Contributions of women marriage-migrants to their families of origin in rural Vietnam

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of marriage migration on migrants' family of origin. It focuses on the contribution of female emigrant spouses to their parental home in the form of remittances. Based on a study of 250 migrant-sending households in Southern Vietnam with a daughter living in an Asian country as a 'foreign wife', it provides empirical evidence that women who marry and migrate abroad make substantial financial contributions to their natal families through remittances. A multivariate analysis of the determinants of remittance-sending shows that a woman's characteristics and living conditions abroad largely determine whether she remits or not, while the relative poverty level of her natal family has limited influence. The amounts of remittances sent are particularly correlated with the strength of ties between the daughter and her parents. Overall, these results indicate women's agency in securing remittances for the home family. Findings call for a broader conceptualization of 'women who marry foreigners' or 'foreign brides' as immigrants who contribute to the social development of their home families as migrant workers do.

Keywords: gender; remittances; marriage migration; development; Vietnam; East Asia;

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With the intensification of transnational activities and the expansion of regional networks, there has been an increase in international marriage within Asia over the past few decades (Jones, Shen 2008). Among the various types of international marriage of citizens from Asian countries, unions involving women from developing countries (i.e. China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia) and men from wealthier nations (i.e. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan) have attracted media and academic attention since the late 1990s [1] (Norimitsu 2007, Piper, Roces 2003, Constable 2005, Nguyen, Hugo 2007). These marriages generally involve the international migration of the woman to her husband's country of residence. In Asia, the phenomenon is referred to as 'marriage migration' or 'cross-border migration' (Lu 2008). Women migrants are called 'foreign brides' or 'immigrant spouses' in receiving countries, and they constitute a separate statistical category in immigration data (Bélanger, Lee et al. forthcoming)

Global and regional inequalities are inherent to these marriages. For many women and their families, an international marriage can offer social, economic, and geographic mobility through international migration (Palriwala, Uberoi 2005)[2]. Most of these marriages are orchestrated by matchmaking agencies that organize tours for prospective grooms, gather potential brides, match spouses, organize group weddings, and complete the paperwork for the subsequent bride's emigration to her new husband's country of residence (Wang 2007)[3]. The salience of a private for-profit intermediary sector that organizes and controls this migration flow has mobilized feminists, activists, NGOs, and the media who often discuss the matter within a trafficking framework.

Not surprisingly, the phenomenon often spurs heated discussions about the commodification of women and the need to either regulate or forbid intermediary agencies[4]. In both the sending and receiving countries of marriage migrants, media accounts also frequently question the morality and motives of women who engage in these marriages. Primarily constructed as 'emigrant spouses' or 'foreign wives' inscribed in a patriarchal order whereby women are transferred from their natal family to their husband's family, these women migrants' status as transnational citizens, part of two families, has been neglected (Piper, Roces 2003). The task of moving from the victimization or stigmatization of migrants to a more balanced account requires closer attention to the social dynamics at the intersection of marriage, migration, and development (Palriwala, Uberoi 2005).

This paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of these dynamics by examining marriage migrants' contributions to their families and communities of origin. While migrants' contributions to their natal families are multifaceted (Piper 2009), we begin with an analysis of contributions in the form of remittances. We estimate the determinants of remittance-sending and remittance amounts based on information obtained from 250 households in rural southern Vietnam that have one or more daughters married in Asia, mostly Taiwan and South Korea. Our objective is to go beyond the victim-agent debate by studying the impact of this migration on sending areas of origin. While examining this group of women as *international migrants*, we take into account their status abroad as *foreign spouses*.

Data collected show that the majority of female emigrants make significant economic contributions to their natal families. Results also indicate that the remittance-sending is mostly dependent upon the women's individual characteristics and living circumstances abroad, rather than the relative poverty level of their origin household. Additional findings provide evidence of

the positive relationship between the strength of daughter-parent ties and the magnitude of remittances sent. We discuss our results in light of the literature on remittance-sending behaviour and marriage migrants' agency and vulnerability.

'Foreign brides' as immigrants

Piper (2003) has called for the dynamics between work and marriage migration to be recognized. For instance, she examined how female migrants who enter Japan as wives eventually become workers and how those who enter as workers might eventually marry and become wives. In their edited volume, entitled *Wife or Worker?,* Piper and Roces (2003) articulate a criticism of the wife-worker dichotomy based on the complexity of migrants' trajectories and their multiple roles as international migrants both in the origin and destination countries. In receiving countries, women marriage migrants tend to be locked in their mode of entry as 'wives' in the eyes of their families, policymakers, and the public (Bélanger 2007); in reality, they play multiple roles in both the domestic and public spheres. This article extends this criticism by studying immigrant spouses as family members of their natal household as well as members of their conjugal family in their receiving country. As such, immigrants are also emigrants, and while they become 'wives' of their new husband and 'daughter-in-law' of their parents-in-law, they remain 'daughters' of their parents.

In sending countries, migrants are categorized as those exporting remunerated labour ('migrant workers' – *nguoi di xuat khau lao dong*) and those exporting their reproductive capacities and unpaid labour ('women who marry foreign men' – *phu nu lay chong nuoc ngoai*). Migrant workers migrate within the confines of state-promoted export labour programs, while migrant wives largely escape state planning and migrate through private channels; the former are

seen as legitimate migrants working towards the development of the nation, while the latter are often viewed by state authorities as having doubtful motives or as being helpless women subject to trafficking and in need of help (Bélanger, Khuat et al. 2007). Because of the gendered and patriarchal construction of female immigrant spouses in receiving countries, research into their roles as citizens and contributors to their sending societies has failed to develop. A study on the issue done by the Vietnamese government in 2004 was framed as a study of 'Women who marry Taiwanese men' (*Phu nu ket hon voi nguoi Dai Loan*) and barely touched upon the migration dimension of the phenomenon (Tran T. K. Xuyen 2004).

This article also responds to studies that underscored marriage migrants' agency (Constable 2005, Nakamatsu 2005). In response to conceptualizations of these women as mail-order brides, victims of trafficking, or migrants facing multiple vulnerabilities, these studies have given voice to women themselves and highlighted how the decision to enter an international marriage and migrate is the expression of their agency and a desire to better their lives and, often, the lives of their family members. Sunanta(2009), for instance, has documented women's contribution to their communities of origin through remittances to relatives, but also through their sponsorship of community events. To go beyond the trafficking victim images research must study migrant spouses as transnational family members and as contributors to both their source and receiving countries. The scope of these contributions is complex, multi-layered, economic, and social (Piper 2009).

Determinants of remittances

A dominant framework for studying remittances postulates that migrants remit for two major reasons, either 'altruism' or 'self-interest' (Taylor, Arango et al. 1996, Brown, Ahlburg 1999, de Haas 2006, Lucas, Stark 1985, Glytsos 2001). Altruism may motivate migrants with poor

families to remit more to help supplement modest household income and overcome market risks in local production. The self-interest approach postulates that larger remittance flows would come to better-off families, since the migrants are concerned with their potential inheritance within their families or they want to build up assets at home, such as land and houses, for when they return (Lucas, Stark 1985). In this framework, the analysis of remittance sending/receiving examines the influence of the 'supply' side (migrants' ability to remit) and the 'demand' side (the family's need or claim on the migrant). The empirical literature provides multiple instances of both altruistic (Vanwey 2004) and self-interest motives (Borovnik 2006). Our analysis uses this framework to examine which marriage migrants remit and how much. This framework is particularly relevant to immigrant spouses who come from poor areas of Vietnam (high demand for income) and whose situation is complex, given their multiple roles in the destination country (complicating migrants' ability to remit) as wives, mothers, daughters-in-law, and workers (both unpaid and paid).

Recent work provides illuminating evidence concerning the gendered aspect of remittance-sending. In particular, Rahman and Fei (2009) put forward an innovative framework examining the various sites of the remittance process – sending, receiving, and spending – as gendered. In their results regarding the 'sending' stage or site, they observe, among Asian migrant workers, that women remit more than men, relative to their income. Their evidence is based on an analysis of remittances sent by Indonesian domestic workers in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia, compared with remittances sent by male migrant workers (from other studies) in construction or factory jobs in the same countries. Their results corroborate other studies that have identified women as being better savers and remitters than men. For instance, Curran found that, among internal migrants in Thailand, daughters were more likely to remit than

sons, resulting in parents trusting migrant daughters more than migrant sons. Mills discusses the sense of obligation that Thai daughters have towards their parents and how their desire to remit is one of the main motivations for migrating (Mills 1997). A study of young, single migrant women from rural areas of Vietnam working as factory workers underscores women's desire to gain status and legitimacy within their family by providing financial support to their parents (Bélanger, Pendakis 2009)Vanwey (2004) also found that female migrants from poorer households send money back home for more altruistic reasons, while male migrants from richer households remit more out of self-interest. According to these findings, emigrant spouses from Vietnam, who are constructed by parents as 'dutiful daughters', should deploy their energy to send remittances to their parents, particularly if they are in great need of support. Being members of a new family as 'foreign spouses' may, however, constrain their freedom to have disposable cash and/or work for pay. The large age difference between spouses and the fact that husbands and their families had to pay a large sum to 'import' the foreign bride likely weaken women's power in these marriages and families. Our analysis will examine this contradiction, taking into account the situations of migrants and their families of origin.

Vietnamese migrant spouses in Asia

Vietnamese government statistics indicate an increase in marriages between Vietnamese women and foreign men, mostly Asian men from Taiwan and South Korea (Vietnam's Ministry of Justice 2005)Vietnamese women began to marry Taiwanese men in large numbers in the 1990s after Taiwan began investing mass capital in Vietnam (Wang, Chang 2002). The number of Vietnamese women marrying Taiwanese partners increased gradually from 1995 to 2003 and reached a peak of more than 12,000 marriages per year between 2000 and 2002. The vast majority of Vietnamese spouses settle in Taiwan after marriage. According to Taiwanese

immigration data, by 2005, nearly 100,000 Vietnamese immigrant spouses had migrated in Taiwan, making up about 35 percent of all 'foreign brides' in Taiwan, ranking second after Mainland China.

Recently, South Korea became the second most popular country of immigration among Vietnamese women who married foreigners. Migration of brides from Vietnam to South Korea began around 1995, but very few women migrated there prior to 2002 (Kim 2007). In 2003, the annual entry of Vietnamese 'foreign brides' reached 1,403, and this was multiplied sevenfold in 2006 with 10,193 cases (Lee 2007). To date, approximately 30,000 Vietnamese women have migrated to South Korea as foreign spouses and, as in Taiwan, they are the second largest group after foreign spouses from Mainland China. Given Vietnam's population, these numbers are relatively small, but, because women tend to come from the same communities, the local impact can be significant.

If we consider that the majority of immigrant spouses are in Taiwan and South Korea, Vietnamese marriage migrants constitute about half the recent female migrants in Asia, the other half being migrant workers. Between 1995 and 2004, Vietnam's export labour program sent 335,000 workers abroad, and 34 percent (113,900) of them were women (MOLISA 2008). The feminization of migration in Asia is often studied in the context of increasing proportions of female labour migrants, but marriage-based female migration also plays a role in this trend, as illustrated by the example of Vietnam.

Study site and data collection

The survey was conducted in three rural communes of Thốt Nốt district in Cần Thơ city province[5]. In Vietnam, Thốt Nốt district is well-known for sending a large number of its female

residents abroad through international marriage, especially to Taiwan and, more recently, South Korea. With the assistance of provincial authorities, we selected the three (out of 8) communes of this district where the largest number of women emigrated following marriage to a foreign Asian man. The population of the communes studied ranged between approximately 20,000 and 33,000.

The international marriage 'fever' first began in commune 1, the commune with the most comprehensive local level statistics on marriages. Of a total of 1,117 marriages in the four year period from 1999 to 2003, 498 marriages were to Taiwanese men, accounting for 45 percent of all marriages registered in the commune. The proportion of international marriages over all marriages was not available for the other two communities studied. While most marriages were to men from Taiwan, recent data indicates an increase in marriages to men from South Korea. In commune 2, 33 women married Taiwanese men and 62 married South Korean men over the 16 months preceding the survey (2006 and first four months of 2007). Local authorities from commune 3 could only provide the total number of international marriages registered by local women – 373 between 1999 and 2007. In our sample, 80 percent of the women married Taiwanese men, 17 percent South Korean men, and the remaining 3 percent other Asian men (Chinese, Japanese, and Malaysian).

We conducted a household survey[6] through personal face-to-face interviews, using two sub-samples of households: 250 migrant-sending households (migrant households thereafter) and 150 non-migrant-sending households (non-migrant households thereafter) as a reference group. To be selected, a migrant-household had to have at least one female household member who had migrated to an Asian country as a marriage-migrant and been there for at least one year. In these households, we administered the module about the emigrant spouse for each of the daughters

abroad. Twenty-three households in our sample had two or three daughters married abroad, so we collected information on a total of 276 emigrants. A non-migrant household was defined as not having any female who migrated abroad following marriage to a foreigner. Our focus on Asian countries allowed us to capture over 90 percent of women in international marriages originating from these localities (others were married to American or European men; information provided by community leaders (see Tran 2008)). There was no significant flow of international labour migration from the communities studied, but some internal migration to Ho Chi Minh City. The present analysis uses data obtained from migrant-households. The questionnaire for this subsample had four sections: (1) general information about household demographic and socio-economic characteristics, (2) information about the migrant and her marriage(s), (3) information on the impact of cross-border marriage(s) on the household, and (4) information on the household's living conditions.

Through cooperation with the provincial authorities, household lists of all hamlets in the three selected communes in Thốt Nốt district (including recent updates of households with marriage migrants and those without) were obtained. We purposely selected the hamlets where migrant households were concentrated within each of the three communes selected. In these hamlets, all migrant households were visited and non-migrant households were selected randomly from the complete list of non-migrant households. A total of 10 hamlets with an approximately equal number of households per hamlet (about 40) were surveyed. One adult respondent was randomly selected from each household.

This study has several limitations. First, a few selected households in each commune surveyed refused to take part in the study. These households could have refused because of the shame brought about by their failure to receive remittances. Since we surveyed nearly all the

households in the selected clusters, we believe that this limitation does not significantly affect our survey results, although it could slightly inflate the proportion of households who received remittances among migrant-sending households. Second, courtesy bias in responses might have led respondents to overestimate amounts of remittances received. Given reluctance, common in Vietnam, to reveal income due to concerns with taxes and levies, it is also likely that amounts were underestimated. Finally, we asked parents to provide information on their daughter and her husband. While we noted that these questions did not seem to pose any problem for our respondents, in some cases, parents might not have been fully up-to-date or informed on some aspects of their daughter's life abroad. We cannot claim to have completely accurate data on all aspects of migrants' lives abroad, since migrants may hide some aspects of their lives from their parents. Since most families were in frequent contact with their daughters and exchanged information about life changes, such as entry into the labour market, progress in language proficiency, and the birth of children, we believe that we collected fairly accurate information on migrants' characteristics for the understanding of remittance-sending.

Data analysis

We used two dependent variables in our analysis: whether migrants remit or not and the magnitude of the amounts remitted. Survey results show that the vast majority (89.7%) of the 276 migrants for whom we have data had sent remittances to their household of origin in the 12 months preceding the survey and that 93 percent had ever received any remittances from their daughter (Table 1). We included both remittances in cash and in goods to this total. Nguyen and Hugo (2007)(Hugo, Graeme and Nguyen, T. H. Xoan 2005) found a similar proportion of households (88%) received remittances from marriage migrants, based on data from another

survey conducted in 2004 in the same region of Vietnam. Nearly 60 percent of families estimated that remittances received represented a large or very large proportion of their total income (50% or above). Although this paper does not examine the reasons that led to international migration, it is useful to mention that over 90 percent of parents believed that their daughter's decision to marry a foreigner was motivated by a desire to help them.

Table 1 about here

To estimate amounts received, we used categories due to the sensitivity of the question. As shown in Table 2, over 30 percent of the women sent an average of $50 to $100 US per month ($600 to $1200 US during the previous year), and over 40 percent sent more than an average of $200 US per month. The total amount of money transferred within a year is many times greater than the average per capita income of this region of rural Vietnam. In 2004, the annual average income per capita in the region of our study (Cuu Long River Delta) ranged between $96 and $1,016 US (Vietnam's Government Statistical Office, 2004). Levels of remittances sent by Vietnamese emigrant female members are substantial, when compared to the average amount of remittances, approximately $121 US, sent home by internal labour migrants during 2004 (Government Statistical Office, 2005). Dang (2005) estimated that the average amount remitted by overseas Vietnamese was $1,000 US per year, but this gross average includes remittances sent by long term settlers living in Australia, the US, Canada, and Europe. No recent data is available on remittances sent to Vietnam by migrant workers only.

Table 2 about here

Our analysis includes two types of predictors: (1) individual level variables accounting for the migrant's characteristics and living conditions in the destination country and (2) household-level variables measuring the relative wealth/poverty of the natal family and the strength of ties between the family and their daughter abroad. These predictors estimate the relative importance of the supply side (migrant's ability to send remittances) and the demand side (family's need for remittances) on the likelihood to remit and amounts remitted.

Unlike a migrant worker who theoretically earns wages, a marriage migrant's ability to secure disposable income is far from guaranteed and will be affected by her living conditions in the receiving country and family. Cash available to send home could come from two sources including (a) money given to the woman by her husband and his family or (b) wages earned by the woman. In both cases, migrants may have to negotiate with their new family to access disposable cash, whether given to them or earned outside the home. Our independent variables capture a woman's ability to negotiate and bargain access to financial resources.

Migrants who can speak the language of the destination country, work for wages, have at least one child, are older, are educated, and live in a nuclear family household (as opposed to an extended household) are hypothesized to be more likely to remit and to remit higher amounts. Women with a child generally have a higher status in their new family and should be in a stronger position to negotiate remittances (98 percent of our sample were childless and single at the time of marriage; children born to these women were from the foreign husband). Older and better educated women have higher social capital, so they should have a better position in the family than young, less educated women. Women living in a nuclear household should be under less pressure, since they only need to negotiate with their husbands and not their in-laws. Theoretically, women who work for wages should have more power in the home and easier

access to disposable income, although the husband and his parents may impose upon them to surrender all their earnings. These variables capture power and gender relations at the household level that influence women's ability to negotiate remittances that are sent to their natal families. We include duration of stay and a proxy for the husband's socioeconomic class as control variables. Based on past research, we hypothesize that there will be an increasing likelihood of remittance-sending after a few years of stay, but then decline as the stay extends. In addition, having a husband who earns wages (blue collar or above) should enhance remittance-sending.

The origin household-level variables measure the relative need of the household for remittances. As explained above, past research shows that the likelihood and amounts of remittances increase with the number of family members living in the place of origin due to greater need. As suggested by the altruism theory of remittance-sending behaviour, a migrant's decision to remit and the amount remitted will depend on the well-being or consumption level of the recipients. We hypothesize that more sizable remittances will be sent to larger households that have more dependents, no other family members working away from home (potentially also a remittance-sender), low perceived economic and social status, none of the durable goods considered essential locally (television, motor scooter, telephone) and a house built of temporary material (i.e. bamboo as opposed to concrete). Finally, we hypothesize that remittances will be greater in families with closer emotional ties, as measured by frequent communication between the migrant and her family and gift exchange from the family to the migrant.

Findings

Table 3 presents the frequencies for our independent variables and bivariate descriptive statistics indicating the relationship between the independent variables and the first outcome variable – propensity to remit. A Chi-square test is conducted for each variable.

Table 3 about here

Age is significantly associated with remittance-sending. Almost 96 percent of emigrant spouses aged 23-26 years sent money home, while only 87 percent of those who were 18-22 did so (the odds of remitting are 3.26 times higher for older group, $p<0.05$). As expected, emigrants who work were much more likely to remit than those who did not (the odds of remitting for migrants are 4.92 times higher for the employed, $p<0.01$). Migrants who had lived in their husband's country for 2 to 5 years and more than 6 years are more likely to remit than those who have been abroad for less than a year (the odds ratio are, respectively, 17.55 and 7.88, $p<0.01$ in both cases). Results suggest that language skills play an important role in remittance behaviour. Among emigrants fluent in the language of their destination country about 96 percent remitted, compared to only 76 percent of those with limited language skills. For migrants in nuclear households the propensity to send money home was not significant, but the odds ratio suggests that it is stronger than for those who live with their husband's parents. More women with children sent money home than those without children (with an odds ratio of 7.01, $p<0.01$). Women whose foreign husbands are blue-collar workers, such as manual and technical workers, have a stronger propensity to remit than those whose husbands work in other areas, like agriculture and fishing.

Binary results do not suggest a greater likelihood of remitting among women from poorer families. As Table 3 shows, whether the family of origin has any dependents or family members living and working away from home is not significant. Three indicators of family wealth are associated with an emigrant's propensity to remit. Specifically, 97 percent of those families who declared non-poor status received remittances, while 89 percent of those who reported poor status did so (poor status reduces the odds of receiving remittances by 74 percent, $p<0.05$). The same disparity is also observed between families who owned the three durable items considered most important and a permanent house and those who did not. As expected, more frequent communication between women and their natal families led to a higher propensity to remit.

Table 4 shows the multivariate regression results on the likelihood of receiving remittances in the year preceding the survey. Two nested equations are estimated separately to delineate multivariate relationships by adding additional variables. The first model only uses the characteristics of the migrant women. As the first column shows, age has a marginal significant effect on the probability of remitting. After controlling for other variables, the odds of remitting among those emigrant women who were 23 to 26 years and more than 27 years old are 8.24 and 4.85 times, respectively, greater than for those aged 18 to 22 years. This finding can be explained by the progression of the life course. Responsibilities to the family increase when a child enters young adulthood, then decrease as he/she moves into the later twenties.

Table 4 about here

As expected, the working status of emigrants has the strongest positive effect on the likelihood of remitting: after holding other variables constant, the odds of remitting are 11.1

times greater among those working than those who were unemployed or homemakers. This finding reveals women's relative ability to dispose of their own income to support their native families, even when they live in patriarchal family arrangements where many other areas of their lives may be controlled and monitored (Wang 2007). The odds of remitting increase by a factor of 50 percent for every additional year the emigrants live in the place of destination after controlling for other variables, but the difference is only marginally significant. In combination with the chi-square statistics on the three-category variable of length of stay presented above, the effect of time in the place of destination seems to have an inverse, U-shaped distribution and supports the remittance decay hypothesis, as suggested by Lucas and Stark (1985); that is, the probability of sending money home increases with duration of stay abroad, peaks at a certain point, and then declines.

Given the fact that most of the women are not working in the place of destination, the ability to remit may depend on their relationship with their foreign husband, as well as the context of their husband's family. The effect of having children on the ability to remit is positive: the odds of sending money home among those who have at least one child are 4.26 times greater, compared to those who are childless. As hypothesized, this finding suggests that having a child improves the status of migrant women within their husband's family, which, in turn, would give them more power to bargain sending money home.

The effect of emigrants' language skills on the propensity of remitting is found to be positive: the odds of remitting are 5.36 times greater among those who were able to speak fluently. Results suggest that emigrants who are married to blue-collar workers are 5.10 times more likely to remit, compared to others. Interestingly, years of schooling and living arrangements after marriage do not significantly affect an emigrant spouse's propensity to remit.

Model 2 adds key characteristics of the remittance-receiving family and the ties between the migrant and her natal family. The -2Log Likelihood between Model 1 and Model 2 with 15 degrees of freedom indicates that the addition of other variables in Model 2 increases the goodness of fit and the predictive power of the earlier model. The significance and non-significance of emigrant women's characteristics in Model 2 remain almost unchanged, except that duration of time abroad is no longer significantly related to the propensity to remit. In addition, most significant coefficients appear to increase in Model 2.

As shown in the second model, after controlling for other variables, only one variable measuring family wealth – family has three durable items considered the most essential locally (television, landline telephone, and motor scooter) – has a positive significant effect on the migrant's ability to remit. The odds of receiving are 3.49 times greater among families owning these three valuable consumer durables. Other variables measuring the structure of the origin family, namely, family size, presence of dependents, family members living and working away from home, and non-poor economic status, do not have any significant impact on the likelihood of remitting. Similarly, frequency of contact between the emigrants and their native households is not statistically significant. The structure of the household of origin as an indicator of the relative need for remittances does not make any difference in terms of the likelihood of remitting. Overall, results from this model strongly underscore that the women's circumstances in the destination country play the strongest role in whether they remit or not. Contrary to some findings based on migrant workers and economic migrants, the relative poverty level of the marriage migrants' natal household plays a smaller role in the remittance-sending.

We ran the binary logistic regression with the characteristics of emigrant women mentioned above on the likelihood of sending a small (less than $1,217 US, n=127) versus a

large (more than $1,217 US, n=92) amount of money home during the 12 months preceding the survey. The individual-level determinants were not significantly related to the size of remittances (results not shown). In the multivariate model, we only retained the determinants of remittance flow amounts from the demand side – the household of origin.

Table 5 about here.

Demographic characteristics of origin households, such as family size, presence of dependents, and whether family has members living and working away from home, do not show any significant effect on the amount of remittances sent home. Among the variables used to measure family wealth, ownership of a permanent house is the only significant variable. These findings are inconsistent with the literature generally showing that more remittances are more likely to be sent to poorer households. In this case, we could have a circular relationship whereby parents who benefitted from large amounts of remittances have built better homes. The cross sectional nature of our data limits our ability to interpret this result.

Variables measuring frequency of communication between emigrant women and their home families have strong positive significant associations with the amount remitted. The odds of receiving a large amount of remittances among those who communicated with their daughters every week were 1.81 times larger than those who did not. Similarly, those families who sent (non-cash) gifts to daughters abroad were more likely to receive larger amounts than those who did not. Larger amounts of remittances are an effective way to demonstrate emigrant daughters' responsibility and concern to their home families and to maintain and strengthen family ties between them.

Conclusion

Our results provide evidence that including marriage migrants into the inquiries of the impact of international migration on areas in Asia is necessary. First, we observe among our sample a very high likelihood to remit. Contrary to migrant workers who take hefty loans to finance their migration, women in our study did not have to disburse significant amounts of money to migrate[7]. These remittances can thus be promptly used by the household of origin. The fact that the majority of households deemed remittances sent by their daughter as being a significant proportion of their overall revenue shows the strong economic impact of daughters' financial contribution through remittances. This finding begs the question of why daughters remit to parents.

Rather than resulting from ties created by debts or expected returns for a planned return, motivation to send money home lies in other factors. On the one hand, our results support the altruism theory. Osaki (2003) provided comparable evidence for the case of female internal migrants in Thailand. She argued that "such altruistic behaviour may be a reflection of normative expression of gratitude and respect toward the migrant's parents for raising them" (Osaki 2003). This social norm is also consistent with what Curran and Saguy (2001) referred to as 'gender identity', 'obligations', and 'trust' of female migrants towards their families. Children's socialization in Vietnam teaches children – particularly daughters who do not have symbolic value because they cannot continue the family line – a sense of owing to parents and the need to fulfil their obligations through material and emotional support (Bélanger 2002). For the case of Thailand, Mills refers to this phenomenon as 'kinship based morality', which is fostered during early childhood (Mills 1997). Rydstrom talks about the inculcation of the 'embodiment of morality' as the essence of girls' socialization in rural Vietnam (Rydstrom 2002). This strong

sense of owing to parents explains why some young Vietnamese women choose to marry foreign men; marriage migration can be a way to show gratitude to their parents and alleviate their poverty.

Our results also indicate that, as they stay longer and get older, migrants are less likely to send money home, a pattern in line with existing research. Daughters' duties and obligations towards their origin families are particularly strong in the first years after migration and shift towards the needs of their immediate family in later years. The altruistic interpretation of remittance-sending must be situated in a life course perspective, since women could remit to maintain strong ties with their natal family as a form of insurance against the risk of difficulties or even divorce leading to an eventual return. In such cases, remittances could be the outcome of self-interested motives, thus providing some support for this approach as well.

An important finding of our analysis lies in the strong influence of women's characteristics in the country of destination, as opposed to the relative need of her natal family, in influencing the likelihood of remitting or the amounts remitted. On the one hand, this result is not surprising: women's ability to send money will depend, to a great extent, on her new family. Interestingly, our results indicate that, while those who work are very likely to send money home, many other characteristics also influence the likelihood of remittance-sending. This finding points to women's ability to negotiate disposable income to send as remittances to their parents from their new family. Once they migrate, women attempt to send money home, regardless of their employment situation. Those not sending, for the most part, have just newly arrived or face opposition from their new family. Past research on Vietnamese immigrant spouses who experience domestic violence showed how, in most cases, conflict and violence had

erupted over the woman's desire to send of money home and to work outside the home (Tang Wen-hui, Bélanger et al. 2009).

This article contributes to the understanding of the impact of marriage migration on sending areas of Vietnam. The study of remittances sheds light on gender and power relations as they unfold in migrants' new conjugal and extended family. Documenting immigrant spouses' contribution to their family of origin is a step forward in considering these women as migrants in their own right, rather than narrowly defining them as 'foreign brides' or 'women who marry foreigners'.

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Table 1. Remittances sent to families by emigrant daughters (n=276)

	Since migration (ever) (%)	During the 12 months prior to the survey (%)
Remittances	**93.0**	**89.7**
Money	85.3	81.4
Goods	0	0.4
Both money and goods	7.7	7.9
No remittances	**7.0**	**10.3**
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 2. Amounts of remittances sent to families by emigrant daughters (12 months preceding the survey, n=225), in US dollars

Amount of remittances	Percentage (%)
Less than $300	7.2
$300 – $600	20.7
$600 –$1,200.00	29.3
$1,200.00 – $3,000.00	25.7
More than $3,00.00	17.1
Total	***100***

Table 3. Percent remitting by some independent variables and bivariate statistics

Variables	Frequency	Valid %	Remitter (%)	Odds ratios	Chi-square statistics
Individual characteristics of emigrant women					
Current age					0.079
18-22 (a)	62	22.8	87.1	1	
23-26	116	42.6	95.7	3.26 **	
27+	94	34.6	94.6	2.58	
Years of schooling					*0.033*
Lower than primary	36	13.1	85.7		
Primary	163	59.5	91.9		
Higher than primary	75	27.4	98.7		
Current working status					*0.003*
Not working	111	44.2	87.3	1	
Working	140	55.8	97.1	4.92 ***	
Duration in the destination					*0.000*
Less than 1 year	19	7.0	77.4	1	
2-5 years	167	61.6	98.4	17.65***	
6 years or more	86	31.4	96.4	7.88 ***	
Language skill					*0.000*
Speaking with foreign husband at a limited degree	33	22.2	75.8	1	
Speaking fluently with foreign husband	238	87.8	95.7	7.20 ***	
Living arrangement after marriage					*0.114*
Living with husband's parents	184	67.9	91.2	1	
Not living with husband's parents	87	32.1	96.5	2.67	
Presence of children					*0.000*
No	73	26.4	82.2	1	
Yes	203	73.6	97.0	7.01 ***	
Occupation of foreign husband at the time of marriage					*0.055*
Blue-collar worker	130	50.8	96.0	1	
Other	126	49.2	89.8	0.37 *	
Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of household of origin					
Family has dependents					*0.788*
Yes	168	60.9	93.4	1	
No	108	39.1	92.5	0.88	
Family has another migrant					*0.307*
Yes	35	12.7	97.1	1	
No	241	87.3	92.4	0.34	
Self-assessed economic status					*0.012*
Non-poor	135	48.9	97.0	1	
Poor	141	51.1	89.3	0.26 **	
Family has three durable items					*0.000*
Yes	81	29.3	96.9	1	
No	195	70.7	84.0	0.17 ***	
Housing type					*0.015*
Permanent	158	57.2	97.4	1	
Temporary, simple	118	42.8	89.8	0.23 **	
Frequency of communication					*0.054*
Every week	117	42.4	95.6	1	
Every month or several times per year	159	57.6	89.6	0.40 *	
N					**276**

Table 4. Parameter Estimates (Odds Ratios) from Logistic Regression Models: The determinants of the likelihood of receiving remittances

Variables	Model (1)	Model (2)
Individual characteristics of emigrant spouses		
Current age		
18-22 (a)	1	1
23-26	8.24 *	13.98 **
27+	4.85 *	9.22 **
Years of schooling	1.15	1.04
Working	11.1 ***	13.23 ***
Duration of time abroad (in years)	1.50 *	1.31
Having children	4.26 *	4.99 *
Speaking fluently with foreign husband	5.36 **	6.09 *
Living with husband's parents	0.73	0.56
Having a blue-collar foreign husband	5.10 **	6.40 **
Characteristics of the household of origin		
Household size (in persons)		1.36
Family has dependents (children aged under 14 and elderly over 60)		0.50
Family has members living and working away from home		2.66
Family is non-poor		1.72
Family has three selected durable items		3.49 **
Family communicates with the emigrant women every week		2.36
N	**218**	**218**
-2 Log likelihood for normal	**68.40**	**61.13**

Note: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%; (a) reference category

Table 5. Parameter Estimates (Odds Ratios) from Logistic Regression Model: Predictors of amounts of remittances (small vs large) (during the 12 months preceding the survey)

Variables	Model
Demographic characteristics of origin household	
Household size (in persons)	0.88
Family has dependents (children aged under 14 and elderly over 60)	1.14
Family has members living and working away from home	0.94
Family wealth	
Family has three durable items	1.15
Family has a permanent house	2.00 **
Family ties	
Family communicates with the emigrant every week	1.81 **
Family sends gifts to the emigrant during the 12 months	5.03 ***
-2Log likelihood	**274.84**
N	**222**

Note: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

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[1] Under international categories, marriage migrants would fall under the category of 'family reunification'. The Asian phenomenon, however, is more specific than implied by 'family reunification'.

[2] Likewise, many men who seek a wife on the international marriage market are considered undesirable and face difficulties in getting married in their home country; the international marriage market gives them the opportunity to increase their social status by being married and having children.

[3] Since 2000, we observe in our fieldwork in Vietnam, Taiwan, and South Korea that networks have played an increasing role in facilitating subsequent migration, but no published research has examined this matter. In both sending and receiving countries, however, intermediaries are generally unavoidable because they remain the gatekeepers of the complex administrative process involved (Wang, Chang 2002), which is often fraught with corruption and 'under-the-table' payments in some countries.

[4] In 2008, both Taiwan and South Korea instituted new laws. South Korea opted to licence and monitor profit-making match making agencies and brokers and Taiwan outlawed all profit-making agencies to only allowed non-for-profit organizations involved in international matchmaking (see Tseng 2009).

[5] Administratively, Vietnam is divided into provinces and centrally-controlled municipalities existing at the same level as provinces. The provinces are divided into districts, provincial cities, and towns. The centrally-controlled municipalities are divided into rural districts and urban districts. Can Tho was created in the beginning of 2004 by a split of the former Cần Thơ province into two new administrative units: Cần Thơ city and Hậu Giang province. Can Tho has 8 districts.

[6] In addition to the survey, we conducted thirteen in-depth and focus group interviews, reaching a total of thirty-seven villagers. Individual interviews were conducted with mothers, younger sisters of marriage migrants, and local political leaders; focus group discussions were conducted with representatives of non-migrant households, young, single, local men and women. The fieldwork also involved participant observation of community and household relations and informal discussions about cross-border marriages and migration. We make use of these qualitative data elsewhere (Bélanger, Khuat et al. 2009).

[7] In this study, we asked parents if they had to disburse money for their daughter's marriage and migration; the vast majority did not. If they did, the groom had reimbursed the expenses with a gift in cash. Other fieldwork we did with migrant spouses from the North in 2008 (Hai Phong area) revealed that, in this region, families had to pay between $2,000 US and $4,000 US to a broker for their daughter to marry a foreigner (Bélanger et al. 2009).