. Their experiences thus reflected the observations from Bass and Yang (2020) that the migrants' bodies are commonly "tension-ridden and charged with negative emotions" in the host country.

However, when the Vietnamese migrant's body is situated within social relationships and interactions with other foreign bodies in Japan, the outcomes are not as negative. A few men in this research were indeed in either intimate or sexual relationships with foreign migrants of different nationalities in Japan. For instance, Duc, a construction engineer in his early thirties living in Tokyo used to have intimate encounters with several foreign (non-Vietnamese, non-Japanese) women throughout his bachelorhood in Japan. Duc's first sexual relationship was with a Chinese woman who was his *senpai* (senior) at the *izakaya* (Japanese drinking restaurant) where he worked part-time during his enrollment at a language school in the suburb of Tokyo. Duc believed that they were attracted to each other because both of them were foreigners at the workplace and shared the hardship of having to work and study in Japan simultaneously. In this case, the hard-working migrant's body was a common thread that bound these two foreign bodies together. When Duc moved to Kyoto (the former capital city) for his bachelor's degree, he had a relationship with a Japanese woman who was in the same scholarship program. However, the relationship quickly ended because his partner wanted to date a Japanese senior. Later on, Duc met his American girlfriend in a bar. "She

was the one who initiated the first conversion because she thought I was Japanese and she wanted to talk" – Duc recalled. The woman did not mind when she found out Duc was Vietnamese, and the couple had a several-month relationship. After this affair, Duc met a Swedish woman via a friend's introduction and had a relationship with her for over a year, before breaking up when the woman went back to Sweden. In the interactions that Duc had with these two Western women, his body was perceived merely as an Asian body, and his nationality as Vietnamese did not trigger any negative effect that could impede the relationship. The same situation also happened during interactions between Vietnamese migrants and other non-Japanese, foreign users on online dating applications. During such interactions, especially with Western migrants, the Vietnamese migrants' bodies were often seen as Asian bodies without specific labels of ethnicity or nationality. For example, Minh, a gay-identify office worker in Tokyo shared that he often used specific online dating applications for gay individuals to find sexual encounters. As Minh was sexually interested in white men, he usually used a dating application on which there were a lot of white foreigners who either visit or live in Japan. He recalled that various sexual partners just saw him "as an Asian" and did not care about his nationality as Vietnamese. As a result, while the desirability ascribed to the bodies of male Vietnamese migrants within both physical and virtual contexts in Japan is heavily dictated by migrant's race, ethnicity, and nationality, the influences of each factor can be different depending on the interacting partners.

In addition, the inter-subjective analysis of the migrant's body in intimate relationships needs to take into consideration the presence of co-ethnic communities in the migration destination. Migrants are more likely to socialize with their co-ethnics for several practical reasons, from getting different kinds of support to capitalizing on co-ethnic migrants in different ways (Liu-Farrer, 2020). Co-ethnic communities, therefore, can be the potential sites for the cultivation of co-ethnic intimate encounters or relationships. This was the case among a handful of men in this study, especially among those who were fond of having a Vietnamese partner or those who have problems connecting with local Japanese or other foreigners in Japan. However, many heterosexual migrant men in Japan also reported having difficulties cultivating intimate relationships with Vietnamese fellow migrant women due to two reasons: the lower number of Vietnamese females in comparison to male migrants in Japan and the high level of self-awareness and self-dependency among female Vietnamese migrants. While there were close to 259,000 Vietnamese male migrants in Japan as of mid-

2021, this number was only around 198,000 for Vietnamese migrant women in the country[17] (Ministry of Justice, 2021). Consequently, several heterosexual participants lamented that they had low chances of finding female Vietnamese intimate partners in Japan. Moreover, many Vietnamese migrant men in Japan still hinged onto the Vietnamese masculine ideology that measures men's masculine and social status through economic achievements and dependency. In a heterosexual relationship, it is still commonly believed that men should be superior to women in terms of either economic capacity or social achievement (ISDS (Insitute for Social Development Studies), 2020; Martin, 2010, 2018). As many Vietnamese men faced downward mobility in social and economic status after migrating to Japan, they felt less confident in approaching Vietnamese women. The proclamation of Tung, a doctoral researcher in southern Japan fairly rounds up the factors that make it challenging for several Vietnamese migrant men to find co-ethnic women in Japan: "Vietnamese women in Japan are there to be worshiped (by fellow Vietnamese migrant me) (*Gái Việt ở Nhật là để thờ*)! Not only there are few of them, but they are also out of reach because they could study up very high and work very well"[18]. Similar perceptions can be found in the case of Phu, a businessman in Hanoi who chose to date women in Vietnam during his return visits rather than Vietnamese women in Japan because he considered the later to be "too independent and arrogant"[19].

While empirical accounts often suggest migrants' bodies that are "tension-ridden, charged with negative emotions" in the host country (Baas & Yang, 2020, p. 13), the same bodies can be perceived differently in the country of origin. In his study on transnational marriage, Thai (2008) observed that the degree of marriageability of low-wage Vietnamese American men varied greatly across national borders. Particularly, while these men were deemed unwanted marriage partners for women in America (including Vietnamese women), they enjoyed an increased level of marriageability among Vietnamese women in Vietnam. Such a contrariety was made possible because of a common Vietnamese judgment that normally associates diasporic Vietnamese or Vietnamese people abroad (*Viet Kieu*) with possessing high economic and cultural capacity (ibid.). A similar observation regarding the

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[17] The registered number of male Vietnamese living in Japan by mid 2021 (258,752) accounted for around 57% of the total number of Vietnamese residents in Japan (457,645). There are 198,893 registered female Vietnamese migrants residing in the country (Ministry of Justice, 2021).
[18] Interview with Tung, heterosexual, mid-twenties, doctoral researcher in Kitakyūshū, 30th June 2020 via Skype.
[19] Interview with Phu, heterosexual, early thirties, business man, 21st November 2019 in Hanoi.

high sexual desirability attached to the body of male individuals who return to Vietnam from abroad can be found in Müller's study (2021) on the home visit of second-generation Vietnamese Germans. The male Vietnamese migrant's body in Japan can also take on positive meanings in the Vietnamese context. As migration to Japan is generally considered not only as a way to enhance individuals' livelihood, social and economic situations but also as a passage of status that leads to mature and successful manhood (shown in Chapter three), the male migrant's body can be seen as a successful, capable, and desirable body by local Vietnamese in Vietnam. Such a perception was reflected through the elevated respect and attention from families and social networks in Vietnam that many participants noticed when they visited or returned to their home country. At the same time, these migrants' bodies also saw increased sexual desirability when they are situated within the dating and sexual scenes in Vietnam. For instance, An, the office worker in Tokyo whose relationship with his Japanese schoolmate did not work out recalled his past few return trips: "When I visited Vietnam a few years ago, girls would go to me… People in Vietnam have certain expectations towards people going back from abroad"[20]. Similarly, Phu, the aforementioned businessman in Hanoi also remembered dating three different women once thanks to his former status as a migrant in Japan:

> "In Vietnam, I had the label of a person living abroad so I was in a position to have more (partner) options. I had qualities such as having studied abroad and I had the look. Like in Japan, my height was only average in comparison to Japanese (men), but I was taller than many other (men) in Vietnam."

The narratives of men like An and Phu showed that many Vietnamese migrant men had easier times finding or cultivating intimate encounters or relationships in Vietnam in comparison to Japan. In other words, the bodies of these migrant men are put in a more positive light within the home country context. Looking at the desirability of the Vietnamese migrants' bodies within intimate interactions and relationships within different social contexts, thus, elucidates how they are stereotyped, otherized, marginalized, and excluded in/through different social processes.

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[20] Interview with An, heterosexual, early thirties, Office Worker in Tokyo, 30th January 2020.

4.2.3. The institutional migrant body

The examination of the migrant's body should not only take into consideration the subjective level of how the body is individually experienced and the social/inter-subjective level of how the body mediates social relationships but also the institutional level of how the body is governed and portrayed by structural factors. At this level, the migrant's body is a crucial site that reflects institutional powers, discourses, and regulatory mechanisms. Such an angle is pivotal as it provides a structural and contextual perspective to the other two levels of analysis. For instance, the social interactions and relationships between migrants and other actors in the migration contexts are often shaped by institutional factors such as states' regulations over the migrants' bodies, control mechanisms of visa and immigration regimes, or public discourses on certain migrant groups. The following impression of Son, a twenty-five-year-old technical trainee intern in Fukushima (a prefecture in northern Japan) showcased such a circumstance. Son migrated to Japan as a technical intern trainee and worked at an automobile factory in a small city in northern Japan. While Son aspired to cultivate friendships and intimate relationships with Japanese locals, he never succeeded during the three years that he had stayed in Japan. Son shared his experiences of trying to establish social contacts with Japanese women:

> "I think it's pretty difficult to have a relationship in Japan, especially with Japanese people. When Japanese women meet Vietnamese men, they do not like to have conversations. When I tried to talk to them, they made excuses to go away… Maybe Japanese people don't have a positive impression of Vietnamese, some told me that Vietnamese people are loud and often steal things".

In Son's case, his body was seen by Japanese locals as a foreign body charged with negativity, which was a result of the Japanese public discourse on Vietnamese migrants in Japan in recent years. Since 2019, there has been a spike in individual and organized crimes committed by Vietnamese nationals in Japan and several of these crimes have made national news headlines (Asahi Shimbun, 2020; NHK, 2021). Vietnamese has also been the leading group in the number of run-away/undocumented migrants in Japan (Kato, 2019; Ministry of Justice, 2021). Such worsening public images and discourses regarding the Vietnamese migrant community in Japan have, therefore, rendered negative sentiments attached to the bodies of the Vietnamese migrants in Japan. One such negative sentiment can be seen through how these bodies were referred to as being "loud and often steal" as in Son's narrative of his

encounters with Japanese women. In other words, Son's case has shown how Japanese public discourses as a social institution can assert influence on how the Vietnamese migrants' bodies are perceived within interpersonal social interactions in Japan.

Research participants who identify themselves as non-heterosexual also raised their concerns about institutional discrimination towards the queer migrant bodies in Japan. Despite the widely circulated images of an LGBT-friendly Japan, homophobic and heterosexist barriers still hinder sexual minorities in Japanese society from gaining full legal protections and freely expressing their sexual identities (Dale, 2012; Dasgupta, 2017; Kawasaka, 2018; Kazawa & Kawaguchi, 2003; Tamagawa, 2018). The bodies of non-heterosexual migrants in Japan, therefore, are subjected to not only racial and ethnic discrimination but also institutional, structural conservatism toward queerness. Put differently, the bodies of foreign queer migrants are charged with a "double layer of discrimination": one is directed toward their sexualities and the other one toward their ethnicities or nationalities (Hibbins & Pease, 2009). Because of such a circumstance, several gay or bisexual men in this research had to hide their real sexual identities during their daily activities in Japan. For example, Dinh, the aforementioned IT worker who yearned to migrate to Japan to escape the homophobic sentiments that he had experienced in Vietnam did not achieve the sexual liberation that he had expected. After his first year in Japan, Dinh realized that "(Japanese) people were not exposed that much to gender and sexual diversity"[21] from seeing many Japanese gay men getting married to women. Moreover, hearing "homophobic jokes" from other people in his social network, Dinh paid excessive attention to his public behaviors to pass as not "too feminine". The same situation was faced by other non-heterosexual participants who worked in Japanese companies or firms as these are social institutions and environments in which performances of heteronormativity are expected by default (Dasgupta, 2017). I argue that such a reality can render negative experiences among several queer-identifying Vietnamese migrants while negotiating their migrant bodies, especially among those who migrated to Japan hoping for a more sexually open and liberal social environment in comparison to Vietnam (Tran 2022b).

As the institutional level of analysis also pays attention to how regulatory mechanisms are exercised on the migrant's body, it is important to mention migrants' living and working

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[21] Interview with Dinh, gay, late twenties, IT Worker in Hanoi, 14th November 2019 in Hanoi.

situations in Japan as a crucial factor that conditions migrants' bodily experiences. Most male Vietnamese migrants in this study started working right after arriving in Japan, regardless of their possessed visa categories. While men who migrated as high-skilled workers or technical intern trainees began working shortly after their immigration, those who migrated as students also had to look for part-time jobs as soon as possible to cover the living expenses, tuition fees, and, in some cases, the financial debts that they had borrowed to migrate. Such a situation, in combination with the stress of having to navigate the new life, not only physically exhausted the migrants' bodies but also restricted migrants from cultivating social or intimate relationships. Several migrant men complained about being fully occupied by their daily works and routines in Japan to the point that they did not have time to cultivate intimate encounters or connections. In a few extreme cases, some thought that their bodies were so tired that they did not even think about physical or intimate needs anymore. For example, Thanh, a language school student in Osaka shared that because of his busy study and work schedule, he did not have any sexual encounters for a long time:

"I (normally) have very strong sexual needs. But then I was surprised with myself that I did nothing (sexually) for nearly 2 years in Japan. I was busy most of the time: going to school, and going to work. Such a routine makes you forget (about the sexual needs). I did not even think much of sex… Sometimes I masturbated simply just to destress".

According to Thanh, his fully-occupied routine in Japan was one of the major factors that hindered him from engaging with his sexual needs and desires more actively. In other cases, the busy migrant bodies can also negatively impact the existing intimate relationships that migrant men previously had in Vietnam. It was not uncommon to hear stories among the migrant men in this research about breaking up with partners in Vietnam because of the lack of time to stay in touch regularly due to their tiresome schedule in Japan.

Furthermore, migrants' living arrangements can be another institutional factor that contours the sexual experiences of the migrants' bodies. Many Vietnamese migrants in Japan share accommodations with other fellow migrants to save expenses, especially those who live in big cities with high costs of living such as Tokyo or Osaka. Unless arrangements between roommates/flatmates are made, the co-living circumstance can hinder migrants' engagements with not only social but also intimate encounters to a certain extent. The bodies of migrants who are technical intern trainees are even more regulated as the living situations of trainees are often organized by the employers or the managing organizations in Japan.

Most of the time, trainees live in apartments or apartment complexes provided by their employers. Because pregnancy among female trainees is by default discouraged and can lead to the termination of the working contracts, a lot of technical interns in Japan are arranged to live in gender-segregated apartments to avoid possible intimate encounters, sexual harassment, or unwanted pregnancy. Moreover, as areas with a high concentration of technical intern trainees in Japan are normally located in either suburban or industrial, nonmetropolitan areas, it might also be difficult for some migrants to participate in co-ethnic or social events in bigger cities and to build up potential intimate encounters or relationships. For instance, Phan, a former technical intern trainee recalled that because it took around two hours to travel from his residing neighborhood to other metropolitan areas such as inner Tokyo, he rarely went there to socialize during his free time. Due to the exhaustive nature of his work in the construction sites, Phan chose to spend time at home resting or hanging out with his Vietnamese co-workers and roommates rather than wasting all of that time on public transportation to go to town. The working and living situations after migrating to Japan, thus, sometimes present major difficulties to how migrants experience and live out their bodies as sexual or social bodies.

In general, this section engages with the analysis of the bodies of the male Vietnamese migrants in Japan to shed light on how these men's sexualities not only shape the migration trajectories but also are shaped during the process of migrating by multi-level factors. The subjective analysis shows how the migrant's body is a crucial site through which individuals assert agencies, desires, and expressions in the decision-making of migration trajectories. The social/inter-subjective analysis explicates how the migrant's body is "otherized" and treated in interpersonal interactions or relationships in Japan under significant influences from notions of race, ethnicity, and nationality. It also reveals a rather contrasting perception of the male migrants' bodies within the social contexts of the home society in Vietnam. Finally, the institutional level of analysis manifests how migrants' possible engagements with sexuality are curtailed by structural factors and regulatory systems such as public discourses or migrants' living and working conditions. While the independent analysis of any of these three levels can illuminate details on the migrants' bodies in different ways, this chapter argues that these three levels of analysis should not be investigated separately. Rather, they need to be examined in conjunction with each other. In other words, the examination of the migrant's body in any given context needs to feature the tangle of the previously mentioned

different levels of analysis. When considered together, these three analytical levels indicate that while the bodies of the male Vietnamese migrants in Japan can be a site of subjective desire when they migrate to Japan, they are often charged with unfavorable sentiments and, therefore, negatively perceived within interpersonal and intimate relationships within the Japanese contexts. In particular, the bodies of these Vietnamese migrants in this study were often deemed as other, inferior, and therefore undesirable within these interactions. On the other hand, these same migrant bodies were charged with favorable sentiments and positive perceptions when positioned within the Vietnamese context. However, the migrant's body is not only a canvas upon which social division or "stratification" is reflected through representations, regulations, or interpersonal interaction but also a catalyst for recuperative and reconciliatory inter-subjective relations under certain circumstances (Baas & Yang, 2020: 15). As a result, migrants often come up with strategies or tactics to negotiate how their bodies are perceived in social interactions and relations. The next section explores such strategies and tactics that the Vietnamese migrant men in Japan employed to negotiate the charging circumstance of their social bodies and put them under a more favorable light within the context of transnational migration.

4.3. Negotiating the Charged Migrant Body

As the previous section has shown, the bodies of Vietnamese migrant men are often charged with negative emotions and discrimination in Japan. Such an argument can be reflected through the challenges that many research participants mentioned during their attempts to establish or maintain intimate encounters and/or connections with either Japanese locals or other fellow migrants during their stays in Japan. Faced with such an unfavorable condition, many Vietnamese migrant men employed different negotiating tactics and strategies to increase their sexual desirability and status, either locally or transnationally.

In other words, they had to come up with suitable actions and presentations to make themselves and their bodies become more desirable to other social actors and, desirably, potential intimate or sexual partners. This is not a simple task, especially when Vietnamese migrants are subordinated in many ways in Japan as shown in the previous section. From the perspective of the sexual field approach (Green, 2008, 2013, 2015), one social actor has to cultivate certain personal attributes, lines of actions, body types, appearances, or dressing styles in order to generate sexual currencies within a given sexual environment. These sexual

currencies are often referred to as sexual capital, which are the attributes associated with attractiveness that can confer advantage(s) upon those who possess it within a sexual field, including field significance and the ability to find intimate partners of one's choosing (Green, 2015:36). The ways in which one cultivates his/her sexual capital can be explained through the art of self-presentation. Studying individuals' situational interactions, sociologist Erving Goffman (Goffman, 1956) observed that an individual sometimes gives out thoroughly calculated manners, expressions, and appearance(s) during his/her self-presentation in specific social setting(s), so that she/he obtains the desired impressions and responses from other people. Similarly, actors within any specific sexual field who want to acquire a more significant field position have to strategically put up suitable self-presentation to articulate more sexual capital corresponding with the fields' "structure of desire" (Green, 2008). In order to cultivate their sexual capital and become more sexually desirable within the context of transnational migration, the male Vietnamese migrants in this study showed several actions and representations. These practices can be identified as both tactics and strategies of self-presentation.

When explaining how ordinary people engage with creative practice to "consume" social representations, structure, and navigate constraints from the surrounding environment and normative modes of social behavior, French philosopher Michel de Certeau made the conceptual distinction between strategy and tactic. In particular, strategies are considered as the hidden means by which "those with organizational power structures circumscribe a place as proper and seek to distinguish their places" - the places of their own power and will (de Certeau 1984: 36). In other words, a strategy is considered to connote an action that is active, long-term, future-oriented, and capable of paving the way for more structural developments. Strategies therefore can involve the practice of planning and focusing on the future outlook of the environment. On the contrary, a tactic is an action carried out under the opportunities either afforded or given by the environment in which it occurs. For example, when people take shortcuts to reach one point to another quicker instead of following a planned or designated route, they are employing a tactic instead of a strategy. Tactics, therefore, react to the environment and denote social actions that are more passive, defensive, limited, and commonly employed by social groups that have less social power. While strategies and tactics are distinct actions, they are also connected: strategies as actions aiming at an end goal can provide framework(s) for tactics, and tactics as temporary actions can play a crucial role in

putting strategy to life. The conceptual difference between strategy and tactic is relevant in explaining how male Vietnamese migrants negotiate their bodies and sexual desirability by employing different social actions that are dissimilar in goals, operations, and the kinds of resources needed. The narratives from the migrant men in this study suggest four common tactics and one main strategy that are employed to negotiate the migrants' bodies and desirability.

4.3.1. Tactics for negotiating the migrant body

The first tactic that was observed among the Vietnamese migrant men in this study is to participate in several physical and virtual sites in which potential sexual encounters might take place. For example, those with more economic resources can go to places such as bars, and nightclubs where chances for social or sexual rendezvous might arise. The aforementioned case of Duc – the construction engineer who got to know his American girlfriend in a bar can be an example of such a tactic. Duc was very aware of the possibilities for intimate encounters at places such as drinking bars and nightclubs, so he went there frequently with a group of male friends when he was still single "hoping to pick up women"[22]. Similarly, Hoang, a former doctoral researcher in Tokyo, met his Japanese German boyfriend in a gay bar in Shinjuku Ni-Chome - the most famous and popular queer district in central Tokyo (Morimura, 2008). Hoang shared that because he was living in an area that was not very densely populated, using online gay dating applications did not help much in finding intimate partners, especially when he was not too fluent in the Japanese language and could only communicate fluently in English or Vietnamese. Hoang, thus, went to international gay bars in Tokyo's central district once in a while to have higher chances of meeting people who could speak English. It was during one of such bar visits that Hoang met a Japanese German, who later on became his boyfriend. Other physical sites for possible intimate encounters and connections that some of the men in this study went to included saunas and massage pavilions in the red-light districts in big cities such as Tokyo or Osaka. Kien, a gay researcher in his early thirties frequented gay saunas in a central district in Tokyo during the weekend for possible sexual encounters. According to Kien, within the sauna setting where most bodies

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[22] Interview with Duc, heterosexual, mid-thirties, construction engineer in Tokyo, on 3rd November 2019 in Tokyo.

were naked, factors such as ethnicity and nationality did not matter that much in deciding whether one could find an intimate partner or not. What mattered in such a setting was how one presented his body and how he interacted with other bodies.

However, going to physical settings such as bars, nightclubs, or sauna pavilions like in the case of Kien required a certain level of financial capital and capability. Xuan, a construction engineer who had been living in Tokyo for six years, shared that he once went to the *Kabukichō* red light district in Tokyo with a group of friends because they were curious and wanted to "taste the Japanese taste"[23]. They ended up in a host club and the price for such a visit was "too expensive" that Xuan and his friends did not want to come back again. Because of such a requirement for high financial resources when partaking in physical sites of sociosexual interaction, many Vietnamese migrant men made use of social media platforms and different dating applications to look for potential encounters, since these platforms required less economic means. There was also a wide range of online dating applications that Vietnamese migrant men could consider using to look for intimate encounters or relationships depending on their identities, needs, and resources. Popular online platforms among the heterosexual participants in this research that were used for looking for dating/sexual partners included Tinder (mix-national users) and Zalo (mostly Vietnamese users). Applications that were popular among non-heterosexual participants consist of Tinder (mix-national users), Grindr (dominantly used among gay foreigners and tourists in Japan), Jack'd (caters mostly to Japanese gays), and Blued (many Vietnamese users). In comparison to their heterosexual fellow migrant men, more non-heterosexual men utilized online dating applications as the main site for their negotiation of sexualities in terms of sexual desires, practices, and identities. This was because discrimination against nonheterosexuality is still omnipresent in Japan (Dasgupta 2017; Hidaka 2010; Kawasaka 2018; Tamagawa 2018) and these dating applications could provide anonymity and protection from homophobic sentiments to a certain extent. Studies on Thai and mainland Chinese low-wage migrant men in Singapore showed that several turned to transient sexual encounters due to the temporary nature of their jobs and the migration journeys (Ang, 2019; Kitiarsa, 2008). The popular usage of dating applications among the participants in this research, thus, also reflects the

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[23] Interview with Xuan, heterosexual, early-thirties, construction engineer in Tokyo, on 27th March 2020 via Facebook call.

acceptance of or rather the search for possibilities of temporary, short-lived encounters or relationships in the context of transnational migration.

Although participating in physical and virtual spaces of sociosexual interactions could provide migrant men with opportunities to engage more with their sexualities, these sites were also social spaces in which discrimination was omnipresent and racial and ethnic preferences were more obvious (Dhoest & Szulc, 2016; Shield, 2019). Consequently, many Vietnamese migrant men made use of another common tactic of self-presentation to make themselves more desirable namely demonstrating good appearances and special skills. It was common for many young men in this study to dress up and accessorize themselves in certain fashion styles to receive more attention when they went out.

Picture 1. A young Vietnamese man walking on the main street in the area of Shinokubo in Tokyo. Picture taken by the author on 2nd May 2020.

For example, some participants shared that they adopted a "Korean style"[24] in hairstyles or certain ways of dressing up to appear more attractive. Such a tactic for dressing and fashion styles has also been observed among Vietnamese young migrants in Britain in which they

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[24] Interview in November 2019 in Tokyo with Duc (32), heterosexual construction engineer in Tokyo.
Interview in November 2019 in Hanoi with Phu (31), heterosexual, product manager in Hanoi, stayed in Japan for five years.

adopted Japanese hairstyles or Korean fashion styles as a way to negotiate their attractiveness and "oriental identities" among local British (Barber, 2015). Similarly, the tactic of dressing up fancily or fashionably was common among the participants of this research. When Thanh, a young language student met me in a Starbucks Coffee shop in a busy shopping district in Osaka, he showed up in very fashionably styled clothes. With a color-matching T-shirt and trousers, a leather strap watch, stylish glasses, and Gucci [25] sneakers, Thanh appeared as a young man who carefully attended to his appearance. He also said that a lot of women were attracted to him because of his "shiny appearance" (*ngoại hình bóng bẩy*). Many of these women, however, were fellow Vietnamese migrants since Thanh socialized mostly with other co-ethnics living in the same city or area. Thanh was not alone in the fashion game. In the middle of our conversation, a friend of Thanh showed up to borrow some money to buy a new pair of sneakers. Although Thanh thought it was wasteful, he lent this friend money anyway and shared that he had gotten used to seeing his friend "pouring a lot of his income from part-time jobs into expensive clothes and shoes to impress girls". It was also not uncommon to see several young Vietnamese migrant men dressing in glamorous clothing items, having carefully styled or colored hair, and up-to-date phones in coffee shops or on the streets of areas with a high concentration of Vietnamese migrants in Tokyo such as Shinokubo, Takadanobaba or Ikebukuro (see Picture 1).

Studies have established that social media can function as a mediator that bridges not only migrants and families and friends back home, but also co-ethnic and fellow migrants in the destination countries (Ang, 2019; Dhoest & Szulc, 2016; Shield, 2019). The men in this study used social media platforms (mostly Facebook and Zalo - a Vietnamese online message platform) not only to connect with family members and friends in both Vietnam and Japan but also as a potential site of sexual sociality. For example, Thanh regularly posted charismatic pictures of himself with fashionable clothes and a "shiny look" on social media. He believed that such a practice helped him charm women. In fact, Thanh's girlfriend, a Vietnamese woman living in Tokyo, was the one who made the first move and originally reached out to him on Facebook because she was attracted to his nice pictures online. In addition to appearance, many Vietnamese migrant men also showed off skills such as singing, playing

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[25] Gucci is an Italian luxury fashion brand with product lines include clothing, footwears, accessories, and several other merchandises.

musical instruments, driving a car, mastering sports, or possessing photographic abilities via photos or videos posted on social media to increase the chances of cultivating intimate encounters and relationships. It was not rare to come across video clips of singing or playing musical instruments and pictures that show off the photographic skills on the social media accounts of many men in this study. For example, four participants in this study are amateur singers who performed regularly at small musical events in Tokyo. All posted videos of them singing on their social accounts and reported having many "fans" thanks to these videos. In a small music concert for Vietnamese migrants in Tokyo in late 2019 where two of these four men performed, some people in the audience actually asked for their contacts after their performances. Such a tactic of self-presentation is indeed one of the ways these migrant men can assert their agency when negotiating with the structural constraints imposed on their sexualities in the context of migration.

The aforementioned performance and presentation of special skills is not the only tactic employed to make the bodies of these migrant men stand out. In order to increase the chances of finding intimate partners or encounters, many men also focused on presenting attributes that might make them better or superior to the group of Japanese men. Within the sexual and marriage market in Japan, sometimes characteristics considered to be opposed to those of stereotypical Japanese men can be positively welcome. Studying international marriage between Japanese women and male Pakistani migrants, Kudo (2009; 2016) found out that some of these women married Pakistani men because of their images as caring husbands, which starkly contrasts the common portrait of the Japanese man as the "absent husband" who devotes wholeheartedly to work. Similarly, some Latin American men in Japan believed that their Japanese spouses chose a more humanistic heterosexual relationship over a "business-like approach of a stereotypical Japanese marital relationship" (Vitale, 2016). Because of the prevalence of the cold and emotionless Japanese men image, a large number of Vietnamese migrant men in this research tried to show chivalrous, gallant, and caring behaviors in social interactions, especially with potential intimate partners, as a tactic to increase their attractiveness. For example, Tuan, a twenty-five-year-old student in a vocational college (*Senmon Gakkō*) in Tokyo had a strong opinion about how Vietnamese men including himself were more gallant than most Japanese men. Tuan stated that "several Japanese men are not willing to protect women. In some cases, the women are the ones who

protect them (Japanese men)"[26]. Moreover, Tuan observed that several Japanese men often split the bills when going on dates with partners and do not voluntarily help women carry heavy things or offer seats to female passengers on the train. He subsequently thought that many Japanese men are more not so manly and chivalrous in interactions with women. As a result, Tuan often paid for the meals when going out with female friends or dating partners and performed behaviors such as carrying their bags or walking the women back to their places to make sure they got home safely. Such gendered performances were also mentioned by several other heterosexual participants as they engaged in social interactions with female individuals in Japan. Hien, a twenty-five-year-old bachelor student in Hokkaido (northern Japan), thought that his Japanese ex-girlfriend was attracted to him because of his "gentlemen-like and gallant" gestures and chivalrous manners. Hien explained such gestures and manners included showing concern for others' well-being during social interaction, taking up heavy manual tasks for female individuals, or offering to pay during dates.

The fourth tactic employed to navigate the structural constraints on the desirability of the male Vietnamese migrants' bodies is presenting positive foreign traits. In particular, while improving one's Japanese language ability is necessary in not only seeking partners but also in everyday life in Japan, mastering Japanese skills is in many cases not enough to confer advantages for Vietnamese men within the Japanese sexual field. Many participants remarked that as people with East Asian features, they were expected by several Japanese to have decent Japanese skills by default. Phong, a thirty-year-old IT engineer in Hanoi who used to live in Japan for seven years shared that even though Japanese is a difficult language to learn, Japanese people do not appreciate it that much if a Vietnamese person possesses good Japanese skills because "we (Vietnamese) look Asian". In other words, Vietnamese migrant men's Japanese fluency is often taken for granted by Japanese locals in Japan because of their (East) Asian look and being able to communicate in Japanese is, therefore, not considered something special or extraordinary. The expectation of Japanese language level, however, is not the same among different groups of foreigners in Japan. Phong mockingly described how such an expectation of Japanese skills is lower toward Western foreigners: "even if they (Western foreigners in Japan) could only say very simple phrases like *Konnichiwa* (Hello) or *Arigatō gozaimasu* (Thank you very much), many Japanese would say *Sugoi! Nihongo ga jōzu*

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[26] Interview with Tuan, heterosexual, mid-twenties, vocational student in Tokyo, on 31st July 2020 in Tokyo.

desu ne (Splendid, your Japanese is great)*!"* Due to such an uneven reaction toward the Japanese proficiency of foreign migrants of different races and nationalities, some Vietnamese migrants resorted to presenting their English language skills as a negotiating tactic. Phong explained such a choice when he was using an online dating application:

> "You have to steer the conversations toward English because it means nothing to them (Japanese users) that you can use Japanese fluently. Although Japanese is very hard, they take it for granted that you should be able to speak Japanese. But if you can speak English, that is something superior".

According to Phong, even though Japanese is a difficult language to learn, Vietnamese migrants' Japanese fluency is often taken for granted in Japan because of their (East) Asian look. Since being able to communicate in Japanese is not considered something extraordinary that can confer attractiveness, Phong looked to the English language as a medium for his "superior" self-presentation within the online space. Other participants who could communicate in English also talked about stating such a skill in the description of their online dating profiles to make themselves appear more attractive. For instance, some used the icons of the British and Japanese flags to indicate that they could communicate in both English and Japanese respectively. Others chose to write their self-introduction for dating applications only in English. Kien, the guy who frequented the gay saunas in Tokyo, also used a few dating applications. After experiencing both the offline and online forms of cultivating intimacy, Kien stated that while Japanese skill was important in physical spaces like the sauna, his English skill proved to be more helpful within online spaces such as dating applications. Specifically, Kien felt that being able to use and communicate in English provided him with more sexual capital within the online sociosexual sphere.

Interestingly, English skill was not the only foreign element drawn in the tactic of showing positive foreign traits. Foreign credentials and backgrounds were also sometimes used to verify some migrant men's sexual capital. For instance, Van, an office worker in his late twenties in Tokyo shared how he presented himself during interactions with other Japanese people on dating applications:

"I sometimes used some tricks, like I told them (the Japanese users) that I am *Hāfu* (literally translated into Half)[27] or *Kikokushijo* (children of Japanese expatriates who spent their childhood and education outside of Japan) to catch the attention."

Even though scholars have pointed out the various negative constraints, challenges, and frictions that the labels *Hāfu* or *Kikokushijo* brought to individuals who possess them (Goodman, 2005, 2011; Kimura, 2021; Törngren & Sato, 2021), these identity markers were still regarded by Van as better than his true identity as a Vietnamese migrant in conferring sexual capital in Japan. Törngren and Sato (Törngren & Sato, 2021) found out that some *Hāfu* individuals used their mixedness to challenge the identity binary of Japanese/*gaijin* (Japanese/foreigner) fostered by the homogenous idea of Japaneseness and the Japanese race. Their mixedness, while often hindering the navigation of their Japanese identity, also creates space for mechanisms and tactics to confront the racial hierarchy in contemporary Japanese society. Van's tactic suggested that in his view, the in-between identities of *Hāfu* or *Kikokushijo* still had more positive connotations to the body's desirability than the foreigner marker. Put differently, Van's tactic indicates that along the hierarchy of sexual desirability in the Japanese contexts, the bodies of individuals who have Japanese heritage such as *Hāfu* or *Kikokushijo* are still seen as more desirable than those of foreign migrants coming from non-Western countries, especially those of Vietnamese migrants. It should also be noted that the tactic of presenting positive foreign traits is employed by Vietnamese migrant men to impress not only Japanese nationals in Japan but also Vietnamese in both Japan and Vietnam. Indeed, many men in this research (regardless of their sexual orientations and linguistic abilities) preferred to have Vietnamese partners because of the similarities in language and culture. Consequently, finding Vietnamese partners in either Japan or Vietnam appears to be a suitable solution for such a preference. In either case, migrant men often present manners or characteristic traits associated more with Japanese individuals such as polite and delicate manners or paying more attention to details and people's attitudes, which are opposite to the common Vietnamese masculine and macho behaviors of eating and talking loudly (*ăn to nói lớn*), not respecting women, or being patriarchal (Horton & Rydström, 2011; ISDS (Institute for Social Development Studies), 2020; Martin, 2018).

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[27] The term *Hāfu* is generally used to refer to the group of individuals born to one ethnic Japanese and one non-Japanese parent. The term can also be used to describe people with mixed-racial ancestry or mixed ethnicity in Japan (Iwabuchi, 2014; Kawai, 2015; Kimura, 2021).

4.3.2. Fusing the online and offline worlds and putting foreignness in more positive light

In his study on transnational marriage, Thai (2008) observed that while working-class Vietnamese American men were deemed unwanted marriage partners for women in the U.S. (including Vietnamese women), they enjoyed an increased level of marriageability among Vietnamese women in Vietnam. Such a contrast was made possible because of a common perception in Vietnam that associates diasporic Vietnamese or Vietnamese people living abroad with people who possess high economic and cultural capital (Chan & Tran, 2011; Long, 2017; Thai, 2014). Tran's study on the return experience of queer Vietnamese migrants from Japan also confirmed such upward mobility in terms of social, economic, and sexual statuses thanks to returnees' allegedly foreign backgrounds (Tran, 2022). Similarly, the body of the male Vietnamese migrants in Japan could take on positive meanings in the Vietnamese context. Many participants noticed that they received more social respect and attention from families and members within social networks when they visited or returned to Vietnam. At the same time, these migrants' bodies also saw increased sexual desirability in the dating and sexual scenes. For instance, Thanh - the aforementioned language student in Osaka remembered going out with a lot of women when he was visiting Vietnam after more than a year of living in Japan: "When I went back (to Vietnam), I had a lot of meetings with my friends and also many women. It was fun". Other participants also echoed Thanh's experience of having an easy time finding or cultivating intimate encounters or relationships when they are physically in Vietnam. In other words, male migrants who return from Japan can have more sexual capital and, thus, experience upward sexual mobility in their home country.

However, in order to maximize such positive effects on their bodies when these migrant men were in Vietnam, many also looked to online modes of self-representation. Thanh, for instance, frequently posted updates about his life in Japan on his Facebook and Instagram profiles before he went back to Vietnam. While he complained during our conversation about how he found life in Japan difficult and stressful, Thanh's posts on social media never reflected such thoughts from him but rather always portrayed a posh and eventful lifestyle. Many of these online social media posts featured pictures of Thanh in fashionable clothes taken at restaurants, coffee shops, or famous landscapes in Japan. When asked about such an online practice, Thanh explained that these posts served as updates for his social networks back home. As a result, his tactic of online self-representation can also be

considered a preparation step for Thanh's elevated social and also sexual status during the visit/return trip to Vietnam. Thanks to the elevated sexual status that migrants enjoy during visits or return, a few participants also established long-distance relationships with partners in Vietnam. It is important to note that from a transnational perspective, migrants take part in not only one but rather multiple social fields or spaces that are either transnational or simultaneously happening in different national contexts (Faist, 1998; Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Levitt et al., 2003; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Nowicka, 2020). This means that some of the previously featured tactics, especially online ones performed within the online sphere, were also meant to be consumed by audiences in the home country and thus could be employed to negotiate migrants' sexual statuses back home. The aforementioned negotiating tactics within the virtual sphere, therefore, also serve as a preparation step for the future strategy of negotiating sexuality when these migrant men return to their homeland.

Either alone or together, the aforementioned tactics employed by Vietnamese migrant men mostly aimed to achieve and secure more sexual capital within the sexual fields they belong to. In other words, the ultimate goal of participating in different physical and virtual sociosexual spaces and presenting one's digital self glamorously with certain positive attributes was to accumulate more sexual capital for the Vietnamese migrant men's body and subsequently move it to a better position within the sexual fields either in Japan or Vietnam. Because tactics are social actions that happen temporarily under the constraint(s) of the environment (de Certeau 1984), the mentioned tactics were exercised more frequently within the Japanese social context where the bodies of male Vietnamese migrants were not favorably perceived and sexually desired. Moreover, a tactic can be a part of a bigger, more overarching strategy and tactics can work together to bring a strategy into action. As a result, I argue that all of the aforementioned tactics of participating in online and offline sites of socio-sexual encounters, showing-off good appearance, and special skills, and presenting positive foreign traits employed by Vietnamese migrant men were part of the strategy of putting their foreign body in a more positive light not only in the Japanese social context but also the Vietnamese context. In that sense, the tactics and strategy of negotiating the migrant body presented in this study suggested a transnational dimension and also a fusion of online and offline realities.

In particular, how the Vietnamese migrant men in this study adopted and implemented tactics and strategy to negotiate their sexualities in terms of sexual capital,

desirability and status provide a gateway to inquire into how the online and offline worlds intertwine and affect how each other is shaped. As male Vietnamese migrants faced discrimination and difficulties when trying to seek and cultivate intimate encounters and relationships in the offline world in Japan, the virtual world provided them with more means to negotiate such constraints. The platforms of online dating applications and social media then served as social sites where these migrant men could perform certain presentations of self that might be either impossible or not as effective in delivering sexual attractiveness within the offline reality. Through different tactics of self-presentation within both physical and virtual social worlds, migrants tried to acquire more sexual capital – an action that highlights interactional works and the utilization of resources (Green 2008). With the acquired sexual capital, migrants then could position their foreignness in a more positive light and subsequently make their physical bodies become more desirable to certain audience groups within certain social contexts. In that sense, migrants' engagement with the online world is a by-product of the difficulties they face in the offline world. The online world then serves as an important medium through which migrants' agency can be asserted to overcome the constraints in the offline reality. In addition, because a strategy denotes an action that has goals and outlooks for the future, the strategy of putting the foreignness under a more positive light is practiced not only to negotiate migrants' bodies within the Japanese sexual field but also to set the foundation for the possible elevation of migrants' sexual statuses in the Vietnamese context once they return. As chapter five on return migration will show, the majority of male Vietnamese migrants in Japan want to permanently go back to Vietnam after a period of living in Japan. Upon their return, their status as people who come back from abroad can be a helpful tool to cultivate sexual capital within the collective sexual field in Vietnam. In that case, migrant men's experiences of living, studying, or working abroad can be considered as a kind of foreignness. Yet, this kind of foreignness can be positively welcomed in the Vietnamese context thanks to structural favorable views toward the group of people returning from abroad (see chapter five for further details). As a result, by emphasizing their positive foreignness, the migrant men in this research asserted their agency to also move their positions higher within the sexual fields in Vietnam. Presenting characteristics that can associate migrants with positive foreignness on the virtual platform of social media (like in the case of Thanh who posted regularly about his life in Japan), thus, was part of the process of laying the groundwork for the possibility of post-return upward

mobility. The effect of such a strategy was illustrated through migrant men's easier experiences of cultivating sexual or intimate encounters and relationships upon their visits or return to Vietnam. Such a situation could positively foster migrant men's self-esteem and self-confidence. For example, Hien, a twenty-nine-year-old engineer in Tokyo, shared that "whenever I went back to Vietnam, I felt very confident. But then the moment I went back to Japan, such a confidence just disappeared".

4.4. Conclusion: Charging Migrants as a Social Condition, Status, and Negotiating Process

The full relevance of the experiences of the migrant's body during the processes of migrating and living abroad can only be understood by bringing into the analytical equation the affective, sexual, and emotional dimensions of migrants' lives (Mai & King, 2009). The social world constructs the body as a "sexually defined reality" and as "the depository of sexually defining principles of vision and division" (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 11). Using the migrant's body as a venture point, this chapter elucidates the tangled conundrum of mobility and sexuality and how these notions are conditioned by sociocultural structures and individuals' agencies (Groes & Fernandez, 2018; Howe et al., 2008). When migrants relocate transnationally, they do not only move into new social environments, but also enter new domains of the sexual social life, in which their self-esteem and significance, sense of self, and opportunities to engage with desirable others are conditioned therein. While it has been observed that many Asian male migrants are confronted with difficulties in navigating and positioning themselves within the new sexual environments and cultures after migrating, little attention has been paid to the ways in which migrants deal with such situations. The narratives featured in this chapter have shown how the bodies of male Vietnamese migrants are charged with different sentiments in dissimilar social contexts and how these migrant men make sense of such a circumstance. In particular, engaging with the approach of the sexual field (Green, 2008, 2013, 2015), this chapter argues that many Vietnamese migrant men do not possess high positions within the sexual fields in the Japanese social context, be them offline, online, with or without the presence of co-ethnic fellow migrants. Such low positions within the sexual fields were reflected through the reported difficulties that these migrants had in cultivating intimate encounters or relationships in Japan. This positionality was the result of the tangle of diverse factors ranging from institutional level (the dominant hierarchies of desirability structured by racial discrimination and racialized preferences in Japanese society), meso level (migrants'

living and working conditions, the presence of co-ethnic communities in Japan), to the individual level (sexual and gender identities, race and ethnicity, social class and possessed capital). Together, these factors rendered the body of the Vietnamese migrant men as being charged with negative perceptions and, thus, deemed as sexually undesirable within the Japanese context. On the other hand, many migrant men can access higher positions within the sexual fields in Vietnam thanks to the positive views of local Vietnamese toward people returning from abroad. In other words, the social and sexual bodies of Vietnamese migrant men are often charged with positive emotions and sentiments. Such a charged situation could be observed through the easy ways in which migrant men could find intimate partners in Vietnam as they returned or visited from abroad. Consequently, the chapter argues that male Vietnamese migrants can have access to relatively high positions within the sexual fields in Vietnam.

Venturing from the approach of the sexual field as well as the empirical observations on how the bodies of the Vietnamese migrant men are perceived and negotiated in Japan and Vietnam, the chapter then proposes a map of transnational sexual mobility that illustrates the possible positions and mobility trajectories of the male Vietnamese migrants' bodies within and between sexual fields in both Japan and Vietnam (Figure 6). Such a map, I argue, not only provides a good visualization of how the bodies of Vietnamese migrant men are charged and perceived with diverse sentiments in dissimilar contexts but also takes into good account the possible downward and upward mobility trajectories that these bodies can have during different phases of migration. Moreover, it also illustrates the possible outcomes of the tactics and the strategy that migrant men employ to negotiate their sexual bodies.
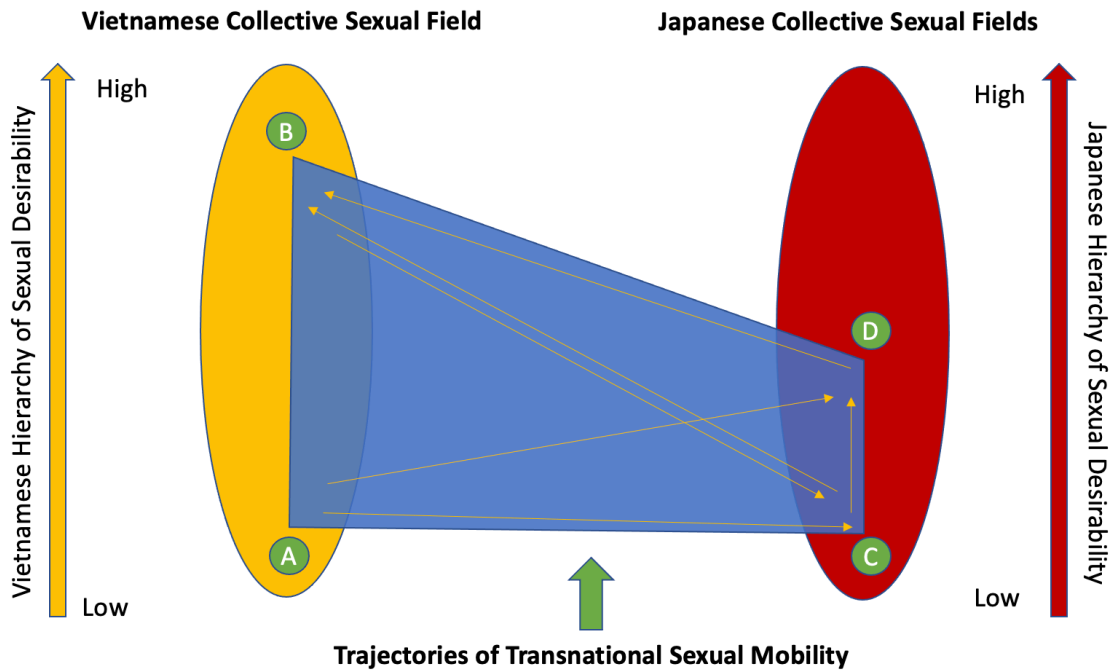
Figure 6. The Map of Transnational Sexual Mobility

The map of transnational sexual mobility in Figure 6 demonstrates the possible positions and movements of the male Vietnamese migrants' bodies within and between the sexual fields in the social contexts of Vietnam and Japan. In this map, the yellow oval represents a collective sexual field within the Vietnamese social context, and the red oval represents a collective sexual field within the Japanese social context. This means that these collective sexual fields encompass smaller sexual fields within the social contexts of Vietnam and Japan, and represent structures and tiers of sexual desire among general social actors. In other words, each of these sexual fields is structured by a collective hierarchy of sexual desirability relevant to its distinct national context. The position of one migrant's body along this hierarchy of sexual desirability will reflect its position within the corresponding sexual field. The higher the position of one migrant's body in situated within the hierarchy of sexual desirability, the better position it possesses within the sexual field that the migrant is a part of.

The experiences of how the bodies of the Vietnamese migrant men have been perceived in different social contexts suggest particular patterns of movement and positioning, all of which are depicted in the map by the yellow arrows confined within a blue trapezoid that transcends the two distinct sexual fields in Vietnam and Japan. I refer to this trapezoid as a zone of transnational sexual mobility as it encapsulates the possible positions

in which the bodies of the Vietnamese migrant men can be situated within different sexual fields and the possible mobility trajectories that these bodies could have within and between the two sexual fields. The fringe of this transnational sexual mobility zone is specified by four points (A, B, C, and D), which indicate the range of possible positions that the male Vietnamese migrant's body can take up within the sexual fields in Vietnam and Japan. When migrants migrate to a new country, it is common that they enter (a) new sexual field(s) in which the structures of desire, tiers of desirability, and the distribution of sexual resources might not synchronize with those within the sexual field(s) that migrants were familiar with. This might lead to possible downward mobility in terms of migrants' position within the sexual field, migrants' sexual capital, and subsequently their sexual status after relocating to the destination country. This downward mobility can be observed in the cases of several male Vietnamese migrants after they have moved to Japan. Consequently, a large number of Vietnamese migrant men are situated in a relatively low position (represented by point C) within the collective sexual field in Japan, including both heterosexual sexual fields and non-heterosexual sexual fields. This situation can happen with either Vietnamese men who had already possessed a high position (point A) or who were placed in a low position (point B) within the collective sexual field in Vietnam. The move from Vietnam to Japan, therefore, can be a descent in sexual status when migrants leave the sexual field in Vietnam to participate in the one in Japan. Such a descent is demonstrated by situations in which the bodies of the Vietnamese migrant men, regardless of their sexual identities, are rendered undesirable within the Japanese social contexts. In addition, several heterosexual migrant men are also placed in disadvantaged positions within the sexual fields that involve female Vietnamese migrants living in Japan, illustrated by the common concern of not being able to find Vietnamese intimate partners due to the few numbers of available Vietnamese women and the post-migration downward mobility in social status and self-esteem.

However, the male Vietnamese migrants in this study also utilized different tactics and strategy of self-representation in order to negotiate their positions within the sexual fields in Japan. This chapter has shown that these tactics and strategy were indeed effective to a certain extent and could help many Vietnamese migrant men gain more sexual capital and subsequently move up the hierarchies of sexual desirability in the Japanese context. In other words, the four tactics of participating in different sites of socio-sexual encounters, presenting good appearance and special skills, presenting superior attributes in comparison

to those of typical Japanese men, and presenting positive foreign traits as well as the main strategy of putting migrants' foreignness in a more positive can help migrants move from a relatively low position to a higher position within the collective sexual field in Japan (from point C to point D in Figure 6). Although several Vietnamese migrant men in this research can achieve higher positions within the sexual fields in Japan through such tactics and strategy, very few of them could actually refer to themselves as being sexually desirable or attractive to other actors in Japan. The narratives featured in this chapter as well as studies on sexualities in contemporary Japan have suggested that the bodies of the male Vietnamese migrants would not commonly be positioned at the highest tier of desire within the different sexual fields in the Japanese social context. Such top positions would normally be occupied by the bodies of Japanese nationals or white Westerners, given how the bodies of White, Western foreigners are commonly positively seen, desired, or even fetishized in the Japanese sexual fields. Moreover, many other foreign bodies of different races, ethnicities, and nationalities are also considered or perceived to possess more sexual capital than the bodies of Vietnamese men. As a result, the map in Figure 6 represents the highest position that the body of the Vietnamese migrant men could be generally elevated to the middle position (represented by point D in Figure 6). On the other hand, when the Vietnamese migrant men in this study returned to Vietnam from Japan either to visit or resettle, most of them experienced an elevation not only in social and gender status (as Chapter three has shown) but also in sexual desirability and status. In such cases, migrants' possible positions within the sexual field can witness upward mobility, yet not within one national context but rather between national contexts (from either point C or point D to point A in Figure 6). Consequently, while transnational migration brings about downward sexual (and social) mobility in Japan for Vietnamese migrant men, it can help these men achieve upward mobility in terms of sexual desirability and self-esteem in the home country.

This chapter so far has elucidated how transnational migration from Vietnam to Japan takes on different meanings that go beyond the mere accumulation of resources or the search for better livelihood. It shows that while contemporary transnational migration has been commonly considered as a response to secure economic or educational betterment, it should also be analyzed through the lens of sexuality to deviate from strict and outdated interpretations of migration and achieve more comprehensive views of migrants' lived experiences and mobility trajectories. Moreover, it illustrates how sexuality acts as an

influential power dimension that affects not one particular period of migration but rather every phase of the transnational migration process. Such insights diverge from the reductive assumption about migration motivations as being merely committed to material betterment. Furthermore, by mapping the possible positions and trajectories of sexual mobility of the Vietnamese migrant men's bodies in transnational migration, this chapter illustrates how different factors at structural, interpersonal, and individual levels contour the ways in which the bodies of the Vietnamese migrant men are perceived in the transnational migration contexts. It shows how the bodies of these men are charged with various sentiments, perceptions, emotions, and desires during transnational migration. In that sense, the chapter contributes to the understanding of the "charging migrants" as a social condition and status. At the same time, the inquiry into the mobility trajectories within and between sexual fields located in different nation-states also reveals migrants' agency. As migrants learn context-specific social codes and symbols of sexual desirability during migration (Hibbins & Pease, 2009), the examination of the tactics and strategy that male Vietnamese migrants adopt to negotiate their bodies and sexualities shows how migrants develop a reflexive relationship with their identities, behaviors, and embeddedness in different social and sexual fields. In that sense, the chapter highlights the relationship between interactional works and the acquisition of resources that are relevant or deemed to be significant to explain the construction and negotiation of the migrant's body and the sexual desire and desirability ascribed to such a body. Such a perspective, thus, indicates that the "charging migrants" notion can also be understood as a process of negotiation, in which migrant men engage with the advantages and disadvantages that transnational migration has on their bodies. Bringing together a multi-level analysis regarding the migrant's body, this chapter contributes to the need to foreground and conceptualize how the body of the Asian male migrant is perceived, experienced, negotiated, utilized, and engaged with during different migration trajectories. Consequently, it responds to the call for research that gives "weight and space to male migrants' accounts of their bodies as part of their trajectories of crossing borders, working abroad, and navigating migration pathways" (Baas & Yang, 2020: 25).

Chapter 5
The Charging Effect and the Experiences of Return Migration

Ben is a young businessman in Ho Chi Minh City whose success thrived after he returned from Japan. We met in a crowded Starbucks café in a luxurious district of Ho Chi Minh City, before Ben started his evening ritual of going to the gym. Sipping his hibiscus tea and looking around at the other surrounding fully-seated tables, Ben told me that his past self would never imagine that he could talk freely in public about his lifestyle as a gay man. "But things changed after I returned from Japan and had these jobs that earned me good money", Ben explained. Returning from Japan was thus a major change and transition in Ben's life, not only in terms of living out his sexual identity but also in many other ways. Ben migrated to Japan at the age of nineteen after finishing his high school diploma in Vietnam and studied at a language school in central Tokyo. During this time, Ben worked several part-time jobs to cover his tuition and living costs, ranging from packing *bento* boxes during night shifts to preparing *Gyudon* (Japanese beef rice) in a chained quick restaurant. After graduating from the language course, Ben enrolled at a private university in Tokyo, majoring in business administration. Shortly after Ben found a full-time job at a *Hakengaisha* (temporary staff recruitment agency), he dropped out of university. The Chinese-ran agency that Ben worked at did not pay much attention to the fact that Ben was not a university graduate and even asked him to set up a branch office in Vietnam. Ben took up the offer and went back to Vietnam after three years of living in Japan.

Upon his return to Vietnam, Ben worked hard to set up the new branch office for the recruitment agency that employed him. But then his relationship with the employers went sour and Ben subsequently quit. However, it was not too difficult for Ben to find a new job. Within two years of his return, Ben changed his employment three times, yet he was still able to earn enough money to buy a new apartment in Ho Chi Minh City, though with a mortgage. At the time that we met, Ben was twenty-four years old and was working for a company specializing in exporting fruits from Vietnam to Japan. Simultaneously, he was preparing to open a cosmetic company whose products "were going to be produced with Japanese technology and philosophy". It was after his return to Vietnam that Ben had his first homosexual encounter. Shortly after his return, Ben was introduced to a group of other returnees who also used to live in Japan, among whom there were a few gay men. These

people subsequently incorporated Ben into the city's vivid queer scene, and since then Ben fully embraced a non-heterosexual identity. Ben shared that he was in a relationship with another man in Ho Chi Minh City and his boyfriend had been helping him out a lot with his business ideas and also with the mortgage for the apartment. Ben relayed that such a transformation in how he engaged with his sexuality was not a surprising twist for him. Indeed, Ben thought that his gay identity "had always been there" but he had avoided admitting it in the past because of the trauma of being bullied and teased by childhood schoolmates for behaving effeminately. Because of such experiences, Ben had tried to act more masculine, diverted his attention to females, and engaged only in heterosexual relationships. For example, during his stay in Japan, Ben was in a cohabiting relationship with a Vietnamese woman in Tokyo. Ben remembered having a strong feeling for this woman, but such a feeling was not lust. Rather, he strongly felt that he needed to take care of this woman and shelter her from the harsh and lonely life in a foreign country. However, when Ben returned to Vietnam and had jobs that allowed him a relatively good income, he felt that it was easier to express his true sexual identity and desire:

> "I felt like I was better off than many of my friends in Vietnam. Look! Not so many people my age could earn as much as I am earning now. I am still young, yet I have my own apartment and I take good care of my father back in my hometown. Of course, there were people who were financially better off than I am, but I am also doing not bad. I have also been through a lot of difficulties with my own jobs so I am confident in my abilities. All of that made it easier to express myself (as a gay man)".

His post-return economic superiority allowed Ben not only upward socioeconomic mobility but also improved self-confidence and sexual status. Ben shared that there were a lot of people into him, but he carefully because he only wanted a partner who "matches" his level of socioeconomic status.

The case of Ben vividly illustrates a common trajectory of many Vietnamese migrant men in Japan after they have returned to Vietnam. In particular, many experienced positive transformation and upward mobility in terms of economic, social, gender, and sexual status in the Vietnamese context upon their return. This chapter will focus on such an experience and explore the question of how and why Vietnamese migrant men have access to upward mobility in many aspects after returning to their home country from Japan. Through such an inquiry perspective, this chapter reveals the effect that transnational migration possibly casts

on migrants' identities and statuses. In this chapter, I refer to this effect as the "charging effect" of transnational migration and examine how migrants' accumulated capital from abroad is negotiated, perceived, and utilized in the different processes of return migration as well as migrants' post-return experiences. In that sense, this chapter links its empirical analyses to the established meanings of the notion of "charging migrants" and offers another way to engage with the existing scholarship on return migration. The chapter starts with a brief review of studies on return migration experiences before conceptualizing its understanding and working definition of return migration. I then propose a framework called the "return diamond" and illustrate, using empirical evidence, how this return diamond can help comprehensively understand the process and experiences of return migration. The chapter then further engages with this "return diamond" framework and transnational migration's "charging effect" to identify the different outcomes of return migration. It argues that the "charging effect" of transnational migration delivers its most positive result in the case of achievement return, where a migrant man returns home voluntarily after having accumulated sufficient capital and resources from abroad, and his expectations regarding the return match with what happened in the post-return social reality.

5.1. Return Migration and the "Charging Effects" of Transnational Migration

5.1.1. The conceptual development of return migration

Despite the widespread assumption that international migrants usually want to permanently settle in the migration destinations, evidence of migrants and refugees wanting and planning to return to their home countries has been omnipresent (Battistella 2018; Carling et al. 2015; Massey et al. 1993). In the past, the studies of return migration used to be hazy due to the dominant focus on emigration and immigration in migration literature, the lack of quantifying data on return migration, and the complexities of how and when migrants return (Oxfeld and Long 2017). Return migration was also not referred to under a unified terminology[28], which made it difficult to quantify the actual actors and processes that involve in such a movement. While the interest in return migration can be traced back to the 1960s, it was only until the 1980s that research on return migration started to flourish and necessitated theoretical

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[28] There were several terms employed to refer to return migration such as reflux migration, homeward migration, re-migration, return glow, second-time migration, or repatriation (Gmelch 1980).

frameworks that explain the phenomenon and its dynamics (Cassarino 2004). This development was in concurrence with the emergence of different approaches in migration studies that aimed to accommodate the growing complexities of contemporary migration such as the structural approach, social network theory, or transnationalism. As a result, there have been several attempts to propose concrete definitions, terminologies, and theoretical approaches to the phenomenon of return migration. In one of the earliest extensive studies on return migration, Gmelch (1980, 136) defined this pattern of migration as "the movement of emigrants back to their homelands to resettle" and observed that most typologies of return migration had been categorizing migrants based on two dimensions: the length of time migrants intended to stay abroad and the reasons for their return. With his definition of return migration, Gmelch then divided return migrants into three groups: people who stay abroad temporarily and return upon the accomplishment of their migration goals, people who were forced to return and abandon their plan of staying abroad permanently, and people who voluntarily return because of failure to adjust to the environment in the migration destinations or because of homesickness (ibid.). While Gmelch's definition and categorization of return migration were one of the first to give way to deeper engagements with the return phenomenon, they need to be reconsidered in the context of more complex migration trajectories and patterns in the contemporary world.

Since return is a situated concept and is given meanings from various sources and actors at different periods, the enlargement of what can be considered as return migration is necessary. Scholars thus have gone beyond geographical typologies to incorporate temporal variances such as temporary, occasional, and periodic visits, and even the processes of preparing for return into the spectrum of phenomena that can be considered return migration. For example, Carling and Erdal (2014) argued that return visits and consistent contacts with communities back home are typical transnational practices that can assert significant impacts on migrants' plans, time, and means of possible return. This means that visits/holidays or circular migration should also be seen as part of the picture (Carling, Mortensen, and Wu 2011). Similarly, Oxfeld and Long (2017, 4) perceived return as ranging "from short visits to permanent repatriation, spatially from one's original place of origin to a reconstructed homeland (a particular site in the home country where one has never actually lived), and legally from voluntary to coerced movements". Such a conceptual enhancement included the processes and consequences of return across time and space and, therefore,

provided better understanding of the complexity and malleability of how return migration happens. Resonating with such a perspective on return migration, this chapter proposes a working definition of return as the voluntary and involuntary movement(s) of migrants from the migration destination to the country of origin for the purpose of either permanent settlement or short-term, temporary visits. The return destination does not have to be the same as migrants' places of departure or the hometowns where they grew up and can be a location in the home country in which the returnee has never lived. Such a working definition reflects the proposal from Oxfeld and Long (2017) to incorporate spatial, temporal, and legal variances into how return migration should be conceptualized. It also indicates the overlap between transnationalism and return migration given that temporary visits and transnational connections can be vital foundations for the eventual return (Carling and Erdal 2014; Nowicka 2020). Furthermore, it sees return migration as a process, through which complex interactions and transformations are enacted. Subsequently, this working definition of return migration includes a wider range of movements from the destination country to the country of origin and does not necessarily render return as the finale of the migration project. This leaves room for the possibility of re-migration or circular migration, which might not be included if a return is considered to be a fixed and permanent end.

The enhanced spectrum of practices included in the definition of return migration also necessitated theoretical frameworks that could sufficiently explain the nuanced processes of return (Cassarino 2004; Waldinger 2008). Migration theories used to mostly focus on the motivations and practices of migrating internationally and transnationally and did not pay much attention to the questions of who returns when, and why; and why some returns can be considered successful in specific social and institutional circumstances at home, whereas others cannot. In a systematical review, Cassarino (2004) traced five major theories that took into consideration the magnitude and dynamics of migrants' return journey to the country of origin including neoclassical economics, the new economics of labor migration, the structural approach to return migration, transnationalism, and social network theory. In particular, neoclassical economics sees return migration as the result of a failed experience, in which migrants miscalculated the costs and could not reap the expected benefits of migration. On the contrary, the new economics of labor migration (NELM) considers return migration to be a logical outcome of the migration project when migrants have achieved their migration goals of generating higher incomes and accumulating financial resources. The shortcomings of

these two frameworks are apparent: return migration is mainly determined by financial or economic factors only, and returnees are exclusively viewed as "foreign-income bearers or financial intermediaries" and thus isolated from other social and political environments either at home or in the host countries (Cassarino 2004: 257). Another theoretical framework that tried to explain return migration is the structural approach, which points to the importance of social and institutional factors in the countries of origin in shaping the return decisions and how return migration can be perceived by both migrants and people at home. This approach advocates for the abolishment of the framing of return migration as being exclusively affected by individual experiences in the migration destination (ibid: 260). While the three theories of neoclassical economics, the new economics of labor migration, and the structural approach to migration studies have different views on the reasons for return migration, they share a common perception of seeing return as the end mark of the migration cycle.

Contradicting this view, the approach of transnationalism considers return as a part of the continuous process of cross-border migration. It highlights the connections between migrants and individuals and communities at home through periodical and regular visits, communication technologies, and remittances. It is through these transnational connections that migrants constitute transnational identities, embrace different types of cross-border mobility, become aware of important situations at home, and constitute their "point of reference" about themselves and how their return is perceived (Nowicka 2014). Return migration, then, takes place once migrants have accumulated enough necessary capital (economic, social, cultural) and carefully calculated for a smooth adaptation to the social and institutional environments at home (Cassarino 2004: 264). Because of the similarity in transnationalism and the processes involved in preparing for return migration, these two phenomena sometimes overlap and can simultaneously or sequentially influence each other, and thus are not always seen as two distinct phenomena (Carling and Erdal 2014). The transnational perspective can hence reveal the connections between return migration, transnationalism, and possible changes over time in the forms of migrants' consideration of return as a possibility, migrants' post-return experiences of transnationalism, and transnationalism associated with onward migration or circular migration (ibid.). Similar to transnationalism, the approach of social network theory also views returnees as individuals who maintain strong linkages with former places of settlement. This approach sees return migrants as bearers of resources (both tangible resources in terms of financial capital and

intangible ones in terms of social capital and skills) and "social actors who are involved in a set of relational ramifications" (Cassarino 2004: 266). Return migration, according to social network theory, derives from migrants' involvement and memberships in certain networks. It is from such involvement and maintenance in different networks that migrants' mobilization, interests, and strategies for return are formulated and shaped.

5.1.2 The post-return experiences and the "Charging effects" of transnational migration

Despite the aforementioned conceptual and theoretical developments, conceptual difficulties and insufficiency remain in the studies of return migration. Battistella (2018) identified two main aspects that fabricated such difficulties: the lack of satisfactory theoretical approaches/frameworks in studying return migration and the overconcentration on a limited number of research topics. Theoretically, more comprehensive understandings of return migration are still being impeded by the lack of a clear definition of return migration, challenges in quantifying the flows of return among different groups of returnees, as well as the insufficiency of theoretical innovation (Hagan and Wassink 2020). In addition, although several studies have pointed out that migrants are restless and active agents for negotiating an unfixed sense of self, home, and culture, there has still been a common perception that migrants are flexible whereas the states, societies, and institutions are fixed (Chan and Tran 2011). With regard to the lack of diversity in return-related research topics, the common research themes concerning the topic of return migration to date can be summed up in three broad categories: the decision-making process of migrants considering returns or the possibilities of return, the (re)integration and post-return experiences of those who do return, and state policies and programs that govern and manage return migration flows (Achenbach 2017; Battistella 2018; Carling et al. 2011; Hagan and Wassink 2020). These three broad categories of studies on return migration inquired into the economic and political sociology of return to access migrants' acquisition of capital while living and working abroad, how such capital could be used to either achieve economic and labor market mobility upon their return or contribute to the social and economic developments in the countries of origin, and how state policies, legal systems, and (trans)national institutions influence the processes of return migration and post-return (re)integration. Although these three broad research categories have broadened our knowledge of the return migration phenomenon and the actors involved in it, the majority of studies still center around the economic and development aspects. While

this was not surprising given the fact that migrants' remittances and economic mobility have constituted one of the most well-researched bodies of migration literature, such a focus risks overlooking other aspects that are equally stimulating in the return phenomenon such as migrants' identities and individual transformation, the social meanings given to return migration, and the gender and sexual dimensions of return.

Moreover, most studies on the post-return experiences of migrants have focused on providing answers to the question of what happens after return yet not so much on how such a post-return reality happens. Although feminist studies have pointed to the shifting gendered role in the family as a result of migration and how structural changes in gender ideologies, practices, and hierarchies are facilitated by returned migrants (Christou 2006; Sakka et al. 1999; Hoang and Yeoh 2011; Parrenas 2010; Yeoh and Ramdas 2014), more could be done to systematically explain how such changes are implemented and performed by the returnees and allowed in the return society. In addition, the sexual aspect of return migration has rarely been addressed since most studies have been focusing on how sexualities drive outward migration and how migrants' sexualities are transformed or contested after migrating (Bass 2020; Cantú 2009; Carrillo 2017; Gorman-Murray 2007; Hoang and Yeoh 2015; Lewis 2014; Luibhéid 2008). More focus on the sexual aspect in return migration is thus needed to better understand migrants' post-return lived experiences and (re)configuring identities.

Taking these gaps in the existing literature on return migration into consideration, this chapter aims to unpack the why and how in migrants' experiences and transformation of status or/and identity after returning to the home country. It does so by proposing the notion of the "charging effect" of transnational migration. This notion needs to be understood in juxtaposition with the "charging migrants" notion that has been proposed and elaborated from the previous chapters. So far, the "charging migrants" notion has been conceptualized as a social process during which migrant men gather different resources during their stays abroad with the aspiration for subsequent upward mobility in terms of socioeconomic, masculine, and sexual statuses. Moreover, such a notion has also been elaborated as a condition in which migrants' bodies and statuses are perceived and received differently in dissimilar migratory contexts. The "charging effect" in this chapter, and this dissertation as a whole, then refers to the effect that the aforementioned charging process and charged condition during transnational migration can cast on migrants' mobility trajectories and lived

experiences. It pays attention to the mechanisms through which migrants negotiate and make use of their accumulated resources and "charged" statuses in migration, with a focus on return migration. Such a focus on the "charging effect" in return migration stems from an empirical ground and a theoretical necessity. First, return migration is an event in which the resources that migrants have accumulated from abroad and during migration are commonly shown and utilized. People and communities in the home countries often consider returnees as living examples through which the success or failure of the migration project can be evaluated (Gmelch 1980). Consequently, return is a social site and process in which migrants are normally expected to demonstrate or at least reveal the capital that they have "charged" from their stay abroad.

Second, the notion of the "charging effect" help understand why some individuals can achieve better social positions in the home society upon their return migration. As in the case of Ben from the opening vignette of the chapter, the social and cultural capital that he had gathered during his stay in Japan helped him to secure employment with good income in Vietnam, which eventually allow Ben upward mobility in terms of social and economic status. The "charging effect" notion therefore also help comprehend the consequence(s), outcome(s), and impact(s) of return migration. Furthermore, this notion also links return migration to transnationalism and takes into account the variances of spatiality and temporality in individuals' transnational migration project. It reflects the working definition of return as not an end but rather a continuity of the migration project. Having elucidated how this dissertation understands the notion of the "charging effect" and positioned it within the studies of return migration, I now explore the logic and experiences of return migration among male Vietnamese migrants in Japan in the following sections. Using empirical evidence as a venture point and engaging with the notion of the "charging effect", I propose a conceptual framework called the return diamond framework, which analyzes how return migration is planned, considered, carried out, and categorized over time and space.

5.2. The Return Diamond Framework and The Logic of Return Migration

5.2.1. The return diamond framework

Return is a phenomenon that is filled with conflicting interests, multiple attachments, and complex political, economic, and cultural consequences (Oxfeld and Long 2017). Because of its political, social, economic, and cultural meanings for not only the returnees themselves

but also the sending and receiving societies, migration scholars have been considering return migration as an important analytical entity. As a result, different conceptual or theoretical frameworks that account for different circumstances, patterns, and trajectories of return migration have been developed, tested, criticized, and (re)adjusted. For example, Achenbach (2017) integrated migration theory with decision-making models to propose a model of return migration decision-making. Engaging with the case study of Chinese high-skilled labor migrants in Japan, she investigated the processes through which migrants negotiate the decision of return migration through the four stages: situation assessment, evaluation of options, behavior planning, and action. Going beyond the decision-making phases regarding return migration, Hagan and Wassink (2020) proposed a broader framework that evaluates the experiences of those who return based on four factors: (1) the accumulation of resources, (2) migrants' degree of readiness for return, (3) sending state and institutional and family contexts of reception, and (4) the opportunities to mobilize resources in the local economies to which migrants return. Although the framework from Hagan and Wassink has recognized the differences between dissimilar groups of returnees and the variety of actors and institutions involved in the return process, it still treats these factors as separate elements and has not considered how these different factors interact with and influence each other to eventually shape the realization and consequence(s) of return migration. Moreover, the two aforementioned frameworks still associate return migration with permanent resettlement and reintegration into the home society and thus risk overlooking the self-perpetuating nature of migration in which individuals who have once migrated have a higher tendency to migrate again (Vertovec 2009).

Responding to the call for more conceptual approaches within return migration's research agenda (Battistella 2018; Carling et al. 2015; Hagan and Wassink 2020), this chapter suggests a framework of return migration called the return diamond framework that seeks to make sense of the processes of how return migration is planned for, negotiated and carried out (Figure 7.1).
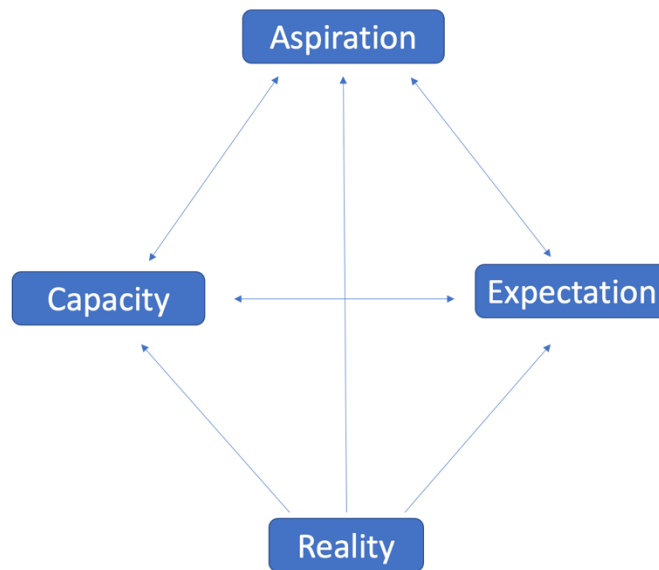
Figure 7.1. The Return Diamond Framework

The proposed return diamond framework is inspired by the sequential framework of migration aspiration and ability initially proposed to explain different mobility outcomes based on the two variables of migrants' aspiration to migrate and their ability to do so (Carling 2002; Carling and Collins 2018). The model identified three types of mobility outcomes: mobility (having both the aspiration and ability to migrate), involuntary mobility (having the aspiration but not the ability to migrate), and voluntary immobility (having the ability but not the aspiration to migrate). Albeit simple, the framework of aspiration-ability is a "profound conceptual approach that provides helpful tools to analyze the processes of both mobilities and immobilities" (Schewel 2020: 333-4). Consequently, it has been engaged with by several migration scholars, which led to further suggestions to either adjust or expand the theoretical framework. For example, arguing that the term "ability" might not be able to describe fully migrants' agencies in migration, de Haas (2010) advocated replacing it with the term "capacity" to better reflect the connection between (im)mobility outcomes, development process and personal freedom to move or stay. In addition, trying to deviate from a mobility bias in migration studies that focuses predominantly on mobile subjects and mobility, Schewel (2020) proposed to add another mobility outcome to the framework - "acquiescent immobility" - to refer to the situation in which individuals do not have both the aspiration and the capacity to migrate. While the theoretical framework offers a venture point to explain how certain mobility and immobility outcomes are produced, the two factors of aspiration

and capacity alone cannot fully explain the complex process of how mobilities are imagined, planned, and realized. In other words, the framework's explanatory power is beneficial for the categorization of mobility outcomes rather than for the explanation of how migration trajectories are driven, planned, and realized because it does not pay attention to factors at the structural level like social context and institutions or more micro-level such as personal expectations.

Consequently, the return diamond framework in this chapter not only takes into account the notions of aspiration and capacity but also considers two additional elements of expectation and reality to understand how the whole process of return migration is planned, prepared, negotiated, and carried out. In other words, the return diamond framework sees return as a process influenced and shaped by four main factors: aspiration, capacity, expectation, and reality. Massey et al. (1999, 281) claimed that any satisfactory theoretical account of international migration should contain four basic aspects: (1) the structural forces that promote emigration from origin areas; (2) the structural forces that attract immigrants into destination areas; (3) the social and economic structures that connect origin and destination areas; (4) the aspiration and motivations of those people who respond to these structural forces by migration. The elements listed in the return diamond framework, therefore, provide an appropriate foundation to acquire a theoretical comprehension of return migration.

In particular, the first factor in the return diamond is aspiration, which refers to migrants' motivation, desire, wish, plan, or preference to return to their home country. The aspiration to return indicates either a "myth of return" (Carling et al. 2015) in which return remains a possibility or an unavoidable future reality. This means that the notion of aspiration in this framework connotes abstract, long-term motivations or wishes that a person might or might not be able to achieve. The time and circumstances under which migrants construct their aspiration to return vary case by case. For example, most migrants who migrate voluntarily know that they would return to the country of origin one day (Carling, Mortensen, and Wu 2011; Parreñas 2010). Similarly, many of the migrant men in this study had already known or planned their return to Vietnam even before they migrated to Japan. Not only those who migrated as technical intern trainees whose return is unavoidable due to their visas' time limitation but many other men with more agencies in deciding their time of staying abroad also considered going back to Vietnam as a predetermined trajectory. At the time I met Thanh,

a young language student in Osaka, he was only in his third semester in a two-year Japanese language program. Although Thanh planned to enroll at a *Senmon Gakkō* (vocational school) after his graduation from the language program and to work in Japan afterward, he saw the plan of returning to Vietnam as ultimately "unquestionable from the very beginning". Put differently, Thanh's aspiration to return to Vietnam had already been sketched since the start of his migration journey to Japan.

While many other research participants shared a similar perspective, return migration is not always predetermined. Migrants' considerations of return are typically ambivalent since they can change over time and might have little to do with what they have planned before (Carling et al. 2015). There are men in this study whose prospects of return only became obvious after they had either experienced life in Japan, accumulated sufficient resources, or witnessed the social changes and developments in Vietnam. This means that for these men, the aspiration of return was not by default but rather developed as they navigated through the different phases of transnational migration between Vietnam and Japan. Besides, the aspiration to return to the home country can be ignited and molded by numerous components. Economic aspiration, for instance, is one of the major reasons why migrants choose to return to the country of origin (Christou 2006; Hagan and Thomas Wassink 2020; Oxfeld and Long 2017). Migration scholars have also reported non-economic related factors such as strong family ties, the feeling of loyalty or allegiance to the home society, the desire to be in the company of one's significant others, or the combination of all to be the primary reasons that trigger the aspiration to return (Alcalde 2019; Gmelch 1980). Hibbins (2005) observed that several heterosexual Chinese men want to go back home as their sexualities and masculinities were degraded after migrating to Australia. Murray (2000) found that some Martinican gay migrants exchanged their sexual liberation in France for a non-racist and less stressful economic situation by returning home to Martinique, where most sexual minorities remained closeted. As a result, the aspiration for return migration should be contemplated as a site where intersections, entanglements, and even contradictions happened. Similarly, the wish to go back to Vietnam of the male migrants in this research is conditioned by a tangle of factors related to economic reasons, family, gender, and sexuality.

In particular, although their desired length of stay in Japan varies, sixty-three out of seventy research participants in this study have either planned or made the return trip. These migrant men talked about the longing for a sense of "home" and the importance of family

and homeplace as the main elements that motivated their return. Many longed for the relaxing living environment and vibrant social activities back in Vietnam, which stand in contrast to the more rigid, rule-obedient lifestyles in Japan. Moreover, strong senses of familism and nationalism are also determinants that encourage many men to return home. All of the research participants in this study are first-generation and the majority of them were relatively young (the average age of participants in Japan was twenty-seven years old and thirty-four years old among those who had permanently returned). For these men, the presence of family members at home and the prospect of building and raising a family in Vietnam acted as strong pull factors for return. Until now, the Confucianist value of familism that expects sons to dutifully take care of the parents and to continue the family's lineage remains relevant in modern Vietnam (Horton and Rydström 2011, 2019; Nguyen 2018; Rydström 2006, 2021, 2022), which the men featured in this chapter commonly referred to in order to justify their return aspiration. Studies on masculinities in Vietnam have observed that a crucial masculine norm among Vietnamese men is the performance of the "family's pillar" (*trụ cột gia đình*) role (ISDS 2020; Horton and Rydström 2011; Rydström 2020). A "family's pillar" should be able to provide a sufficient and good life to his wife and offspring, pay filial piety to the parents, and take the responsibility to take care of other family members (sometimes even extended family members) (ISDS 2020). The motivation to return to Vietnam among the Vietnamese migrant men in Japan, thus, is heavily shaped by this dominant discourse of masculinity.

Nationalism is another motivation that shaped the return aspiration of many male Vietnamese migrants in Japan. Unlike other more established immigration countries, Japan does not allow double citizenship and, therefore, requires the renouncement of the former nationality when an individual naturalizes. Most of the participants in this study saw such a situation as unideal and going against their devotion to the homeland. Moreover, several mentioned the wish to contribute to the development of the homeland as another reason to return. For example, Tung–a doctoral researcher in a city in southern Japan said that because he had "Vietnamese blood running in the veins", he felt the need to return and use the resources that he had gathered in Japan to help Vietnam's societal and economic developments. Such a narrative suggests a strongly gendered guide in migrant men's decision to return namely the masculine discourse of having a stake in the interest and building of the nation, which is not uncommon in Vietnamese men's chattering. Similarly, Phan, a former

technical intern trainee, stated in his autobiography about his three-year migration journey in Japan that he refused to stay longer in Japan when his trainee contract ended, even though he could extend the stay. One of the reasons for such a decision was the urge to contribute, as he wrote in the autobiography: "…While there is no shared road for us (migrants) who return to the homeland, we meet at one common point – bringing good things from Japan back to our families, communities and contributing to our society" (Phan 2020, 173). The "good things" that Phan mentioned here include both material resources such as economic capital and immaterial resources such as cultural and social capital (Japanese language skills, know-how, and potential networks and connections with Japanese). However, the return diamond framework sees return aspiration as only one element in shaping migrants' return migration, which should be contemplated in relation to other elements in the framework as a whole.

The second factor in the return diamond framework is capacity, which connotes migrants' abilities and/or (social, financial, or cultural) resources to make return migration possible. While there are differences in the meanings of the two terms capacity and resource, I argue that these two notions are closely connected and sometimes even overlap in return migration because migrants' capacity to return commonly depends on their financial, social, cultural, or human resources. This is similar to the ways in which migrants have to mobilize certain capital to be able to migrate in the first place. Using the two terminologies of capacity and resource interchangeably, therefore, demonstrates the concomitant relationship between agency and resource in the unfolding of the process of return migration. It should be noted here that capacity/resource refers to not only tangible assets such as financial means but also intangible properties such as skills or experiences. In the case of male Vietnamese migrants in Japan, their capacity to return is very much tied to the kind of resources they have gathered during their stay in Japan. Many would only return once they have been able to save up a particular amount of financial capital or have worked in Japan for a few years to garner enough experiences and certain skill sets. For example, Hien, a thirty-year-old transportation engineer in Tokyo, confided that he would definitely go back to Vietnam because he had unexpectedly become the only son in the family after the passing away of his elder brother. Hien, therefore, had to take over the responsibility of taking care of the parents and the other family members back in Vietnam. However, he still planned to stay and work in Japan for a few more years before returning home permanently:

I planned to return to Vietnam within the next ten years… The first reason for that is the money. I have already been thinking about this since a few years ago. Working here (in Japan) earns me enough money to cover the living expenses and save up a bit in case I go back to Vietnam…The best scenario would be for the current company to send me back to Vietnam to manage a branch office. Otherwise, I would have to look for a new job in Vietnam, or I would open a small company with friends and then take up projects from Japanese companies.

Since Hien considers himself a careful man who prefers stability and safety, he aims to accumulate at least two types of resources – economic capital (money) and cultural capital (working skills, familiarity with the Japanese working culture) before returning to secure the best success chance in any of the post-return scenarios that he imagined. In other words, Hien's capacity to return is closely tied to the accumulation of resources. Sharing such a goal with Hien, most men in this study only felt "ready" and willing to return to Vietnam after having accumulated enough financial, cultural, and social capital in Japan. The notion of "charging migrants" has shown that migration to Japan is a process of accumulating necessary resources. Return, therefore, takes place only after migrants have successfully gathered these resources, and the capacity to return of the migrant men in this study is largely influenced by such a process of charging up capital.

As mentioned previously, the factors of aspiration and capacity alone cannot adequately explain the different processes involved in return migration. The return diamond framework hence also considers the notion of expectation at two levels: individual and social. At the individual level, expectation refers to migrants' presuppositions and anticipation about the outcome(s) of their return. Such a notion of expectation differs from the notion of aspiration because it refers to more concrete or/and short-term objectives that a person anticipates after certain actions. In other words, the factor of expectation in this framework denotes an anticipation of one or more consequences of one or more performed acts. Some migrant men in this study expressed the expectation that they would be able to claim higher economic, social, and gender statuses upon their return to Vietnam by making use of the resources accumulated abroad. Duc, a mid-30 engineer who works in the construction field in Tokyo, shared that there are three reasons for him to return to Vietnam in the near future:

The first reason is that because I am Vietnamese, that is my biggest resource. I also have gathered good working skills on construction sites here (in Japan). The second

reason is to be closer to my home and my family… The third reason is related to economics. I am only an employee in the headquarter in Japan, but I can have a higher status after returning to Vietnam. My income can be thirty to forty percent higher (than my current salary).

Duc's account implies an expectation of higher social and economic status upon going back to Vietnam, which plays an important role in contouring his ideas and plans for his future return.

Duc's personal expectations regarding his return were not spontaneous or cultivated by his individual perspective. Rather, they were also constructed in accordance with the social norms and expectations in Vietnam regarding male duties and people going back from abroad respectively. In modern Vietnam, children, especially sons, are expected to bear the responsibility of taking care of the parents as they grow older, and sometimes this responsibility also applies to members of the extended family (Horton and Rydström 2011; ISDS 2020; Martin 2018). Such a Vietnamese gendered expectation for filial piety and duty prompts not only Duc but also the majority of the male migrants in this research to go back to Vietnam eventually. Moreover, there is a common perception in Vietnam that often regards Vietnamese people who return from overseas as individuals with significant cultural and financial resources. In his ethnographic works on the return trips of Vietnamese Americans, Thai (2014) pointed out that returnees are often expected to show good pecuniary power by engaging in lavish consumption behaviors while in Vietnam. Other studies on the homecomings of the Vietnamese diaspora also observed that many local Vietnamese expected *Viet Kieu* [29] (overseas Vietnamese people) to be rich, modernized, and well-educated people coming back from developed countries (Chan and Tran 2011; Koh 2014; Long 2017; Müller 2021; Wang 2013). Consequently, the return diamond framework advocates considering the factor of expectation also at the social or institutional level to understand how different kinds of social, economic, and gendered anticipations directed toward returnees can affect not only the contemplation, planning, and realization of return migration, but also the actual post-return experiences.

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[29] The term Viet Kieu (越僑) is a Sino-Vietnamese term that refers mostly to Vietnamese people living abroad. "Viet" alludes to the Vietnamese ethnic, while "Kieu" means "sojourn" or "to reside abroad" - an equivalent of the Chinese term "qiao" (僑).The term is commonly used not only by Vietnamese people living in Vietnam but also by the Vietnamese state in official discourses (Koh 2015).

The last factor in the return diamond framework is reality, which refers to the social realities or social contexts in both the home country and the migration destination country. The term reality encompasses the social structures, institutions, and realities in both the migration destination and the country of origin that can either directly or indirectly affect migrants' aspiration, capacity, and expectation(s) of returning. A key problem in debates about migration is the tendency to see migration as quite distinct from broader social relationships and changes when the phenomenon should be seen as embedded in contemporary society (Castles 2010). Being attentive to social contexts and realities hence is crucial in understanding how the return migration process unfolds because while migrants are active agents who adjust their social behaviors, aspirations, and expectations in accordance to their social milieus, the social environment in which they live is also constantly changing. The consideration of reality in this framework thus responds to the need to contemplate the relevance of not only personal factors but also the role of structural factors both in the countries of origin and destination in influencing the return (Battistella 2018). Moreover, migrants' transnationalism in terms of transnational connections, communication with communities back home, or short-term home visits also serves as information channels through which migrants are made aware of the social changes and realities in the home country on a regular basis. As a result, the three aforementioned factors of aspiration, capacity, and expectation cannot be fully comprehended unless situated and contemplated within the social contexts and realities within which migrants are embedded. The following two cases can provide illustrations of the tangled relationship between migrants' aspiration, capacity, expectation, and reality.

When I first talked to Van, a salesman in his late 20s who had been working in Tokyo for three years, he had thought about settling down in Tokyo permanently. Having a good job that allowed him to earn a decent salary, a social network that he enjoyed, and a vibrant sexual life that he adored, Van had "no intention of returning to Vietnam in the future"[30]. He also thought that it would not be possible to earn the amount of money he was earning in Tokyo if he was in Vietnam. However, when I reconnected with Van one year after our first talk, Van had changed his mind. Our second talk happened during Van's three-month business trip to Ho Chi Minh City, in which Van's main task was to secure more potential retail clients

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[30] Interview with Van, 27, bi-sexual, salesman in Tokyo, on 29th April 2020 via Skype.

in Vietnam for the new products that his Japanese company was about to launch. During his stay, not only did Van have more in-depth views about Vietnam's rapid economic development, but he was also introduced to investment opportunities that "had a lot of future financial potential"[31]. Moreover, Van tried opening a dating application out of curiosity and found out that the sexual scenes in Ho Chi Minh City were "more open and easy-going" than he had expected. Faced with a social reality in Vietnam that he had not been aware of while being abroad, Van's plan of residing in Japan became less certain and he started considering the possibility of returning to Vietnam one day.

While what prompted Van's aspiration for a possible future return was the social reality that he encountered in Vietnam, the social reality in Japan also needs to be considered. For instance, Tai - an interpreter in Ho Chi Minh city (also featured in the opening vignette of chapter four) - had lived in Japan for 17 years by the time he decided to return to Vietnam. Migrated to Japan initially as a student at a language school, Tai then studied for a Bachelor's and a Master's Degree before spending eight years working at a big Japanese technology firm. During this time, Tai realized that he did not enjoy living in Japan as he used to. Work became "too stressful and boring" for him and Tai also suffered from *pawa hara* (power harassment) from one of his supervisors and saw no chance for further promotion in the company due to his status as a foreigner. Tai's observation of the reality of how difficult it was for foreigners to climb up the corporate ladder in the Japanese firm is not uncommon. Researchers have pointed out that despite the efforts to internationalize the workforce, Japanese workplaces and cooperate culture remain ethnocentric and offer limited promotion opportunities for foreign workers (Chiavacci 2020; Hof and Tseng 2020; Liu-Farrer and Shire 2021). Several research participants in this study who had worked in Japanese companies in Japan also mentioned how they disliked Japanese working culture, where "there was no work-life balance, no emotion between people, and too much gossip"[32]. Such a stressful reality of the work life in Japan thus urged many of them to consider returning to Vietnam, where there is a supposedly more relaxing working environment.

In addition, although one of the reasons Tai chose to migrate to Japan in the first place was to get away from the "homophobic sentiments and stressful living environment" in

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[31] Interview with Van, 27, bi-sexual, salesman in Tokyo, on 16th May 2021 via Facebook Messenger Call.
[32] Interview with Phong, a 29 year-old IT engineer in Hanoi, who had studied and worked for 7 years in Japan before returning to Vietnam, on 13th November 2019 in Hanoi.

Vietnam, the realization of the actual situations of sexual minorities in Japan and the changes regarding LGBTQ matters in Vietnam had altered his perspective. In Japan, Tai became aware of how constrained he was living as a gay man, reflected through his limited sexual experiences and hesitation to reveal his sexual identity with colleagues or non-close friends. However, Tai felt more liberated when he visited Vietnam thanks to the constant advocacies by civil society organizations and developments of the LGBTQ movement in the country, which have led to more open public attitudes toward sexual minorities and more lively queer scenes in big cities (Truong 2016; Vu, Do, and Chu 2019). Tai was impressed with the vivid homosexual landscape in modern Vietnam, which was in opposition to not only his memory and experiences growing up in Vietnam in the 1990s but also what he had experienced while living in Japan. In his own words: "I saw, wow, plenty of *thính* (bait)[33] on the gay dating applications when I tried opening them in Vietnam… And I received many flirtations". For Tai and some other participants who initially escaped Vietnam because of the oppressive environment for sexual minorities, such changes had altered their perceptions of a sexually oppressive Vietnamese society in the past. As a result, Tai decided to return to Vietnam after close to two decades of living in Japan to have more freedom in terms of working and lifestyle.

5.2.2. The logic of return migration

In the stories presented in the above section, migrants' aspiration to return, capacity to return, the expectation(s) regarding the return, and the social reality were highlighted separately in order to better illustrate the return diamond framework. However, I argue that these factors should not be examined separately when a thorough understanding of the logic of return migration is needed. Rather, these four factors should be considered and treated as co-implicated and entangled in shaping and facilitating return migration. In other words, return in transnational migration needs to be reckoned as a process produced by the mutual interactions between individuals' wish to return, their capability to do so, and expectations on individual and social levels, all of which happen under constantly changing transnational social realities. In all of the aforementioned cases, migrants' aspiration to return shape and is shaped by whether they have sufficient capacity or resources, the expectation that they have

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[33] *Thính* (Bait) is a slang word in Vietnamese that generally refers to flirtations directed to potential sexual or intimate partners. It is a word well-known on the internet, among Vietnamese youths, and also within the scope of dating applications. The act of flirting then is called *thả thính* (dropping bait).

upon the return, the different kinds of social expectations imposed on them as potential returnees, and what has been happening in the social contexts in which these people are socially and intimately embedded. For example, economic motivation is one of the prime reasons that foster the aspiration to return to Vietnam for several Vietnamese migrant men in Japan. This economic aspiration is constructed by the expectation that associates returnees from Japan with high employability in the Vietnamese labor market and hence higher chances to achieve economic success. Such an expectation is influenced by the reality that Vietnam has turned into a prominent business site for Japanese firms in the last decade, especially in the manufacturing, retail, and IT industries thanks to the increasing flows of Foreign Trade Investment (FDI) from Japan. The growth in presence of Japanese companies and branch offices in Vietnam has subsequently resulted in a higher demand for high-skilled workers who possess sufficient linguistic skills and cultural competencies that can bridge the local offices and the headquarters. Besides looking for local employees in Vietnam, many of these Japanese firms also send employees from Japan to work as correspondents who manage the operation of the branch offices. Many of the men in this study expressed their preference for such an opportunity as it would guarantee a salary of Japanese standard, which can allow returnees a middle-class or upper-middle-class lifestyle upon their return to Vietnam because of the difference in average living costs between the two countries. The case of Ben from the beginning of this chapter has shown how the growing number of Japan-related occupations in Vietnam nowadays could offer returnees from Japan plenty of employment opportunities as long as they have a suitable skill set. Furthermore, being able to go back to the country of origin as a representative of a Japanese firm would not only allow returnees to circumvent the ethnocentric and stressful working environment in Japan but also allow them to fulfill the social expectations regarding returnees' strong pecuniary ability and filial duties. As a result, many migrant men have been actively accumulating human resources in terms of skills and competencies to acquire such a position. The economic motivation of return migration among Vietnamese migrant men in Japan, therefore, is one of the many instances that demonstrate the linkage between migrants' aspiration to return, their capacities, multi-level expectations, and the social realities in both Japan and Vietnam. On this ground, the interconnected relationship between these factors is indicated in the return diamond framework by the two-way arrows (see Figure 7.1).

However, while the relationship between migrants' aspiration to return, capacity to return, and expectation toward return is mutual, the relationship between these three factors and the factor of social reality is not as reciprocal. Specifically, while the social realities in both sending and receiving societies can have significant impacts on the construction and realization of returnees' aspiration, capacity, and expectation, these three factors as individual elements have less agency in exerting influences on shaping social realities. Consequently, the arrows that connect the factor of reality to other factors are unidirectional. Such a conceptualization does not counter the transformations of social norms and realities as a result of return migration that existing studies have pointed out (Battistella 2018; Carling, Mortensen, and Wu 2011; Gmelch 1980; Oxfeld and Long 2017). Rather, it argues that social realities can be influenced by return migration as a whole, but not by each of the individual factors that constitute return migration. Moreover, such a unidirectional interaction also eludes to the various levels of structural and social constraints that shape migrants' return processes. It should also be noted that while the four factors featured in the return diamond framework are seen as encompassing elements that shape migrants' experiences of return migration, other factors at the micro level such as migrants' gender, sexuality, social and cultural capital, or socio-economic background, etc. should not be overlooked. For example, studies on the return trips of second-generation Vietnamese migrants from England and Germany have shown that return is extremely gendered (Barber 2017; Müller 2021). These works have observed that the expectations and realities of return migration to Vietnam can vastly differ between male and female returnees. Similarly, returnees' sexual identity and subjectivity also significantly influence the aspiration, capacity, expectation, and reality of return migration among many migrants (Tran 2022b). As a result, the return diamond framework should be utilized as a foundation for understanding return migration, with fundamental elements that can be further analyzed with other micro factors.

Return migration nowadays is triggered by increasingly diversified and overlapping motivations. When contemplating migrants' reasons to carry out return migration, much of the literature on return migration tended to be too empirical or descriptive (King 2000, 40), manifested through the listing of detailed reasons that motivate or force migrants to return (economic impulses, family obligations, intimacies, and belongings, etc.). While the return diamond framework acknowledges the necessity of identifying individual motivations that trigger return migration, it also tries to explain why and how people return at a more abstract

level. By identifying four fundamental components that constitute the trajectory of return migration and discussing the interrelationships between these factors, the proposed framework seeks to contribute to the understanding of the logic of return migration or how return migration as a social process unfolds. From such a vantage point, return migration is seen not as a fixed occurrence but rather a fluid social product manufactured by the negotiation and navigation between the broadening spectrum of factors that are not only reflective of migrants' mobility experiences but also responsive to institutional, socio-cultural, political and economic circumstances in the host and the home countries. Moreover, by taking account of the overlap between return migration and transnationalism (Carling and Erdal 2014), the framework also attends to how temporal and spatial variances can affect the actual planning and realization of the return processes. It, therefore, contributes to the elucidation of why migrants voluntarily return at particular times, or how migrants themselves and the institutions surrounding them expect and prepare for the return. Carling et al. 2015 saw return migration as penetrating the lives of migrants in two significant ways: the possibility of return (focusing on the topics of migrants' identities and senses of belonging) and the reality of return (asking the questions of who returns, how migrants experience returns and what impacts can return migration has). Therefore, in addition to explaining how return migration is planned and carried out from the perspective of the migrants themselves, another main focus of this chapter is to explore migrants' post-return experiences, in which return migration can be a marker of transformation in terms of returnees' social, gender and sexual statuses and the "charging effect" of transnational migration takes place.

5.3. Post-Return and the Elevation of Statuses

Through the investigation of the political, social, economic, and cultural consequences of return migration, scholars have suggested that looking into the experiences of post-return can allow various levels of sociological analyses including how individuals make sense and ascribe meanings to their identities, values, and well-being or the ways in which flows of return migration and returnees' resources cast effects on social norms and institutions, communities and even the states (Carling et al. 2015; Chan and Tran 2011; Christou 2006; Gmelch 1980; Lietaert 2021; Sakka, Dikaiou, and Kiosseoglou 1999). There are several perspectives from which post-return experiences can be studied. One approach, for example, is to take into consideration the actual economic, employment, and social conditions of the

returnees. Another is to explore the varied interpersonal relationships between the returnees and other social actors within the return context. With the increasing complexities in return patterns and statuses, Cassarino (2004) suggested assessing migrants' post-return re-adaptation by looking into the extent to which migrants are willing and prepared to return in terms of resource mobilization, and the preparedness of social institutions around migrants with regards to the return. Such an emphasis showed that the higher the level of readiness, the greater the ability of returnees to mobilize both tangible and intangible resources and get involved in cross-border social and economic networks to lay the groundwork for positive post-return experiences.

While each of these approaches can provide insights into specific aspects of migrants' post-return lives, the ways in which return migration is given validity can only be thoroughly contemplated by examining both the changes in migrants' different statuses as well as how their interpersonal relationships unfold after the return. All of these factors can be observed through the notion of transformation. In migration studies, transformation is commonly seen as a part of the migration process and therefore a well-engaged notion when referring to not only the reshaping of migrants' perceptions, identities, and bodies but also the institutional changes that affect socio-political behaviors and developments (Baas and Yang 2020; Parrini et al. 2007). For example, Vertovec (2004) observed that migrants' engagements with different modes of transnationalism can result in transformations in at least three domains: socio-cultural, political, and economic. Taking transformation as one of the central analytical categories can thus facilitate the understanding of the complexity, interconnectedness, variability, contextuality, and multi-level mediations of the migratory processes (Castles 2010). This chapter hence conceptualizes the return migration to Vietnam of Vietnamese migrant men in Japan as an event through which the transformations shaped by migration are made visible and concrete. The emphasis on transformation also allows the investigation of how the "charging effect" of transnational migration impact returnees' post-return experiences and mobility trajectories. While the chapter focuses mostly on the transformations among returnees at the individual level, it also takes into consideration the social transformations at more structural levels in the return context because they also actively condition how the transformations at other levels take place. The post-return experiences of Phan, a businessman in his early 30s in Hanoi, can be an illustrative case through which the question

of transformation can be addressed at different levels and how the "charging effect" of transnational migration takes place within the return context.

Phan was born in a working-class family in central Vietnam. After graduating from a university in Hanoi, Phan pursued his dream of becoming a businessman. He migrated to Ho Chi Minh City, hoping to find better chances and environments to develop his business ideas. Unfortunately, none of Phan's business models went well, to the point that he had to look for financial support from his parents to keep the businesses running. Feeling disappointed from "draining too much of the family's money", Phan wanted to migrate abroad to "run away from the failures of starting up businesses in Vietnam"[34]. He first thought of applying to migrate to Angola as a laborer, but eventually decided against it after reading on the Internet about how unsafe it could be living in Angola as a foreign migrant. The opportunity to migrate to Japan as a technical trainee came unexpectedly from one of Phan's relatives who told him about this particular agency that was looking for applicants. "It was very spontaneous and it happened so quickly that I did not even believe that I got in (the program)", Phan recalled. After six months of pre-departure training, during which he was required to study Japanese and did some training for working skills, Phan migrated to Japan as a trainee for a company specialized in construction. For three years, Phan worked at different construction sites in the Kanto area and lived mostly in Chiba, a prefecture on the east side of Tokyo. The first few months were particularly difficult because not only did he have to get used to the new living environment but he also did not understand anything because of his lack of Japanese language skills. The work on the construction sites was extreme and labor-intensive since Phan had to work outdoors most of the time, which was not easy under the heat and heavy rain of the Japanese summer or the cold winds in the winter. Even when Phan stepped on a nail on the construction site one time, he still had to continue working until the end of his shift with a blood-soaked working shoe since little resting time was allowed. Despite the hardship, Phan kept a relatively positive attitude. He tried to study more Japanese during the evening and started writing short stories about the life of Vietnamese migrants in Japan as a way to document his experiences and observations. When Phan shared these stories in a Facebook group of the Vietnamese migrant community in Japan, he was surprised that the

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[34] Interview with Phan, 31, heterosexual, manager at a Japanese language center in Hanoi, on 9th August 2020 via Facebook Messenger Call.

stories were unexpectedly well-received. Eventually, he started a personal blog on Facebook with the pen name of *Anh Fuho* (Construction Man) where he wrote short stories, sometimes based on his own experiences and sometimes based on what he heard from other fellow migrants. While Phan's stories were not literarily special, they conveyed many aspects of the life of Vietnamese migrants in Japan in a simple, real, and occasionally quirky style that is relatable to many readers.

After three years of working in Japan, Phan decided to return to Vietnam despite the opportunity to extend his stay under the regulations of the relatively newly-implemented program for workers with specific skills (*tokutei ginō*). By that time, Phan had been able to pay back all the money he had borrowed to migrate to Japan. Moreover, he also had accumulated sufficient experiences and savings to "have a new start" in Vietnam. After a few months upon his return, Phan started working as a managing director for a newly established agency that specializes in providing Japanese language courses for Vietnamese who plan to migrate to Japan as technical intern trainees. Interestingly, it was through the popularity of his online blog that Phan was contacted by the business partners who offered him such a position in Vietnam. Moreover, Phan also got to know his fiancée through such a platform as she followed his blog and initiated contact by sending him online messages. Around eight months after his return to Vietnam, Phan published an autobiography titled *Toi Di Nhat* (I went to Japan). Through more than 200 pages of the book, various aspects of his migration journey to Japan were described, from making the migration decision, taking part in the pre-departure training in Vietnam, to living and working in Japan, and finally going back to Vietnam after the working contract ended. While the book featured many of the short stories that Phan had previously posted on his online blog, it also added some new stories on his post-return experiences. Facets of Phan's love life were also narrated including how a former relationship with a Vietnamese woman in Vietnam turned sour when he migrated to Japan or the love relationships that appeared after his blog became more popular. By sharing such stories and experiences in the book, Phan confided that he hoped to provide Vietnamese who want to migrate to Japan with the real picture of what it was like living and working in Japan as a technical trainee. Despite not being as literary and well-written as other autobiographies, Phan's book was a big success. "I ordered 1000 print-outs (from the publisher) and almost all of them have been sold out" - Phan happily shared and added that he also offered to send books to Japan for Vietnamese readers living there. Since the issuing of the book, Phan was

invited by a few newspapers and television stations in Vietnam for interviews, and the Vietnamese migrant community in Japan also positively received his book. On his social media, Phan enthusiastically shared the pictures that some readers in Japan had taken of his book at different places such as in a convenience store, on a construction site, or in front of well-known tourist attractions.

While every stage in Phan's migration journey can provide fruitful materials for the sociological analyses of lived migration experiences, this chapter focuses on his post-return experiences to highlight the different transformations on the individual level as the result of the migration journey to Japan. In particular, there were clear differences between how Phan saw himself and how Phan thought other people saw him before, during, and after his stay in Japan. Before going to Japan, Phan considered himself to be a failed man who wasted his family's money on unsuccessful businesses. Migrating to Japan was an escape solution for him at the time to look for both a change in life and another way to earn money. After returning to Vietnam from a three-year stay in Japan, Phan had been able to fulfill his wish of becoming an entrepreneur by having an occupation as a managing director of a Japanese language center. When Phan posted pictures of himself delivering a speech at the center's grand opening on the internet, many friends and acquaintances congratulated him and commented on how he looked like a successful businessman. Another transformation can be observed on the cover of Phan's autobiography, which features a portrait of Phan crossing his arms over the chest. In the original photo initially taken at one of the construction sites in Japan where he used to work at, Phan was wearing working clothes, a helmet and was surrounded by drilling tools, wooden panels, scaffoldings, and a fellow worker (Picture 3). When this photo was used for the cover of Phan's book, Phan's body was presented differently. Specifically, his body was put in focus and the background of the construction site was deleted. Phan's working jacket and helmet were photoshopped so that they served as the canvas for typical pictures of Japan such as Sakura flowers or the Chureito Pagoda (*Chūreitō*) overlooking Mount Fuji (Picture 4). Phan's facial expression and his body's posture gave an impression of a sense of pride, and next to his picture was a caption written in Japanese: *Ikura taihen demo ganbarimasu. Nihongo wa muzukashi desuga omoshiroi desu* (I will try no matter how hard. The Japanese language is difficult yet interesting). The combination of the book's title, the caption, and the edited picture thus suggested the differences in how Phan's body could be perceived during and after migration. From a

working body on the construction site when he was still in Japan, Phan's body has since the return been transformed into a body of a role model who had had a successful migration to Japan.
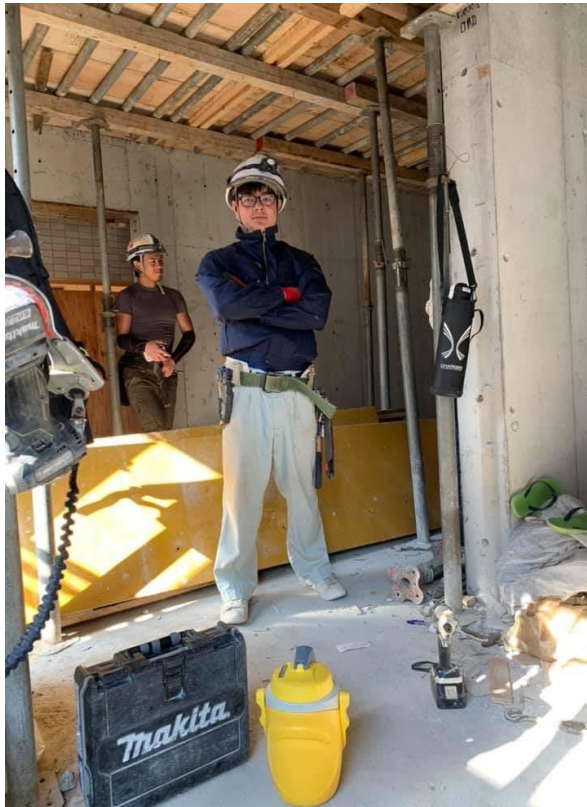
Picture 3. Phan at one of the construction sites in Japan where he used to work.

Picture 4. Phan's first autobiography - "Tôi đi Nhật" (I went to Japan).

As a result, Phan's social status was elevated as he moved from the social field in Japan to the one in Vietnam. During his stay in Japan, Phan was only a foreign technical intern trainee – a status that might not enable its holder a significant social status within the Japanese society, in which the public image of the Vietnamese community has been worsening due to the recent negative media reports on crimes committed by Vietnamese nationals such as shop-lifting, fruits, and vegetable stealing or illegal pig slaughtering (Asahi Shimbun 2020b; 2020a). Nevertheless, Phan's social status has been positively changed and elevated as he entered and engaged in the social field in Vietnam upon his return. Phan's status as a former migrant who had successfully completed his migration project provided him the legitimacy and resources to narrate his experiences abroad and give advice to other fellow or prospective migrants. Phan's elevated social status was also allowed by a favorable view toward the population of returnees that Vietnamese social discourses have been holding.

This view is a result of several combined factors. First, it stems from state-endorsed strategies and policies that encourage overseas Vietnamese to contribute to homeland development, which gave way to some media glorification of this group of people (Chan and Tran 2011). Second, there has been a prevalent perception among local Vietnamese that associates diasporic Vietnamese people or people who come back from abroad (especially from developed countries) with wealth and modernity (Barber 2017; Koh 2014; Long 2017; Müller 2021; Wang 2013). Such a perception also renders the possibility for returnees' financial, symbolic capital to be converted into social status in contemporary Vietnamese society, where pecuniary strength can easily equate to higher social status (Thai 2014). In addition, many return migrants hold foreign education credentials, and together with their experiences of living and working/studying abroad, project an image of modernized, progressive and competent individuals. Consequently, they can have access to higher chances of securing good employment opportunities and earning satisfactory wages upon returning to Vietnam. Returned migrants from Japan could also have the opportunity to gain well-paying occupations not only thanks to their experiences in Japan but also the growing presence of Japanese companies and Japan-related jobs in Vietnam in the last decade. In other words, migrants who return from abroad commonly have access to symbolic, economic, and cultural capital that could easily be appreciated in Vietnamese society and subsequently to higher social statuses.

The post-return positive changes in social status also lead to possible transformation in migrants' sexual expressions, desirabilities, and identities. Many participants in this research thought that their sexual desirability had improved after returning to Vietnam in comparison to the time when they were still in Japan. Being physically in Vietnam means migrants do not have to negotiate the linguistic and cultural barriers within the Japanese sexual fields that do not favor Asian foreigners and, therefore, enjoy easier access to sexual opportunities. In his work on transnational marriages, Thai (2008) described how low-income Vietnamese American men experienced a drastic shift in their ability to get married as they return from the U.S. to Vietnam. While they were considered undesirable marriage partners for either white females or Vietnamese females in the U.S., their social status in Vietnam as people coming back from abroad allowed these men to be seen as highly marriageable by local women. Similarly, Müller (2021) observed that his Vietnamese-German male friends had easy sexual adventures when they visited their ancestor homeland in Vietnam. Such a

transformation was made possible thanks to the existence of a common perception that sees people coming back from abroad or Vietnamese people in the diasporas as having great financial resources, which can provide a pathway to higher social status within Vietnamese materialistic society. Another example of how social, economic, and sexual capital and status are tangled after migrants have returned to Vietnam can be seen through the major change of Ben whose story was mentioned earlier in this chapter. Before his return migration from Japan, Ben had to hide his true sexual orientation and only dated women. Ben's elevated socioeconomic position after returning to Vietnam thanks to his Japan-related jobs, however, allowed him to feel "better off" than other people in his social network and encouraged him to engage more freely with his long-hidden sexual identity and desire. The positive changes in institutional and public discourses toward non-heterosexuality in Vietnam in recent years also played an important role in fostering a more suitable social context for Ben and other non-heterosexual returnees in this research to express their sexualities more deliberately. Indeed, some non-heterosexual participants in this study came out to their families and friends while others actively took part in social activities for the LGBTQ community, cultivated intimate relationships, and communicated that they felt more at ease about their sexual identities and practices after returning to Vietnam. Some even said that it was easier to be queer in Vietnam than in Japan, as sexual minorities in Vietnam have been given greater voices and could express their sexual orientations more freely (see Chapter four for more details).

Another transformation that takes place in the post-return phase can be seen in the returnees' gender status. Studies on migration and development studies have shown that the experiences of international migration can provide returnees with different kinds of resources to navigate power relations in the return context. Feminist scholars also pointed out how cross-border migration can empower female migrants and allow them to negotiate or even challenge traditional gender roles, norms, and expectations in the home society thanks to the gained cultural and economic capital (Pedraza 1991; Sakka, Dikaiou, and Kiosseoglou 1999; Hoang and Yeoh 2011). This means that new gender behaviors, expectations, or relations can be formed as a result of migration. However, it has also been observed that while changes in gender perceptions, practices, and identities can consequentially occur after migration, they can be temporary and migrants might resume the old gendered patterns or behaviors as soon as they return to the home country after migration (Batnitzky, McDowell, and Dyer 2009; Bell

and Domecka 2018; Newhouse 2021; Pande 2017). As the third chapter in this dissertation has shown, the migration journey to Japan is considered by many male Vietnamese migrants as a pathway to manhood. Returning to Vietnam after the stay in Japan is, therefore, a mark of transformation for the masculine status of many male migrants. It is not uncommon to hear from participants that they felt their opinions were more respected by families and friends in Vietnam after they have come back from Japan. As a result, many saw their role as the man in the family grew bigger and some men participated more actively in family-related matters or decisions. Because a large part of the masculine identity in Vietnam is tied to the performance of the role as the pillar of the family, the greater respect that returned migrant men received from family members indicates an increase in masculine status.

Furthermore, by returning to Vietnam from abroad, many male returnees project an image of successful, modernized individuals who have had the experiences of living abroad but then chose to come back to contribute to societal developments and the building of the motherland. For example, Phan, the above-mentioned former technical intern trainee shared in his autobiography that he wanted to "bring the good things from Japan back" in order to contribute to his family, community, and also the Vietnamese society as a whole (Phan 2020, 173). Phan was not the only participant who framed return migration as a contribution to the development of the homeland. Several other participants also shared this nationalistic narrative of returning to promote Vietnam's societal and economic developments, which can easily be translated into an attribute of masculinity well appreciated in the Vietnamese context. The combination of the perceived symbolic, economic, and cultural capital and such a nationalist idea from returned migrant men can significantly contribute to the accumulation of a higher Vietnamese masculine status that thinks highly of pecuniary power, familism, and nationalism.

This section has so far shown how the outlook of elevated social, gender, and sexual statuses upon return to Vietnam from Japan can be a lodestar that motivates several migrant men to return after having migrated for a certain amount of time. However, such an outlook is a double-edged sword. People and communities in the home countries often consider returnees as living examples through which the success or failure of the migration project can be evaluated (Gmelch 1980). Because of the common social assumption in Vietnam about returnees' high financial, cultural and social resources, most returned migrants are subjected to the pressure to meet these imposed expectations. Phan wrote about one of such

performances in his book when he described how newly returned migrants from Japan (including himself) often have the mentality of "breaking free" to compensate for the hard-working and cramped years in Japan. Newly returned migrants would "buy new motorbikes, dress up nicely, or hold feasts to reunite with friends after a long period abroad". Some other research participants also reported feeling that they have to deliver performances of status by dressing up, buying gifts for people at home, engaging in lavish consumption, or having to find well-paid jobs so that they fit the social images of people returning from abroad. Hieu, a returnee in his mid-thirties who was working as an office manager for a Japanese food and beverage group in Ho Chi Minh City, sarcastically asked me during our interview whether I would be able to show "luxurious goods" when I go back to Vietnam. Hieu then explained the reason for his question:

> "It is always 'money, money, money' (*lúc nào cũng 'tiền, tiền, tiền'*) in Vietnam now. People always want to show off that they have money. They have to buy luxurious brands, drive expensive cars, and wear fancy watches. Many returnees from abroad also had to catch up with such a trend now here (in Vietnam). Otherwise, people might look down on you… How tiresome!"

While Hieu himself tried to avoid engaging in unnecessary lavish consumption or showing off his financial wealth through "luxurious goods", he admitted that he sometimes also had to "put on a show" in Vietnam, especially when he conducted meetings or had informal meals with business partners. Hieu's narrative then indicates the other side of return migration that accompanies the elevation of status after returning. In other words, migrants' increased socioeconomic status and the pressure to perform the expected image of the successful returnee are two sides of a coin that many men in this study have to juggle simultaneously.

Moreover, while it was common that their status as returned migrants from Japan helped several participants facilitate better interpersonal relationships within the Vietnamese context, several men also felt that the returnee status hindered honest social interactions and intimate relationships. For example, Tai – the gay-identifying interpreter in Ho Chi Minh City who returned to Vietnam after seventeen years of living in Japan received various flirtations from other local men in Vietnam. He juxtaposed such a situation with his limited sexual experiences and hesitation to reveal his sexual identity in Japan, where acts and performances of heterosexuality are still expected in most social spaces (Dasgupta 2017; 2013; Kawasaka 2018), and subsequently felt more liberated when he visited Vietnam. While

he found such a configuration in his sexual status "quite enjoyable", Tai was also skeptical of his increased sexual desirability as he could not tell whether people were into him just because of his Viet Kieu label. Another returnee who was a project manager for a Japanese company in Ho Chi Minh City also lamented that sometimes he got confused about whether people who connected with him on dating applications were interested in him because of attributions like appearance and characteristics, or they were interested in him just because they knew that he returned from abroad. The post-return elevated sexual status thus is also a site of conflicted feelings for the men featured in this project. While many admitted enjoyed the improved sexual desirability in Vietnam in comparison to when they were still in Japan, others also had concerns about the sincereness of the social and intimate encounters that the "charging effect" of transnational migration delivered.

Furthermore, studies have manifested that returnees can encounter multiple differences not only between their post-migration selves and the communities back home but also between their expectation of return and what happens in reality. For example, several *Nikkeijin* (Japanese ethnics or descendants of Japanese ethnics in Latin America, mostly Brazil and Peru) who returned to their ethnic homeland faced cultural distancing, othering, and discrimination as they could not fit in with the Japanese society albeit their Japanese ethnicity (Ishi 2008; T. "Gaku" Tsuda 2003; T. Tsuda 2018; 1999; Yamanaka 1996). Research on diasporic Vietnamese also mentioned the uneasy feelings that returnees, especially those who fled the country after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, often faced after a period of living abroad due to the gap between the social and political realities and expectations (Long 2017; Long and Oxfeld 2017; Oxfeld and Long 2017; Wang 2013). Because return migration to Vietnam was expected among most of the Vietnamese men in this research, many did not report having significant mismatches between their expectations of return and the social realities that they faced immediately after going back. However, it is important to note that although Vietnamese migrant men's socioeconomic, gender, and sexual statuses can be elevated upon their return, this positive transformation might not last permanently. Rather, returnees' improved social, gender, and sexual statuses can be attrited after a certain period after the return. This happens when returnees fail to live up to the socially constructed expectation of being successful, rich, educated, and well-mannered individuals. The degree to which returned migrants' sexual, gender, and social statuses can be positively perceived by people and communities in the return context is also different

depending on the specific destination of return. For example, the status as a returnee from abroad will have different social effects and meanings in big cosmopolitan cities such as Ho Chi Minh City or Hanoi in comparison to smaller and more rural areas. With the growing population of the middle and upper-middle class in Vietnamese urban cities (Earl 2014), returned migrants' perceived economic capital might not be able to convey a significant impression to other people who are relatively well-off in the current Vietnamese society. Such a situation is one of the reasons why men like Hieu and Phan had to put on performances such as showing off their (perceived) wealth and financial capability to other people in Vietnam.

In addition, as Vietnam has been seeing a growing number of people going abroad to work or study, the social meanings of return migration have been shifting and the "charging effect" of transnational migration also varies in its impacts depending on the host countries from which migrants returned. Tai shared how he saw the label "returnee from Japan" had changed its meaning over time. When Tai visited home in the 2000s and early 2010s, he noticed that being a returnee from Japan drew more curiosity, admiration, and subsequently respect from local people in Vietnam. However, from the mid and late 2010s, he felt that the same label has not generated as much commendation as before due to the growing waves of Vietnamese migrants going to Japan. Coming back from Japan, therefore, "was not something too special" for local Vietnamese anymore. Tai thought that people coming back from Western countries might be held in higher regard than returnees from Japan. In his words: "returnees from Western countries such as the U.S., the U.K., or European countries, for example, are more likely to be seen as having more money than migrants who come back from places in Asia such as Taiwan, China, Korea, or Japan." One of the reasons for such a perception was that it normally requires more resources to migrate to the destination countries in the West in comparison to migrating to destinations within Asia. This means that returnees from these Western countries are commonly considered to possess higher financial resources in comparison to those returning from Japan. In short, the post-return elevation of statuses and how the "charging effect" of transnational migration unfolds can be different among different groups of returnees. The social meaning of being a returnee in Vietnam nowadays thus is locally specific and dependent on the constructed hierarchy of the host countries from which migrants return. This is of relevance in the context of an increasing

international migration culture in Vietnam, where migrating abroad has become more popular and accessible to the general Vietnamese population.

Given such a reality, some men did feel discontented after returning to Vietnam from Japan. Minor and immediate dissatisfactions included complaints about air pollution, the chaotic traffic, and how inconsiderate people are in Vietnam in comparison to these aspects in Japan. Bigger problems seemed to be realized or appear not immediately after the return but rather at a later stage. For example, Phan told me that because of his social networks and job as the manager of a Japanese language center specialized in training for prospective technical trainees, he knew returned migrants who could not find suitable jobs even after months subsequent to their return to Vietnam. Most of them were former technical intern trainees, who found themselves in a middle space - not being as skilled as returned migrants who were students with international education credentials or highly-skilled migrants who had worked in Japanese companies, yet they had more working experiences than university graduates in Vietnam. Such a middle position can hinder these migrants' competitiveness in the Vietnamese labor market, even with their working abroad experiences. Literature on the Technical Intern Trainee Program has pointed out that technical intern trainees could seldom improve their skills after the program and has subsequently raised skepticism about the scheme's motive of transferring skills transnationally (Chiavacci 2020; Roberts 2018; Siu and Koo 2021; Tian 2019). In other words, many former technical intern trainees found it difficult to put their working experiences in Japan to good or practical use upon their return to the home countries. As a result, Phan shared that he had talked to friends or acquaintances who wanted to migrate to Japan again after returning to Vietnam. Another participant in this research who took on a side job as a migration broker who introduces potential working contracts in Japan for people in Vietnam wanting to migrate as technical intern trainees also echoed this observation. Among the people who enquired with him about job opportunities in Japan, many were former technical intern trainees who could not find satisfying jobs after returning and, therefore, wanted to go to Japan again to earn money.

Besides, discontentment with the social realities in the home country after the return can also emerge, though not as common as the inability to find fulfilling employment. For instance, Dao, a gay man in his early 30s working as an IT engineer in Hanoi, shared in our first interview that he decided to return after more than four years of studying in Japan because of the hope that recent developments of LGBTQ movements in Vietnam could give him a

more relaxing gay lifestyle than in Japan. However, Dao had changed his mind when we talked again one year after the first interview. Dao gradually realized after his return that while the situation of the sexual minorities in Vietnam nowadays had improved, there remained institutional barriers and homophobic sentiments that hinder him from fully embracing the gay lifestyle that he had expected. In addition, he was unhappy with having to live with his parents and how "toxic" Vietnamese society can be. Dao thus longed to go back to Japan and thought of applying for a graduate program in Tokyo, where "nobody cares about other people". Dao's return is thus an unsatisfactory movement, in which he had to deal with the discrepancy between return expectation and reality. In such a case, return is not the end of the migration project as returnees might contemplate the possibility of re-migration.

5.4. Typologies of Return Outcomes

In the past, theories and studies on return migration often held the simplistic binary grouping of return as being either a success or a failure (Gmelch 1980). For example, while the theory of neoclassical economics considered return migration as a failure due to migrants' inability to stay in the receiving countries and maximize their wages, the new economics of labor migration theory (NELM) saw return as a logical and successful outcome of a temporary time abroad during which migrants accumulate financial savings and provide their households back home with economic means (Cassarino 2004; Castles 2010). Such a binary view not only confines return migration and its outcomes merely within the economic sphere but also offers little information on the actual post-return experiences of migrants beyond the engagement with financial earning or how return is unfolded at later stages. Temporary conceptual developments in the study of return migration have also necessitated the reconsideration and further expansion of the typologies of return migration. Rather than classifying return migration based on the success-failure binary perspective, scholars have come up with more complex categories of return migration. Oxfeld and Long (2017), for instance, considered the return phenomenon in three types: imagined returns (returns that are emotionally planned, anticipated, and imagined but have yet to be realized), provisional returns (permanent returns or strengthen transnational ties prompted by home visits), and repatriated return (resettlement in the home country with long-term commitments and include both organized and individual returns as well as forced and voluntary returns). Using the two variables of the timing of the return and the voluntariness of the return, Battistella (2018) conceptualized four

return typologies including (1) return of achievement (voluntary return after having achieved the migration goal), (2) return of completion (return due to the expiration of the visa/ working contract despite the wish to remain abroad), (3) return of setback (voluntary return before achieving the original migration goals), and (4) return of crisis (return that is forced, mostly in the case of deportation or rejected asylum).

While these categories have provided more nuanced ways to look at return beyond the simple binary system of failed or successful trajectory, they mostly tie return to the ability to achieve the migration goals, finish the migration project, or the individuals' and state's capacity to prepare for return migration. What is missing in these categorizations is the account of migrants' post-return lived experiences. Such negligence offers little perspective on how return migration is given meanings and perceived by returnees themselves and other actors in the social context of the return destination. Leaving out migrants' post-return experiences also means not taking into account the consequences of the "charging effect" of transnational migration. I argue that one of the ways to address this conceptual deficit in engaging with post-return experiences is to look at what return outcomes emerge out of migrants' individual transformations as a result of return migration. At this point, I bring back the framework of the return diamond and discuss yet another possible theoretical contribution of this framework through the typologization of return migration (Figure 7.2).
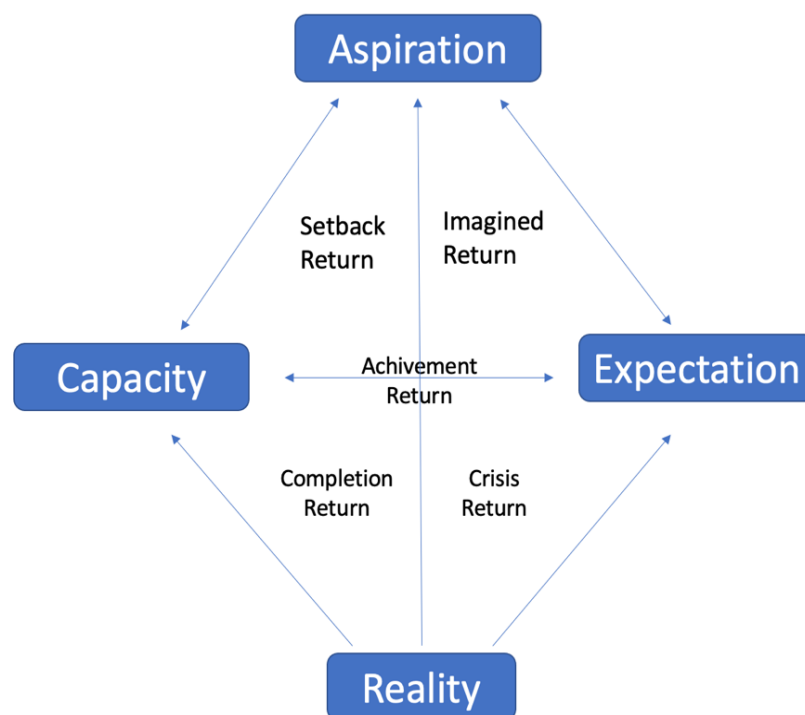
Figure 7.2. The Return Diamond Framework and Different Return Outcomes

Similar to how it interprets the process of return migration, the return diamond framework also categorizes return and the return outcome based on the four elements of aspiration, capacity, expectation, and reality. Specifically, each return type is examined in relation to the returnee's willingness to return, his capacity to realize the return trip(s), his (imagined) expectation(s) of what happens after returning, and whether the post-return reality matches such expectation(s) or not. Venturing from such a postulation, the framework offers five types of return outcomes.

The first type is achievement return, defined as a voluntary return after the migrant has accomplished the migration goal(s) as well as has accumulated sufficient capacity to return. In this kind of return, the migrant's post-return experiences within the social contexts of the return destination match his expectation(s) of return. Because of such intersectionality, achievement return is positioned at the center of the framework, signifying equal proximity to all four constituting elements. A prime example of this type of return migration can be found in the case of high-skilled migrant men who return to Vietnam to become managers or representatives of the branch offices of Japanese companies after having studied and worked in Japan for a certain period. For example, the return of Phan who transformed from a technical intern trainee in Japan to a manager of a language center in Vietnam can be categorized as an achievement return. Phan chose to return to Vietnam voluntarily though he could have extended his work contract and stayed longer in Japan. Moreover, Phan had already gathered enough economic, cultural, and social capital from his stay in Japan by the time of his return. Such a circumstance then allowed a social reality of Phan's elevated socioeconomic, masculine, and sexual in Vietnam, which corresponded to his expected outcomes of migration.

The second type of return that can be drawn from the return diamond framework is imagined return, in which migrants have the aspiration to return some days and certain expectations toward the return but have not made the return trip because of the lack of capacity. Since the return is imaged in this case, migrants have not experienced the reality of return migration. As a result, this type of return is located nearer to the elements of aspiration and expectation, but further away from capacity and reality (see Figure 7.2). Many participants in this research who were residing in Japan at the time of the interview

represented this return type as they had foreseen the eventual return to Vietnam, but had yet to actually make the return. For instance, Kiet - a technical trainee in his mid-20s who had been working in southern Japan for two years shared that he would go back to Vietnam only by the end of his three-year contract because of the big financial toll and time investment to return only for a visit. Kiet imaged that he would use his savings and connections to establish a real-estate agency in Hanoi after returning, and looked forward to the journey home. The type of imagined return not only applies to people who have not returned at all during their time abroad but also includes migrants who have not permanently come back to the home country and returned only for temporary, short-term visits. While these migrants can experience and get to know the social realities in the return context during their visits, their return experiences can be very different from the experiences of those who return permanently because of the temporary nature of their stays in the home country.

The third type of return that the return diamond framework suggests is setback return, which occurs when migrants voluntarily go back to the home country after having accomplished the goal(s) of their migration project. However, the post-return realities do not live up to or match their expectations or imaginations regarding the return. The position of this return typology within the return diamond framework is hence nearer to aspiration and capacity, but further from expectation and reality. The aforementioned case of Dao, the gay man who returned to Vietnam after seeing the development of LGBTQ movements back home, can be an example of a setback return. Dao was unsatisfied with the closeted life that he was leading in a small Japanese city in the Kyūshū area and therefore decided to return to Vietnam, thinking that changing public attitude toward non-heterosexuality in the country could be a positive sign. Upon returning to Vietnam, Dao came out to his family and friends and had no hesitation in admitting his identity as a gay man on social media. However, after more than a year of returning to Vietnam, Dao realized that he had set such a high expectation for his return because he also did not feel entirely comfortable living as a gay man in Vietnam, where people pay more attention to material prowess and performing their status. Consequently, the social reality that Dat realized in Vietnam after returning did not meet his prior expectation, a fact he only noticed after one year after his return. Another example of setback return can be found in the group of technical intern trainees who could not find satisfactory employment after returning to Vietnam. For these individuals, the fact that they could not compete with other more skilled returnees or local university graduates for well-

paid employments in the Vietnamese labor market could be an unanticipated reality that had not been considered in their decision to migrate in the first place as well as their return expectation.

The fourth return type is completion return, which is located in proximity to the elements of capacity and reality and further from aspiration and expectation. Completion return occurs when migrants return to the home country even though they still want to remain abroad. These migrants, however, have been able to accumulate either financial, social, cultural, or human resources by the time of their return a sufficient amount of either financial, social, cultural, or human resources by the time of their return, though these resources were not as much as they had desired. Situated in this typology are migrants who have to return by the end of their working contracts or because their visas have expired. As a result, these returnees do not have much aspiration to return or high expectation regarding their returns and are faced with the social realities in the return context. Prime examples of this return type can be represented by the group of technical intern trainees returning by the end of their three-to-five-year working contracts in Japan, or student migrants who failed to secure employment and subsequently working visas to continue staying in Japan after their graduation. One example of such a return outcome can be provided through the case of Minh, a master's degree graduate in Tokyo. Minh migrated to Japan with a scholarship to study for a master's degree program at one of the biggest and most well-known private universities in Japan. While Minh had the idea of finding a job after his graduation to stay in Japan longer, he started the job hunting (*shūkatsu*) process too late. As a result, by the time his student visa ran out, Minh had not been able to secure a job and had to apply for a special visa for designated activities that allowed foreign students to stay in the country in order to seek employment after graduating from a university or equivalent form of higher education. However, Minh admitted to not being active enough in looking for jobs in Japan and thought that it would also be acceptable if he had to return to Vietnam since he had already experienced living in Japan, got a degree from a precious Japanese university, and also had a bit of financial savings from his part-time jobs. Minh said that in the worst case, he could just go back to Vietnam and "see what would happen next"[35]. Four months after my interview

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[35] Interview with Minh, 25, heterosexual, master's degree student in Tokyo, on 5th February 2020 in Tokyo.

with Minh, he boarded the plane to go back to Vietnam after two years and a half of living in Japan.

Last but not least, the fifth typology of return called crisis return refers to the return that is involuntary in which migrants possess neither the aspiration to return nor the capacity to do so but were forced to face the realities of return and the expectations associated with failed migration. As a result, returnees who fall into this category of return can be more prone to stress and crisis, and crisis return is the worse outcome that return migration can have. While none of the migrant men in this research belong to this return type, examples of crisis return can be observed in the cases of forced returns, deportations, or rejected asylums. Since the number of undocumented Vietnamese migrants in Japan has been rising in recent years (Kato 2019; 2022), it would not be surprising or unexpected if there is also an increase in the number of migrants who have to have crisis returns to Vietnam, as long as Japan keeps a strict policy toward granting asylums and the problems in the technical intern trainee program that prompt trainees to run away remains unaddressed.

While these five presented categories of return are far from being ideal types and returnees can move from one category to another, these categories provide a platform to further explore post-return lived experiences among migrants, return migration patterns and subsequently widen the meanings of migration and mobility (Carling and Erdal 2014). They also offer a more nuanced perspective to look at return migration beyond the binary view that treats return as either a success or a failure, and subsequently encourage a critical reconsideration of common assumptions associated with return migration. In addition, the categories of return can have an explanatory power regarding the phenomenon of re-migration, which can likely happen among the returnees who belong to the categories of setback return or completion return due to their lack of contentment with the social reality in the return context and lack of aspiration to return in the first place respectively. When these five presented categories of return are contemplated from the perspective of the "charging effect", it can be argued that transnational migration delivers its charging effects in the most positive and effective ways in the case of achievement return. Migrants whose return trajectory falls under this typology of return outcome are most likely to enjoy the economic, social, gender, and sexual privileges that their accumulated resources from abroad and the positive perceptions towards returnees in the context of the home society allow. On

the contrary, the "charging effects" of transnational migration can be considered failing or delivering unsuccessful outcomes in the case of returnees who have a crisis return.

5.5. Conclusion: Towards a Comprehensive Understanding of Return Migration

The increasing diversification and complication of contemporary migration patterns and trajectories have emphasized the need to reconceptualize return migration and how this migratory trajectory unfolds. Literature on return migration has indicated a wide range of factors that prompt migrants to consider going back to their home countries rather than staying in the migration destinations such as economic incentives, discrimination, the sense of belonging, or family-related obligations. Carling et al. (2015) observed that male migrants could be more inclined to return to their country of origin than female migrants, partly because of the gendered notions of status and belonging. Having a similar gender approach to the pattern of returning to the homeland, Barber (2017) saw a clear gender division in the trajectories of return among British-born Vietnamese men and women. Her observation confirmed that male returnees' experiences of returning to Vietnam are more likely to be shaped by expectations of socio-economic power that are closely linked to the construction and performance of masculinity (see also Carruthers 2002; K. K. Hoang 2015; Thai 2014). While this chapter does not have such a comparative perspective between the motivations to return of male and female migrants, it notices that the need and the desire for upward social mobility in terms of economic, class, gender, and sexual statuses can be one of the main guiding lights for Vietnamese migrant men to return to Vietnam. However, instead of merely listing detailed factors that can trigger the return decision, this chapter aims to understand how return migration is planned and carried out at a more abstract level. It thus proposed looking at the return migration trajectory among the Vietnamese migrant men in Japan through the framework of the return diamond, in which the process of return migration is seen as a product of the active negotiation and entanglement between four elements: aspiration to return, capacity to return, the expectation of return, and reality of return. The approach of the return diamond framework presented in this chapter explains why for some migrants, return migration is considered a goal, a duty, or a means to show success and self-worth, while for others it can be presented as a threat or failure. It can also be a suitable tool to evaluate the two significant ways in which return migration can pervade social life: the possibility of return and the reality of return (Carling et al. 2015). At the same time, such a

perspective points to the necessity to reconceptualize return migration not as merely the conclusion of the migration process, but rather as an intrinsic aspect of the migration project that leads to further mobilities and trajectories.

In addition to explaining how male Vietnamese migrants in Japan negotiate their return journeys and trajectories, this chapter has also elucidated why and how several migrant men can achieve upward mobility regarding social, gender, and sexual status upon their return to the homeland. It considers such upward mobility in status as the result of the "charging effect" of transnational migration, through which migrants can access specific privileges thanks to their accumulated resources from abroad and the positive perceptions attached to the label of returnee in the home society. In that sense, the "charging effect" renders the event of return migration as a form of positive transformation at the personal level allowed by the perceived possession of symbolic, economic, cultural, and masculine capital. Specifically, symbolic capital represents a power to impose upon other minds a vision of social divisions depending on the social authority acquired in previous struggles (Bourdieu 1989). Returnees thus have access to a specific kind of symbolic capital by showing that they have overcome the hardships and challenges of migrating to and living in Japan, and through such a process produce a perception of them as being more experienced, independent, capable, and mature men. This perception is also closely connected to migrant men's increased masculine capital as a result of having completed the migration project upon their return to Vietnam. Moreover, economic capital represents returned migrants' financial resources based on their savings abroad and the alleged higher salaries in Vietnam as people who come back from abroad. Last but not least, cultural capital signifies migrants' foreign education credentials, linguistic, or cultural familiarities that have been acquired in Japan. This chapter, therefore, illustrated how return is an important part of a pathway of status represented through transnational migration. It is in this phrase that migrants have to acquire their desired status back home through the performance and exhibition of what they have achieved during their time in Japan. As such, it deviates from the framing of transnational migration as being merely economic-oriented and responds to the call for more studies on Asian male migrants' sexualities and masculinities (Baas and Yang 2020). As the previous chapters in this dissertation have suggested, transnational migration to Japan is commonly seen as a rite of passage through which migrant men transform from inexperienced young men into capable and well-articulated matured men by overcoming the difficulties of

migration and accumulating different kinds of capital. Return migration, therefore, is an occasion for migrant men to showcase such transformation and subsequently access upward mobility in terms of social, gender, and masculine status.

Apart from explaining why many migrant men want to return to Vietnam after a period of migrating to Japan, the abovementioned transformation and its consequences also necessitate a reconsideration of how return migration is categorized. Engaging again with the return diamond framework, this chapter has categorized five different return outcomes in relation to the factors that also shape the actual return process. Paying more attention to the migrants' post-return experiences, the framework's categorization reveals how the return takes place over space and time and is given meanings in accordance to not only what migrants have aspired, expected, and achieved when they were still abroad but also the actual post-return realities within the institutional, economic, cultural and socio-political contexts in the return destination. As a concluding note, the chapter calls for the adoption of a temporal perspective when studying return migration. It reveals how the meanings of return migration can alter over time and are shaped by multi-level factors within specific institutional, cultural, and socio-political contexts. Contextual changes in the returning society should be taken into account in order to dispense with the common assumption of migration studies that migrants' identities and behaviors are fluid while states and societies are not (Chan and Tran 2011). As shown in the chapter, migrants' motivation, expectations, and experiences of return are largely conditioned by social changes and new developments in the home country. The meanings of return migration in Vietnam today can be very different from those of twenty years ago. Moreover, with the growing culture of migration in Vietnam, the meanings of return are also determined by the countries from which migrants come back. The social expectations toward the returnees have also been shifting, changing the kinds of pressure that returned migrants have to face. Contemporary return migration, therefore, needs to be examined not only through migrants' actual post-return social, economic, employment, sexual, and gender statuses but also through the gap between migrants' return expectations and reality.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Revisiting the Charging Migrants and Going Beyond the Transnational Negotiation of Sexualities and Masculinities

In the summer of 2020 when I first talked to Tai - the technical intern trainee introduced in the very first chapter of this dissertation, he was stuck in Vietnam after returning for his wedding at the beginning of the global pandemic. The strict Japanese immigration rules and the limitation of international flights at that time had prevented him from going back abroad and continue his work in Japan. During his waiting time in Vietnam, Tai turned to farm work in his hometown and happily welcomed a new family member – his newborn son. In late 2021, Tai finally made it back to Japan to resume his work contract. He then even managed to bring his wife over to Japan in the summer of 2022. During the seven years that Tai has lived and worked in Japan, he has transformed significantly and Tai felt that he became a "more mature and capable" man after every year of his stay. From a young man who migrated to Japan just to step out of his hometown and earn better, Tai is now a family man who plans his migration trajectory strategically. He now negotiates his working conditions and salary in Japan carefully, so that he is able to not only support his wife in Japan but also to plan for more regular returns to Vietnam as his son is staying with his parents in the hometown. Furthermore, while there was a time in his bachelorhood when Tai stopped dedicating his entire energy to work to have more time for himself, it is not the case at the moment as Tai, once again, devotes himself to working harder because he has his own family to support. Tai and his wife hope to accumulate enough savings by the end of his current work contract to open a business in Vietnam upon their return. The seven-year migration journey of Tai, thus, witnessed several transformations in his social, sexual, and gender statuses and featured his aspiration for upward social mobility. Similar to the case of Tai, migrating to Japan allows many other Vietnamese men to gain not only economic and cultural capital but also masculine and sexual capital, which later on support their transformation and upward mobility in terms of social, sexual, and gender status.

While transnational migration is commonly thought of as exposing male migrants to unfamiliar gender and sexual cultures and structural challenges and, thus, suggests a passive negotiation of masculinity and sexuality, this dissertation emphasizes the dialectical

connection between transnational migration and migrant men's active aspiration for positive changes and upward social mobility. It sees migrating to Japan as a gendered choice and an effective means for men to claim their masculine and social identity. In the cases of some non-heterosexual men, migrating to Japan is also a choice to claim their aspired sexual identities and/or lifestyles. The dissertation makes clear such an entanglement by investigating the transnational migration journeys of male Vietnamese migrants in Japan through the notion of charging migrants. Such a notion renders the male migrants as individuals with social life and aspirations that go beyond the economic sphere (Ahmad 2009) and expands the social meanings of transnational migration. In that sense, the notion helps address the need for "established alternative conceptualizations that might advance accounts of migration beyond a reliance only on economic rationality and completely involuntary displacement" (Carling and Collins 2018, 911).

6.1. Revisiting the Charging Migrants

This dissertation introduces the notion of charging migrants as an overarching theoretical framework to unpack the relationship between migration, sexuality, and masculinity. It proposes to understand this notion in at least two ways. First, the notion of charging migrants suggests a social process during which migrants gather and accumulate different resources through migration. In particular, I provided evidence in chapter three to show how Japan can be considered a migration destination where migrant men can charge up in terms of not only economic, cultural, and social capital but also masculine and sexual capital. During the process of migrating to and living in Japan, most male Vietnamese migrants have to face several difficulties and challenges presented by structural factors such as linguistic and cultural barriers, the Japanese ethnonational labor market (Liu-Farrer 2020; Liu-Farrer and Shire 2021), or discrimination based on race and nationality. Because overcoming these difficulties requires constant efforts and certain qualities, many migrant men see themselves as becoming more capable, independent, and eventually more masculine through migration. It was also argued in chapter three that migration to Japan can be perceived as a rite of passage or a pathway to mature manhood in which male migrants transform from young, inexperienced individuals to well-articulated, grown-up men. I want to emphasize this point by reciting what Tung, a doctoral researcher in Kitakyūshū said when he reflected on his migration journey: "after migrating to Japan I felt two hundred percent more masculine". The

chapter provides a further illustration of such an argument through the comparison between the migration trajectory of the male Vietnamese migrants in Japan with that of the salmon fish. While the salmon fish migrate from their small streams to the big open ocean to grow up, the Vietnamese men in this study migrate to Japan in order to accumulate different capital, a process that allows them to claim the status of mature men. Japan, in this sense, is the big ocean where the Vietnamese "salmon men" migrate to and become true men. Moreover, similar to the salmon fish that return to the natal stream afterward, the majority of the Vietnamese migrant men in this research also return or plan to return to Vietnam after having charged up with sufficient resources. The notion of charging migrants in this chapter, thus, ties transnational migration to the aspirations, expectations, and also performances of gender.

In addition, the notion of charging migrants also indicates the different sentiments and perceptions that are attached to the social body of Vietnamese migrant men. Such a perspective can be observed through migrants' perceived sexual desirability and status in the migratory contexts. Empirical evidence in chapter four showed that male Vietnamese migrants are commonly seen as sexually undesirable in the Japanese social context, reflected through the difficulties these men face when establishing intimate encounters or relationships with Japanese locals. This circumstance is the result of factors at macro, meso, and micro levels such as the Japanese hierarchy of racial and national preferences, unfavorable media representations of Vietnamese migrants in Japan, migrants' social network and living conditions, as well as migrants' lack of cultural and financial resources. The social bodies of the Vietnamese migrant men, in such a case, are charged with disadvantageous factors and/or negative sentiments and experiences. On the contrary, many Vietnamese migrant men reported an elevation of sexual desirability and status once they return to Vietnam from Japan thanks to the generally favorable view towards people coming back from abroad. Such an elevation of sexual desirability and status can be observed through returnees' easier experience of engaging in sexual or intimate encounters or relationships with Vietnamese in Vietnam. In that sense, their social bodies are charged with positive attributes in the Vietnamese social context and, therefore, possess relatively high positions in the sexual fields in Vietnam. The chapter also argues that many Vietnamese migrant men come up with tactics and strategies to negotiate such "charging" effects. In that sense, the notion of "charging migrants" is elucidated not only as a process like in chapter three but also as a condition, a status, and a social action.
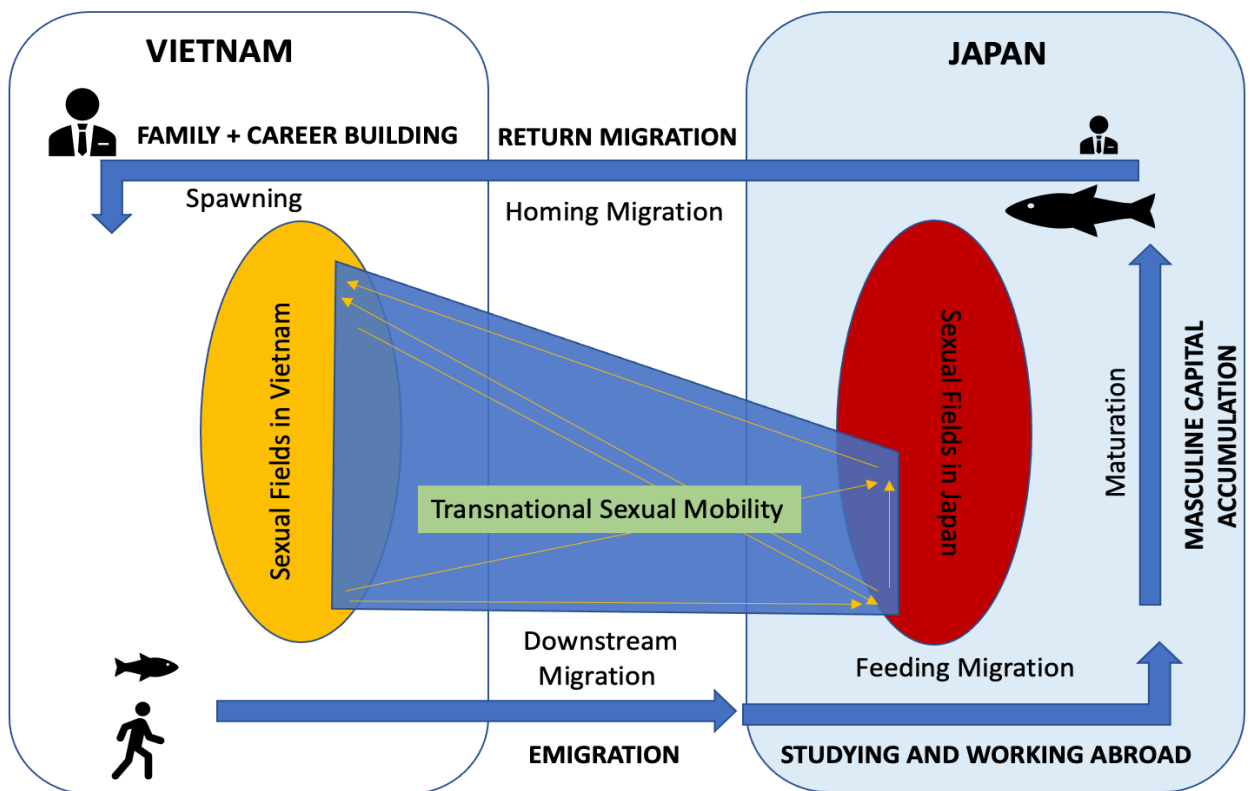
Figure 8. Mapping the "Charging Migrants"

Until now, I have explained the two ways in which the notion of charging migrants is examined in chapter three and chapter four of this dissertation. Figure 8 (see above) combines and visualizes both of these conceptualizations. In particular, the figure represents the key conceptual findings that speak to how the charging migrants notion is manifested as a social process and also a social condition in transnational migration. One part of this figure was featured in chapter three in which male migrants' journey to Japan was compared to the migration trajectory of the salmon fish and considered a rite of passage to mature manhood. This part indicates the transformation in migrant men's socioeconomic and gender statuses over time as they move from Vietnam to Japan and, later on, from Japan back to Vietnam. The other part of this figure was presented in chapter four where I mapped the possible mobility trajectories within and between the sexual fields in Vietnam and Japan. In figure 8, such a mapping is fitted into the migration trajectory of male migrants between Vietnam and Japan to also indicate how migrants' sexual status and desirability are charged, conditioned, and reconfigured as these men move between different social contexts. It also connects the elevation of migrants' sexual statuses to the temporal development of their migration journey: migrant men tend to gain better sexual desirability and status in the context of return

migration, where they go back to their home country after a certain period of being abroad. By combining these two perspectives, figure 8 speaks to both the sexual and the gender aspects of transnational migration and also illustrates the findings of this dissertation at once. It also shows how migrants develop a special relationship with cross-border migration in which transnational mobility functions as a capital that can be converted into other forms of capital (Kelly and Lusis 2006, 836). In the frame of this research, transnational migration is itself a capital that allows migrant men to then claim not only economic and cultural capital but also sexual and masculine capital. When a male individual is charged with the capital gained through transnational migration, he can have access to upward mobility in terms of social, sexual, and gender statuses.

An effective way to examine such an effect of transnational migration on migrants' social identity is by looking at the post-migration experiences in the return context. Chapter five explores this exact angle and provides evidence that sheds light on the unfolding of the "charging" effects of transnational migration once migrants have returned to the home country. It argues that most male Vietnamese migrants aspire for and expect an elevation of social, sexual, and gender status upon returning to Vietnam from Japan. The chapter then juxtaposes factors of aspirations, expectations, capabilities, and realities to inquire into the different outcomes of return migration from Japan among Vietnamese migrant men. It argues that the "charging" effects of transnational migration can deliver the most positive impacts in terms of returnees' social, sexual, and gender positions when male migrants voluntarily return to Vietnam after having gathered sufficient capital in Japan and when their expectations of return align with the social realities in the return context. It is also in this chapter that I critically evaluate the length and extent to which the charging effect of transnational migration can last upon return. I argue that these charging effects need to be considered with regard to the constant social reconfigurations in the social context of the return destination, where local economic and social developments intertwine with the global hierarchies of development.

6.2. Charging Migrants – The Entanglement of Transnational Migration, Transformation, and Social Mobility

When this dissertation was in the initial phases, migrant men's sexuality and gender were the sole main focuses. After the processes of analytical and theoretical contemplation took place,

transformation and social mobility turned out to be the overarching themes. Looking at the gender and sexual aspects in migration, what this dissertation found out is not only the integral and influential role that sexuality and gender play in transnational migration but also the close tie between transnational migration and individuals' aspirations of positive transformation and upward social mobility. For the charging migrants in this dissertation, migration to Japan provides them with resources to transform their social positions and gender and sexual statuses. The case of men like Phan who transformed from a failed businessman before migration and a construction worker in Japan into a successful businessman and a role model for other migrants after migration is a clear illustration of such an argument. Not only did Phan experience a positive transformation in terms of social identity, but he also enjoyed upward mobility in terms of social, sexual, and gender status after returning to Vietnam. From a man of working-class background before migration to Japan, Phan attained a middle-class status upon his return to Vietnam with his accumulated resources and post-return employment. As a result, I argue that transnational migration, for many Vietnamese migrant men, is a social process that, albeit challenging, promises positive outcomes.

In that sense, Japan seems to resemble an "escalator region" (Fielding 1992) that moves the individuals who migrate there upwards both socially and economically. In the original definition from Fielding (1992), an escalator region attracts many young people at the start of their working lives or those seeking to gain promotion, qualifications, or personal advancement. This escalator region then provides the context within which migrants have a chance to achieve upward social mobility through movements within the region's labor market. The migrants would then emigrate to other places after a certain period of staying, mostly in the middle or later stage of their working lives. This metaphor of an escalator region emphasized several characteristics of the migration influxes that flow in and out of global metropolitan cities: the youthfulness, low status, singlehood of the ambitious immigrants and the middle-aged, high-income, high status, and maybe multi-person household of the emigrants (ibid.). Such an attribute of the escalator region seems to fit in the mobility trajectories of the Vietnamese migrant men in this study. This is because many Vietnamese men migrated to Japan at a relatively young age (around twenty to twenty-two years old when they first moved to Japan), with the hope of attaining Japanese education credentials and gaining financial resources. Most of them then plan to return or return to Vietnam by the

time they reach their late twenties or early thirties, after having charged up with different kinds of cultural, human, and economic resources in Japan.

On the surface, such a trajectory can be similar to Fielding's description of the processes of "stepping on the escalator", "being moved up by the escalator", and "stepping off the escalator" (1992). However, there are two fundamental ways in which the experiences of the migrant men featured in this study deviate from Fielding's characterization of the escalator region. First, while many Vietnamese migrant men can achieve upward social mobility in Japan, the opportunity to elevate their socioeconomic status is much more accessible once they have returned to Vietnam. This means that migrating to Japan does not move migrants upward socially within the Japanese social context, but rather in the context of the home country. Consequently, this dissertation addresses the transnational dimension of the process of upward social mobility, in which individuals' mobility trajectory spans across national borders. Moreover, what the Vietnamese migrant men experience is not only upward social mobility but also upward mobility in terms of sexual and gender status in the Vietnamese social context. Second, because the escalator is commonly an automatic moving staircase, the notion of the escalator region suggests a smooth and effortless process of upward social mobility. It then risks ignoring the difficulties, challenges and struggles that individuals have to face and overcome in order to achieve upward social mobility. In the case of the male Vietnamese migrants in Japan, the struggles and difficulties that they have to face while living, working, or studying in Japan are omnipresent. It is only after overcoming these difficulties and challenges that these men can move up the social stratifications in Japanese society and subsequently in Vietnamese society. This dissertation, thus, sees Japan not entirely as an escalator region but rather as a charging region that male Vietnamese migrants enter and struggle within to move up socially, sexually, and gender-wise at a later phase.

Before going to Japan, several men in this study were well aware that they would be confronted with various challenges during the migration journey. Yet, they still decided to embark on the trip, hoping for positive outcomes in terms of their eventual socioeconomic status. This introduces another meaning through which the notion of "charging migrants" can be unpacked: migrants who keep charging/moving forward. Such a perspective also indicates that upward social mobility is a planned and expected outcome of the spatial mobility between Vietnam and Japan. This argument contradicts Lipset and Zetterberg's theorization of social mobility (1958; 1956) which contemplated social mobility as being an unplanned

consequence of geographical mobility. What this dissertation has shown is that transnational migration is what Goldthorpe (2007) referred to as a "mobility strategy" – a strategy that helps realize the aspiration of upward social mobility. Put differently, mobility in this case is a capital and a resource for social differentiation (Cresswell 2010; Kaufmann, Bergman, and Joye 2004; Moret 2016). The event of return migration to the home country, then, is a marker of transformation in which the planned upward social mobility takes place. Such an argument renders transnational migration the core resource that enables migrants to mobilize their capital where it is valued most highly and, through that, achieve higher social status and class positions. However, this statement cannot claim to pertain to the lived experiences of all the Vietnamese migrant men in Japan and those who have returned to Vietnam from Japan. Transnational migration as a mobility strategy is, thus, rather an ideal type formulated based on the analyses of common patterns in the migration trajectories of the participating migrant men.

6.3. Beyond the Negotiation of Sexualities and Masculinities

One of the main starting points of this dissertation is the necessity to engage with dimensions that are prominent and deeply felt in migrants' social lives yet appear to be more subtle and thus not adequately studied such as sexuality and gender. Conventional migration theories such as neo-classical migration theories, the new economics of migration theories, or dual labor market theory (Massey et al. 1993) mostly tied cross-border migration to economic-related motivations and practices such as the need of maximizing the household's incomes and livelihoods or migrants' labor practices. By failing to take into account the many non-economic factors that also shape transnational mobilities, such theories have little to explain the increasing complexities in most migration flows nowadays. In other words, there have not been "established alternative conceptualizations that might advance accounts of migration beyond a reliance only on economic rationality and completely involuntary displacement" (Carling and Collins 2018, 911). This dissertation's engagement with the dimensions of sexuality and gender in migration, therefore, contributes to the more comprehensive capture of the lived experiences of contemporary transnational migrants and subsequently extends the debates on the intersection between transnational migration, sexuality, and gender. It also advocates for critical, constant, and timely engagement with theories and literature. The findings and arguments presented so far in the dissertation have contradicted quite a few

conventional assumptions in both conventional and contemporary migration studies. Nowadays, transnational migration is considered not only a response to economic or demographic pushes and pulls, but also a process contingent on tangling factors. This study has shown that sexuality and masculinity are indeed integral and influential in every phase of transnational migration and that the migratory journeys of migrant men diverge from the reductive assumption that only ties migration to material betterment. The dissertation, therefore, responds to the growing need to reflect on the tangled conundrums of mobilities, sexualities, and gender, and how these notions are conditioned by sociocultural structures and individuals' agencies (Howe, Zaraysky, and Lorentzen 2008; Groes and Fernandez 2018).

Moreover, by also taking into consideration the experiences of non-heterosexual migrant men, this dissertation problematizes the reliance on heteronormative meanings, institutions, and practices among past migration scholarship (Luibhéid 2008). The narratives from the queer-identify migrants in this study also challenged the commonly assumed unidirectionality of cross-national queer migration as being from the more oppressive global South to the more liberal global North (Carrillo and Fontdevila 2014; Tran 2022). By doing so, the dissertation acknowledges the need to account for the multiplex componentry of migration, the way it is situated in imaginative geographies, emotional variances, social relations, and obligations, politics, and power relations, as well as in economic imperative and the brute realities of displacement (Carling and Collins 2018). Moreover, by examining how sexualities and masculinities are affected concerning migrant bodies, spaces, and discourses, the dissertation provides insights into how migrants' agencies, transnational social lives and identities are shaped by social institutions, structures, and changing social landscapes in both sending and receiving societies. Such an analysis suggests an extensive way in which scholars can examine the migrants' social bodies and the different social meanings attached to them in migratory contexts. Consequently, the dissertation seeks to be in critical conversation with social theories and to provide a better, more nuanced understanding of transnational migration as a social phenomenon.

The narratives from the research participants also indicate that understanding sexuality and gender in migration is not an easy task that can be done in a one-time fashion. For example, it has been well-established that masculine subjectivities are likely to be reconfigured or reworked in the process of migration. Hegemonic masculinity might be destabilized or reinforced, and new forms of masculinities might be developed and enacted,

often in complex ways depending on the backgrounds of the migrants and the contexts they are situated in. However, the question of whether changes in migrant men's masculine subjectivities, practices, and identities will remain or vanish has to be critically addressed. For example, while a lot of research participants in this project claimed that they took on housework and chores such as cleaning up, cooking, and washing the dishes when they were in Japan, these practices were not performed anymore once they returned to Vietnam or after getting married. The same goes with either the migrants' elevated social status or sexual status after returning from abroad. As Vietnam has been on its way to becoming a major emigration country, the social meanings attached to the group of returnees from abroad are likely to change overtimes. Because going to another country and living abroad are not anymore considered to be something too extraordinary or special, the label of returnees from abroad might not confer much symbolic, sexual, or gender capital like in the past. Such a situation should also be considered within the constantly changing social contexts in modern Vietnam. As a result, one of the ways to achieve a critical approach to the negotiation of sexualities and masculinities among migrant men is to be attentive to the dimension of temporality and the configurations in the social contexts within which migrants are positioned. Only then can we evaluate the extent of the "charging effects" that transnational migration delivers to individuals' transformation and social mobility.

Going beyond the field of migration studies, this dissertation's focus on male migrants' negotiation of sexualities and masculinities suggests the possible ventures into other study domains. These include the ways in which structured factors and ideologies considerably contour migrants' sexuality and gender at specific times and places, the formations of transnational social and cultural fields, the construction, negotiation, and reproduction of social identities, or the complex relationship between identity, local cultures, transnational norms and the reproduction of power structures (Benedicto 2008; Lewis and Naples 2014; Lu and Wong 2013; Vertovec 2001; Yuval-Davis 2006). A focus on masculinity can also provide additional insights into the construction of gender roles and expectations in terms of not only masculinity but also femininity. Moreover, the relationship between migrants' negotiation of sexualities and gender identities and social institutions and structures in sending and receiving countries is not a mono-directional but rather a multi-directional one. Via the empirical study of certain aspects in the grounded reality of individuals whose lives transcend

borders, researchers can provide insights into how and where institutions, structures, and ideologies are being transformed as a result of transnational migration (Favell 2001).

Empirically, this dissertation is to date one of the first English-language academic studies that examine the group of male Vietnamese migrants in Japan, with the biggest sample of qualitative evidence. By paying attention to not only Vietnamese migrant men residing in Japan but also former migrant men who used to live in Japan but have returned to Vietnam, this is also among the few projects that apply a multi-sited ethnographic approach to studying Vietnamese migrants in Japan. It is, thus, capable of addressing the changes in migrants' social identities, practices, and representations not only in the spatial but also in the temporal sense. Furthermore, the empirical focus of this dissertation is equally beneficial to the understanding of Asian migrants' lived experiences in nowadays Japan. Vietnamese has been the fastest-growing population of foreign residents and the second largest group of foreigners in Japan. Consequently, this dissertation provides a closer look at how male migrants with Asian background live, work, aspire and develop social networks and relationships in a diverse yet ethnocentric immigrant Japan (Liu-Farrer 2020). It, hence, responds to the call for more empirical studies on how Asian male migrants experience their bodies and identities as migrants as part of intra-Asian transnational migration (Baas and Yang 2020). Further studies can critically engage more with this dissertation's arguments and findings by comparing the experiences of Asian male migrants from different nationalities and ethnicities, adding the female's perspectives into studies of male migrants, and/or further developing, questioning and engaging with the notion of "charging migrants".

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Appendix I

General Bibliographical Information of the Research Participants

70 Research Participants	Time in Japan	Average Age	Sexual Orientation	Marital Status	Occupation
Japan (53) Kanto: 29; Kansai: 9; Tohoku: 2; Hokkaido: 2; Shikoku: 1; Kyūshū: 3; Okinawa: 1	1 – 52 years	27 years old (20 – 72)	Heterosexual: 40 Non-heterosexual: 13	Single: 43 Married: 10	High Skilled Worker: 36 (50%) Students: 26 (38%) Technical Trainees: 7 (10%) Low Skilled Worker: 1 (2%)
Vietnam (17) Hanoi: 9 Dalak: 1 Ho Chi Minh city: 7	3 to 17 years	33 years old (24 – 45)	Heterosexual: 9 Non-heterosexual: 8	Single: 11 Married: 6	Managing Positions: 30% (5) Entrepreneurs: 30% (5) IT Engineer: 10% (2) Other Occupations: 30% (5)

Appendix II

Using Vignette as a Supporting Data Collecting Technique

This dissertation employed the vignette technique as a supplementary data collection technique during the life-history interview. The technique was utilized to pave ways to discuss with research participants about their negotiation of sexual experiences, gender subjectivities, experiences of discrimination, and judgments on other fellow migrants during the interview in a subtle yet time-efficient way. The following text is the English translation of the employed vignette:

"Hung has been living in Japan for three years. Before going to Japan, Hung used to have a love partner in Vietnam, but the two broke up because of the long distance. Although he lives in a busy and vibrant Japanese city, Hung always feels lonely. His daily life revolves around studying, working, and then going back to the apartment which he shares with two other people. Hung is studying at a mechanical vocational college and has three simultaneous part-time jobs to pay for the tuition fee, living expenses and to send remittances to his family back home. Because of such a busy schedule, Hung does not have much free time. Whenever he has time, Hung would connect with family and friends via Facebook. His friends in Vietnam usually jokingly say that Hung went to Japan to look for a Japanese lover, but Hung thinks he has no such a chance. Not only does he feel unconfident with his Japanese language skills, but he also thinks a Vietnamese migrant is not going to be *ninki* (popular) among Japanese people. He also thinks sometimes Japanese people look down on *gaijin* (foreigner) like him. Hung goes back to Vietnam once per year to visit his family and friends. Only during such trips that Hung feels more confident and respected since he earns more money than most of his friends back home. Because he is living abroad and sends remittances back home regularly, people think that he is a responsible and successful man. Moreover, many are also sexually interested in him. Hung's confidence, however, disappears when he goes back to Japan".

In this vignette, the story of the main protagonist does not have an ending, and the pronouns used to refer to his former partner and potential partner are gender-neutral. Research participants were asked to comment on the situation described in the vignette with no time limit to prepare or respond.

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