

EXPLORING THE VIETNAMESE IMMIGRANTS' EXPERIENCE IN HUNGARY: AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The way Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest negotiate their multiple identities is by all means but simple. It is a mix of personal belongings, culture, and how society sees them. In today's more and more globalized world, people move between different cultures all the time, adjusting themselves to new social rules and expectations. Identity is not something fixed—it changes all the time, influenced by both a person's background and the pressure to fit into the new society. For Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest, this idea means trying to keep their traditions and connections to their community while also finding a place in Hungarian society. In this process, big questions come up: Where do they belong? Are they accepted or excluded? How do they define themselves? The immigrant experience is often full of mixed feelings—sometimes they feel close to both cultures, sometimes they feel distant from both. They are always rethinking where they stand between their old home and their new. This paper attempts to explore

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the ways Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest navigate through the host society while balancing their multiple identities in a multicultural context.

Keywords: intersectionality, Vietnamese immigrants, identity

Discipline: Cultural Anthropology

Absztrakt

A VIETNÁMI BEVÁNDORLÓK TAPASZTALATAI MAGYARORSZÁGON: EGY INTERSZEKCIONÁLIS ELEMZÉS

A Budapesten élő vietnámi bevándorlók számára identitásuk alakítása összetett folyamat, amelyben a személyes hovatartozás, a kulturális örökség és a társadalmi megítélés egyaránt szerepet játszik. A globalizáció hatására az emberek folyamatosan különböző kultúrák között mozognak, alkalmazkodva az új társadalmi normákhoz és elvárásokhoz. Az identitás nem statikus, hanem folyamatosan változó jelenség, amelyet egyszerre befolyásol a személyes háttér és a befogadó társadalomba való beilleszkedés kényszere. A Budapesten élő vietnámi bevándorlók számára ez azt jelenti, hogy meg kell találniuk az egyensúlyt hagyományaik és közösségi kapcsolataik megőrzése, valamint a magyar társadalomba való integráció között. Ebben a folyamatban alapvető kérdések merülnek fel: Hová tartoznak? Befogadják őket vagy kirekesztés áldozatai? Hogyan határozzák meg önmagukat? A bevándorlói lét gyakran kettős érzésekkel jár – egyes helyzetekben közel érzik magukat mindkét kultúrához, máskor viszont mindkettőtől távolinak. Az identitás folyamatosan újraértelmeződik az eredeti és a befogadó kultúra között. Jelen tanulmány azt vizsgálja, hogyan navigálnak a vietnámi bevándorlók a magyar társadalomban, miközben többes identitásukat egy multikulturális közegben próbálják fenntartani.

Kulcsszavak: interszekcionalitás, vietnámi bevándorlók, identitás

Diszciplína: kulturális antropológia

Cultural and Historical Context

Hungary, as part of the European Union, has a special context for looking at how people deal with identity in a multicultural setting. To study Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest, it is important to consider both the larger social structures and the personal choices that shape this process. The way Vietnamese immigrants experience life here is influenced by Hungary's history and politics, but also by their own migration stories. Things such as the political situation, past migration trends, and job opportunities all affect how they interact with Hungarian society. This paper looks at how Vietnamese immigrants find their place in a city that, even though it has different ethnic groups,

still holds strong nationalistic and sometimes xenophobic sentiments (Kovács, 2020).

To have a better understanding at this it is important to look at Vietnamese immigrants' experiences within Hungary's history and society. The first major wave of Vietnamese migration to Hungary took place in the late 20th century mostly for political and economic reasons, especially during the socialist period. After the Vietnam War, Hungary welcomed many Vietnamese, which set the foundation for their community. Over time, as more people arrived, Vietnamese groups started to build their own space in Budapest mainly in business and trade. However, their connection with the Hungarian society was not always smooth.

During communism, Hungary viewed these immigrants as part of socialist brotherhood but this feeling was not always mutual. At first, many Vietnamese came to Hungary as guest workers or refugees, but after socialism ended, they faced difficulty as immigration policies changed, making it harder for non-EU migrants to integrate (Bognár & Tóth, 2013).

Since the 1990s, Hungary has changed significantly, particularly from communism to a market economy, and later joining the European Union. These changes had created an impact on the Vietnamese community. In some ways, the shift to a market economy created new chances for Vietnamese immigrants especially in small businesses such as retail and food. But at the same time, as Hungary followed more neoliberal economic policies, problems such as discrimination, unemployment, and social exclusion became more common. This was especially hard for those who didn't have the right skills or legal status to get better jobs (Illés & Kin, 2012).

In a society that is mostly Hungarian, which already has its own national and ethnic values, Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest struggles to keep their. Despite Budapest being a multicultural city, Vietnamese immigrants still face marginalization in their daily lives. Often viewed as "outsiders" because of their ethnicity and culture, Vietnamese immigrants often deal with stereotypes that put them into certain roles such as street vendors and restaurant owners, which only strengthens generalized views about their community. This problem is exacerbated by the general situation in Europe where xenophobia and anti-immigrant attitudes have run rampant in recent years. In Hungary where the general attitude is already nationalistic and the fact that the Hungarian government often promotes ethnic homogeneity and resistance to immigration, Vietnamese immigrants face challenges to find their place in public life (Kovács, 2020).

At the same time, the Vietnamese immigrants keep strong connections to their homeland, both emotionally and financially. These very connections help them hold on to their culture while also figuring out how to thrive in Hungary. For example, the Vietnamese community in Budapest still celebrates traditional festivals, speaks their native language, and creates spaces where they can practice Vietnamese traditions together. Keeping their culture alive is not just about missing Vietnam, it is also a way to push back against the pressure to fully assimilate. Nevertheless, balancing these cultural ties with the reality of living in Hungary has shown to be more complicated and led to identities that are both connected to Vietnam and shaped by the need to adapt to Hungarian society (Faist, 2000).

In the next sections, this paper will look at how these cultural and historical factors connect with personal identity struggles. It will focus on intersectionality and how different parts of social identity such as gender, class, and migration status, affect the daily lives of Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest.

Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Vietnamese Immigrant Community

When analyzing the data concerning the Vietnamese community in Budapest, it is necessary to consider how factors such as gender, ethnicity, and class intersect with one another to shape the immigrants' experience. The aforementioned aspects of identity do not just influence the way Vietnamese immigrants experience life in Hungary but also the social dynamics and power structures within their community and the Hungarian society. When it comes to gender roles in the Vietnamese community, it is largely influenced by traditional values from Vietnam, but at the same time it changes and adapts when the immigrants interact with the Hungarian society. Similar notions can be said for ethnicity as they also influence the ways

Vietnamese immigrants are perceived and treated, both among themselves and in the wider context of the Hungarian society where they often face racial stereotypes and sometimes exclusion. Another notable aspect would be class, which decides who has access to resources, opportunities, and social mobility, ultimately complicates the ways Vietnamese immigrants navigate their identity. The following session of this paper will attempt to take a look at how all these factors intersect and shape the Vietnamese immigrants' experience in Hungary, together with their social positionings, and strategies for their survival in the multicultural city of Budapest.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity plays an important role in shaping the Vietnamese immigrants' identity in Budapest, particularly influencing how they interact with one another within the Vietnamese community and in the wider context of Budapest. For many in the Vietnamese community, ethnic identity remains a core value of their self-image, especially in a multicultural city where they often face racialization and marginalization. When it comes to the perception related to their physical appearance, language, and cultural practices, Vietnamese immigrants are often labeled as "other" in Hungary. These stereotypes can result in the exclusion from mainstream social, political, and economic spaces (Wimmer, 2007).

At the same time, ethnicity provides a strong sense of solidarity within the Vietnamese community. Shared cultural traditions, language, and migration experiences create a collective identity that resists the pressures to assimilate. For first-generation Vietnamese immigrants, holding on to these cultural practices such as celebrating Tet (Vietnamese Lunar New Year) or cooking traditional foods, is not just about keeping their

heritage alive but also to serve as a way to resist assimilation and maintain a connection to their homeland (Nguyen, 2004).

However, ethnic identity among Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest does not function in the same way for everyone. There is a noticeable difference between the first and second generations. First-generation immigrants often have a more defined sense of ethnic identity because they are more likely to experience exclusion from the Hungarian society. Their lives are often tied to maintaining close connections with other Vietnamese, creating close-knit networks for support in a foreign country (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

On the other hand, second-generation Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest tend to navigate their ethnic identity in a more complex way. Generally, they have native level proficiency of the Hungarian language, and are more integrated into the local educational and work systems; their racialization however means that they are still often seen as outsiders despite the aforementioned factors. This very idea creates tension, as many young Vietnamese immigrants struggle to reconcile their ties to Hungarian culture with their desire to maintain a connection to their Vietnamese heritage. The generational divide highlights the ongoing negotiation of ethnic identity as they balance their cultural heritage with the realities of living in a society that sees them as foreign (Foner, 2001).

Ethnic identity for Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest is also shaped by the wider racial context in Hungary. In Hungary, like in many countries in Europe, immigrants from non-European backgrounds are often seen differently from the local population. Vietnamese immigrants, along with other minorities, are sometimes seen as "exotic" or just a source of cheap labor, often working in areas like restaurants, shops, and services. These views can limit the opportunities for immigrants, pushing them into lower-paying jobs and making it harder to fully join in society (Jönköping University, 2012).

This kind of marginalization creates a stronger divide between the Vietnamese community and the local Hungarians, making it tough for immigrants to move up or feel fully accepted.

At the same time, ethnicity can sometimes work as a kind of strength for Vietnamese immigrants, especially in certain parts of society. The stereotype that the Vietnamese community is hardworking and clever helps them find jobs in areas where their skills are needed. Many Vietnamese businesses, like small shops, restaurants, or nail salons, do well because they meet a specific need in the Hungarian market. These businesses not only give immigrants financial stability but also create spaces where their ethnic identity stays strong, with people sharing the same language, culture, and customs.

Still, racialization is not always just a barrier for Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest. Over time, younger generations have a chance to redefine their ethnic identity through their involvement in Hungarian society and their changing connections to both their own community and the wider Hungarian population. These younger people often experience different cultural influences, which allows them to create mixed identities that combine both their Vietnamese background and the Hungarian context they live in. As they grow older, their experience of ethnicity is shaped more by their ability to move between different cultures, redefining who they are in ways that challenge the traditional ideas of ethnic belonging and integration (Schiller & Çağlar, 2009).

Ethnicity still significantly influences the ways Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest define themselves. It offers them a sense of belonging and support within the community, but at the same time it also brings challenges, considering the already existing racialization and exclusion they often face in the host society. With that being said, the negotiation of ethnic identity is a complex process that depends on things such as generational differences, how immigrant are

racialized, and the constantly changing social and economic roles in the host society. Understanding ethnicity as something that shifts and evolves over time facilitates the understanding of how Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest actively engage with their heritage while also adjusting to life in a multicultural environment.

Gender

Gender roles have shown to have an impact on the Vietnamese immigrants' experience in Budapest, which shapes their relationships both inside their own community and with the host society. Regarding the Vietnamese community, traditional gender roles, often based on Confucian values, are the dominant forces. These roles usually view men as providers and women as caretakers, responsible for the home and maintaining cultural tradition (Tran, 2004). However, upon arriving in Hungary, both Vietnamese men and women face new expectations in the host society that make it difficult to maintain the mentioned traditional roles.

For many Vietnamese women in Budapest, moving to another country changes their roles in the family and society. In Vietnam, women are expected to take care of the household and raise children. But when they come to Hungary, many women need to work because of financial reasons. First-generation women often work in restaurants, retail, and nail salons, which is very different from what they did in Vietnam (Kibria, 1993). These jobs give them some independence, but they can also be hard work, with long hours and low pay. This change challenges the old gender expectations in the Vietnamese community, as women's work becomes more important and visible.

However, even though women start working, they still have to follow many traditional gender roles. They are still expected to take care of the home, look after children, and manage family matters, which can be a double burden. Many

immigrant women experience this, not just Vietnamese women (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1997). So, even though the roles of women in the Vietnamese community are changing because of the new economy in Hungary, they are still influenced by old expectations from their home country. In some cases, women's roles as caretakers and leaders in their communities may get stronger, but they are also changing as they live in Hungary.

Regarding Vietnamese men, there exist a notable change as well. In Vietnamese society, men are oftentimes viewed as providers. But when they come to Hungary, many men have a hard time finding stable jobs. Their certifications and experience from Vietnam are not always recognized, which leads to doing works below their skills. This can make them feel less like the providers they are used to being in Vietnam, which may make them frustrated or feel less "manly" (Hoang, 2009). Moreover, the traditional expectation that men should be the head of the house can create tension, especially when they cannot fulfill this role due to their job situation or the way they are seen by the Hungarian society.

The changes in gender roles can create opportunities to redefine family dynamics. Some Vietnamese men now living in Hungary, especially those who are involved in the local job market and social systems, may start to share home duties with their partners, which in a way redefines what it means to be masculine. The stark difference between traditional roles expectations and new reality in Hungary creates a space where men and women can challenge or reshape their gender roles. For this, gender roles have shown to be not static but constantly evolving as people also constantly negotiate their multiple identities to adapt to the new demands and opportunities of migration.

The younger generation of Vietnamese immigrants, especially those who born and raised in Hungary, is often the first to tackle gender dynamics. Having grown up in a multicultural city

like Budapest, they are exposed to progressive gender norms that actively challenge the traditional gender roles expectations from their parents' generations. They ultimately reject or adapt to these expectations, which means embracing more equal gender roles shaped by the new society and global influences. For instance, second-generation women in Budapest who are both fluent in the Hungarian language and more well-integrated into the education system, are often exposed to opportunities outside traditional gender norms. Many of them are able to pursue careers, education, and activism, which effectively challenges inherited expectations while balancing the culture of their roots with the Hungarian culture.

These changes however are not always easy. Second-generation women oftentimes face societal pressures when it comes to their ethnic background despite having access to more opportunities. They often carry a "double burden", meaning they have to negotiate their roles when it comes to balancing the expectations from the Vietnamese community while adapting to the wider Hungarian gender norms. This has rendered second-generation Vietnamese women in Budapest in a challenging position where they must constantly navigate through their personal hopes and desires alongside family and cultural responsibility (Nguyen, 2007). In quite the same way, second-generation men also struggle with redefining what it means to be masculine in this multicultural setting, negotiating their roles in the family and society while staying connected to their Vietnamese heritage.

Generally, it can be said that gender dynamics in the Vietnamese community in Budapest are constantly changing and not static. Both men and woman face challenges in adapting their roles and identities while they navigate through the two realities: traditional cultural values and new life in the host society. Factors such as migration, job market, family and social expectations have

influenced these changes. As gender roles continue to evolve, they will express core patterns of adaptation, change, and resilience among the community.

Class

Class and socioeconomic status are important for Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest, and they affect a lot how they live and try to fit in. When they first come to Hungary, many Vietnamese immigrants have low social status, mostly because they are non-EU migrants and do not have good chances for high-skill jobs. A lot of first-generation Vietnamese immigrants work in the service sector, like in restaurants, nail salons, or retail. These jobs are usually low-wage and not high-status. They help immigrants get by, but they also come with hard work and poor conditions. There is little chance to move up in the job market (Friedman, 2005). Also, their qualifications from Vietnam are not always accepted, which makes it harder to get better jobs or improve their situation.

Even with these challenges, the social class is important in how immigrants create social networks. Many Vietnamese immigrants stay in close communities where they can share resources. These networks give emotional support and help find jobs or information about living in Budapest. For immigrants with fewer resources, these connections are a way to survive and feel more secure (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). But even in the Vietnamese community, there are some differences. While many immigrants work in low-wage jobs, some have started their own businesses like restaurants, grocery stores, or beauty salons. These people are in a higher social class because their businesses are doing well. They have better housing and more financial security. But even they face the problem of being seen as foreigners, which makes it harder for them to be fully accepted in Hungarian society. So, even though they are doing better, the fact that they are outsiders still holds

them back from completely integrating into the larger society (Jönköping University, 2012).

Class and socioeconomic status, therefore, are not just about money but also about how people are seen in society. They affect how Vietnamese immigrants connect with each other and with the wider Hungarian society. While class decides who gets what kind of opportunities or resources, it also shapes how people see their place in society and how much control they think they have over their lives. When you add in gender and ethnicity, these issues become more complicated, as women and ethnic minorities in the Vietnamese community often face more challenges, both in the workplace and socially.

Generational Differences in the Vietnamese Diaspora

Generational differences play an important role in understanding how identities shift and how people engage with their cultural heritage and the society they live in. In the Vietnamese community in Budapest, these differences are particularly noticeable. First-generation immigrants and second-generation individuals experience migration and adaptation in very different ways. The first generation who moved to Hungary to seek better economic opportunities or safety often face a set of challenges that directly impact their sense of identity. These challenges include being excluded from the social mainstream, economic struggles, and trying to hold on to their cultural values in a foreign environment (Rumbaut, 2004). For them, migration does not just mean to be about physically moving to a new place but also an ongoing process to figure out where they stand in the Hungarian society while still keeping their Vietnamese roots.

On the other hand, the second generation, usually born or raised in Hungary, face their own

unique identity struggles. While they grow up exposed to Hungarian culture and often speak Hungarian fluently, their Vietnamese heritage still influences who they are. For them, the tension between the cultural values their parents pass down and the social pressure to fit in with the Hungarian majority creates a complex identity process (Nguyen, 2017). This paper looks at the generational differences within the Vietnamese immigrant community in Budapest, focusing on how the migration experience, cultural adaptation, and social integration are different for the first and second generations. It also examines how each generation negotiates their identity, deals with societal expectations, and figures out their place in Hungary.

First-generation Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest face a distinct set of challenges that shape both their migration experience and their identities. Many of them came to Hungary searching for better opportunities, escaping political instability or economic struggles in Vietnam. Upon arriving in Hungary, they are confronted with the realities of a new environment: language barriers, cultural differences, and the difficulty of securing stable work. All of these factors contribute to a sense of displacement as they try to balance preserving their Vietnamese roots while adjusting to their new home.

Language remains one of the biggest obstacles for first-generation immigrants. Many do not speak Hungarian fluently and find themselves stuck in low-wage, low-skill jobs, often in areas like cleaning, food service, or manufacturing (Friedman, 2005). For example, M., a man who came to Budapest more than 20 years ago, shared how hard it was for him to find work beyond the Vietnamese-owned restaurant where he first started. His limited Hungarian made it hard to move beyond these low-status jobs. This is a common issue among first-generation immigrants,

who often face economic marginalization because of language barriers, even though they work hard (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Aside from economic challenges, many first-generation immigrants are also motivated by the desire to keep their cultural heritage alive. Community organizations and religious groups are crucial for maintaining cultural traditions and giving people a sense of belonging. T., arrived in Hungary as a teenager, is actively involved in organizing Tet celebrations in the community, an important way to keep the Vietnamese language and traditions alive. These events help her stay connected to her roots and also serve as a collective reminder of shared history. However, the desire to hold on to these traditions often clashes with the pressure to fit into Hungarian society, which might not always recognize or value these customs.

Traditional Vietnamese family structures, with their hierarchical relationships and collectivist values, also contrast with the more individualistic and egalitarian norms found in Hungary. These differences can lead to generational tensions, particularly as younger people are exposed to more liberal Hungarian values. T., for instance, described how she sometimes clashed with her parents, who held strongly to traditional Vietnamese ideas, especially around the autonomy of women. She spoke about how her parents' focus on family duties often conflicted with her wish for more personal freedom, highlighting the ongoing tension between her Vietnamese upbringing and the more individualistic culture she encountered in Hungary.

Despite these struggles, first-generation immigrants show impressive resilience. They build spaces where they can preserve their cultural identities while adapting to their new surroundings, and this process of negotiating identity is ongoing. These experiences not only shape their personal sense of self but also lay the groundwork for future generations to engage with both their

heritage and their host society in unique and meaningful ways.

The second generation of Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest represents a distinct group within the diaspora, shaped by both their parents' migration experiences and their own growing up in Hungary. Typically born in Hungary or arriving at a young age, second-generation Vietnamese immigrants face the complex task of holding dual identities. On one hand, they are immersed in Hungarian culture through school, friendships, and the wider society, but at home, they live in an environment where Vietnamese cultural values, language, and customs are upheld. This creates a unique set of opportunities and challenges as they try to balance between the Vietnamese community and Hungarian society (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). While first-generation immigrants often face integration barriers because of language or unfamiliarity with Hungarian norms, the second generation has better access to the resources of their host country. Still, they struggle with reconciling their Vietnamese heritage with the pressure to assimilate into a largely Hungarian culture (Nguyen, 2011).

One major aspect of identity for second-generation Vietnamese immigrants is negotiating their cultural heritage during the acculturation process. While the first generation often focuses on preserving Vietnamese traditions, the second generation faces a sense of cultural dissonance, caught between the expectations of their parents and the norms of Hungarian society (Rumbaut, 2004). Many second-generation individuals feel pressure from their families to maintain Vietnamese customs—such as speaking the Vietnamese language or celebrating traditional holidays—while also adapting to the liberal, individualistic culture of Hungary (Nguyen, 2011). This constant balancing act leads to generational tensions. For example, T., a 21-year-old second-generation student in Budapest, described her

experience as “feeling like a bridge between two worlds.” She explained that, on one side, her parents want her to follow traditional Vietnamese values, but on the other, her Hungarian peers encourage her to adopt a more independent, Westernized lifestyle. This tug-of-war between cultural norms creates an ongoing negotiation of identity, with varying outcomes depending on the person’s ability to manage both cultural influences.

Language is a central aspect of the generational divide within the Vietnamese immigrant community. While many first-generation immigrants in Budapest struggle with Hungarian, the second generation often becomes fluent in Hungarian, using it as their primary language in social settings, education, and work. However, this language skill does not always mean full integration. Even though second-generation individuals can easily interact with Hungarian society, their fluency in Vietnamese tends to diminish over time, creating a gap between them and their parents, as well as their cultural roots (Nguyen, 2011). During my fieldwork, A., a 23-year-old second-generation Vietnamese university student, shared that while she can understand Vietnamese, speaking it fluently has become difficult. *“My parents speak to me in Vietnamese, but I mostly reply in Hungarian now. I feel bad about it sometimes, but Hungarian feels more natural in daily life,”* she said. This language divide can lead to a sense of alienation within the family, as second-generation members may feel disconnected from family discussions or cultural practices. However, A.’s Hungarian fluency also gives her more opportunities in Hungarian society, such as accessing higher education and pursuing professional careers more easily than her parents could.

When it comes to their social life, second-generation Vietnamese immigrants often feel distanced from their parents’ generation. While they share the same cultural background, their lived

experiences are significantly different from each other. Unlike their parents who faced notable discrimination and difficulties integrating when they first arrived, second-generation Vietnamese in Budapest are more likely to form relationships with Hungarian peers. They can navigate these friendships easily, as they are often perceived as “Hungarian” by classmates and colleagues, even though their ethnic background might lead to occasional microaggressions or discrimination (Chau, 2017). This creates a hybrid identity, where second-generation individuals may feel closer to Hungarian culture than to their parents’ Vietnamese culture. L., a 22-year-old second-generation Vietnamese participant in my study, explained how she navigates this: *“At school, I’m just seen as Hungarian. I’ve never felt like I had to explain myself. But when I visit my relatives, I’m reminded that I’m different because I do not fully speak Vietnamese, and I can’t participate in all the rituals they do.”* This illustrates the subtle identity struggles that second-generation immigrants face, as they are caught between two cultures and the expectations of both.

Second-generation immigrants also experience shifting gender roles, which differ from those experienced by their parents. While traditional Vietnamese culture places greater expectations on women to fulfill more conservative roles within the family and society, the second generation is exposed to more progressive gender norms in Hungarian society. This exposure often leads to tensions, especially for second-generation women, who may seek more autonomy and career opportunities than their mothers had when they first came to Hungary. For example, M., shared her desire to pursue a career in business despite her mother’s disapproval. *“My mom wants me to stay close to home and be a good wife and daughter, but I want to make my own career,”* M. said. These tensions reflect how gender dynamics can create generational conflict, especially for second-generation women who may challenge the patriarchal structures that

were more prominent in their parents’ generation (Nguyen, 2011).

The second-generation immigrant experience in Budapest, therefore, is defined by a constant negotiation of identity. It is shaped by the clash between Hungarian societal norms and the Vietnamese cultural traditions their parents uphold. While they have better access to education and social mobility than their parents, the second generation still faces challenges, such as ethnic discrimination and difficulties fully integrating into Hungarian society. By looking at this through an intersectional lens, we see how gender, ethnicity, and the intersection of these factors with Hungarian nationality influence the experiences of second-generation Vietnamese immigrants, who continue to redefine their identities and sense of belonging in Hungary.

Generational Conflict and Adaptation

Generational conflict is a crucial part of the immigrant experience, especially when it comes to cultural negotiation and identity formation. For Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest, the first generation’s strong attachment to traditional values often clashes with the more flexible, mixed identities of the second generation, who grow up in Hungary. As many scholars have said, immigrants usually want to keep their cultural heritage, but their children, who are born or raised in the host country, often want to adapt and fit into the local culture (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). This generational tension is clear in the Vietnamese community in Budapest, where first-generation parents want to preserve their culture, while second-generation children try to create a more fluid, hybrid identity.

According to first generation, maintaining traditional Vietnamese values is very important. They expect their children to follow these values such as

speaking Vietnamese at home, celebrating Tet (Lunar New Year), and showing respect through filial piety. As Waters (2001) points out, these traditions are seen as crucial to maintaining a sense of community and identity when living in a foreign country. But for second-generation immigrants, these expectations can sometimes feel limiting. As they try to fit into Hungarian society while also holding on to their Vietnamese roots, they often feel torn between the two. This generational divide, as Glick Schiller et al. (1992) explain, is common in immigrant families, where younger people often feel caught between meeting their parents' expectations and adapting to the culture of the host country.

For example, A., a 25-year-old second-generation Vietnamese Hungarian, describes the conflict she faces when trying to balance what her immigrant parents want with the lifestyle of her Hungarian peers. *"At home, my parents want me to study hard and keep the traditions. But my friends just want to hang out at cafés or go to parties like any other Hungarian university student,"* A. said. This example shows the generational tension that often happens when young people want more freedom to do things that fit into the Hungarian lifestyle, while their parents want them to follow traditional values. A.'s experience shows the difficulty of trying to live in two worlds – her Vietnamese family's expectations and the more relaxed, Westernized life of her Hungarian friends.

At the same time, the second generation also has to figure out how to combine their Vietnamese identity with the norms of Hungarian society. Growing up in Hungary, young immigrants go through a process of cultural negotiation, where they take aspects of Hungarian culture but still keep important Vietnamese traditions. This process is not about rejecting their culture but about building a new identity that mixes both. For example, T., a 21-year-old university student, shared how she manages this balance: *"At home, we*

always have family dinners with Vietnamese dishes, but when I go out with my friends, we often eat at Hungarian restaurants. I enjoy both, but they are very different from each other." This shows how second-generation immigrant identities are flexible, mixing elements from both cultures in everyday life. It also shows the personal negotiations they make to balance the expectations of their parents with the culture of their peers.

These generational conflicts are also part of the adaptation process within the immigrant communities. As second-generation Vietnamese immigrants try to fit into Hungarian society, they face challenges when dealing with social structures that are different from what their parents experienced. This is especially clear in education and work, where second-generation individuals must deal with discrimination, language barriers, and their parents' expectations.

As Pedraza (2007) notes, second-generation immigrants often have an advantage because they are bilingual and more familiar with the cultural norms of the host society. However, this adaptation also means they have to manage a balance, keeping their cultural heritage while also finding their place in a new environment.

In this way, generational conflict and adaptation are key to understanding identity negotiation among Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest. The younger generation's hybrid identities come from both generational negotiations and the mix of cultural practices, social expectations, and personal desires. These young people actively combine both Vietnamese and Hungarian cultures, creating identities that are more flexible and fluid, instead of being limited by one set of values.

Even though generational conflict often happens because of these changes, it also creates opportunities for both parents and children to redefine what it means to be Vietnamese in Hungary, opening up new ways for cultural exchange and transformation.

Generational Influence on Social Networks

Social networks within the Vietnamese immigrant community in Budapest play a critical role in helping individuals survive, integrate socially, and maintain their emotional well-being. These networks are shaped by cultural expectations from Vietnam and the challenges immigrants face in Hungary. They provide connections, mutual support, and also serve as spaces for preserving culture, showing resistance, and building resilience. These networks are complex and change over time, influenced by the social, economic, and political situations that immigrants navigate in their new environment.

The core of these social networks within the Vietnamese community is centered around family, close friends, and community organizations. The family, especially the extended family, remains the most important unit for maintaining these networks. Many Vietnamese immigrants in Budapest have strong family ties that offer both financial and emotional support when needed. For example, L., a 34-year-old woman working as a waitress in Budapest, shared that her parents, who had moved to Hungary years before her, continue to provide essential help – financial support and childcare for her children. L.'s extended family network is vital for both practical daily support and emotional strength, especially given the challenges of working in a low-wage job. Through these family-centered networks, Vietnamese immigrants manage to create a sense of community even while being far away from home.

Besides family, the Vietnamese community in Budapest also organizes around social and cultural institutions, such as temples, cultural centers, and business associations. These spaces provide opportunities for immigrants to preserve their language, traditions, and customs. For example, the Vietnamese Buddhist temple in Budapest serves as a gathering point for community members, where they meet regularly for religious ceremonies,

cultural activities, and social events. This temple acts as a vital link for people who may not have close family in Hungary but still seek a sense of belonging through shared cultural practices. Through this temple, individuals like T., a 55-year-old woman from Hanoi, receive both spiritual and practical support, attending weekly meetings where information about local resources, job opportunities, and community events is shared. These spaces help immigrants stay connected to their Vietnamese culture and provide social safety nets that make life in Hungary easier to navigate.

In some situations, these social networks also become sites of resistance, especially for those who face discrimination or exclusion in Hungarian society. H., a 28-year-old assistant cook, shared how his involvement with the Vietnamese restaurant owners' association helped him address unfair treatment at work. "When I faced discrimination, I turned to the restaurant network. They helped me understand my rights and connected me to legal resources." Through these networks, immigrants support each other, ensuring their rights are respected in a country where they might otherwise feel powerless.

Therefore, the social networks within the Vietnamese community in Budapest are multifaceted: they provide social and emotional support, preserve cultural identity, and protect against discrimination. Family is still at the core of these networks, but community organizations play a key role in helping Vietnamese immigrants hold onto their heritage while adjusting to the challenges of living in a multicultural society. The flexibility of these networks, which combine both traditional and modern forms of social organization, shows the resilience and adaptability of the Vietnamese immigrant community. These networks are not only survival tools but also places of empowerment, allowing immigrants to stay connected to their cultural roots while integrating into Hungarian society.

Case studies*Case Study 1: Doan and his journey to Germany*

Doan is a 28-year-old man who arrived in Hungary just two years ago, seeking a better life after years of hardship in Vietnam. Coming from a rural village in Vietnam, Doan grew up in poverty, with limited access to education and opportunities. His family, although close-knit, struggled to make ends meet, and Doan felt the pressure to find a way to improve his circumstances. Motivated by the desire for financial stability and a brighter future, he decided to migrate to Europe. After hearing from a friend who had migrated to Hungary, Doan chose to follow a similar path, using connections to get a work visa for a job in the kitchen of a Vietnamese restaurant in Budapest.

Upon arriving in Hungary, Doan found himself facing the familiar challenges of a first-generation immigrant: a new language, unfamiliar customs, and limited access to job opportunities outside of the Vietnamese community. He worked long hours as a kitchen assistant, performing physically demanding tasks in a small kitchen under the supervision of other Vietnamese immigrants. The work was exhausting, and the pay was low, but Doan was driven by the hope of improving his life over time. The restaurant, owned by a fellow Vietnamese immigrant, was a hub for the local Vietnamese community in Budapest, where many of Doan's coworkers were also first-generation immigrants who had come to Hungary in search of better opportunities.

During his time in Budapest, Doan began to build a small social network, primarily consisting of other Vietnamese workers in the restaurant and a few people from the local community. These networks proved to be invaluable when Doan learned about opportunities for better work prospects in Germany. Through a connection at the restaurant, Doan was introduced to a network of Vietnamese migrants who had already settled in

Germany, working in the hospitality and restaurant industries. He learned that there was a demand for workers in Germany, particularly in the food service sector, where wages were significantly higher than in Hungary.

Seizing the opportunity, Doan leveraged his new connections and began to plan his move to Germany. With the help of a fellow Vietnamese immigrant who had successfully made the transition, Doan managed to secure a job at a high-end Vietnamese restaurant in Munich. The job offer was much better than his position in Hungary, both in terms of salary and working conditions. Doan quickly made the decision to leave Budapest and head to Germany, seeing it as the next step in his journey toward economic mobility and a better life.

After arriving in Munich, Doan was immediately impressed by the difference in living standards. The job in Germany came with better pay, better working hours, and even the opportunity for tips. The restaurant was part of a larger network of Vietnamese-run businesses, and Doan found it easier to communicate with his colleagues, as many of them spoke fluent German. Although Doan still faced the challenges of living in a foreign country and navigating a new language and culture, the financial stability provided by his job in Germany allowed him to rent a small apartment and start saving money for his future.

His success story was largely due to the social networks he had developed in Budapest, which served as a bridge to his improved circumstances in Germany. These networks not only provided him with information about job opportunities but also gave him a sense of belonging and support during his transition from Hungary to Germany. Through the connections he made, Doan was able to find a better-paying job, improve his living conditions, and set himself on a path to further integration and economic success in Europe.

Analysis Using the Intersectionality Approach

Doan's story shows how different factors like ethnicity, labor status, social networks, and class all come together to shape the experiences of first-generation immigrants. His migration path from Vietnam to Hungary, and then to Germany, is a clear example of how migration and labor markets intersect with these factors to create opportunities or challenges for upward mobility.

Ethnicity and Social Networks: Doan's experience highlights the key role that social networks play in transnational migration. His first connection to Hungary came through a Vietnamese friend who helped him find a job in a restaurant. This shows how ethnic networks are often crucial for immigrants who are new to a country. These networks help newcomers find jobs, get support, and learn about opportunities. Doan used his network in Hungary to learn about better prospects in Germany, which allowed him to move to a better labor market. Even though his Vietnamese ethnicity in Hungary posed challenges at first – like language barriers and being marginalized – it later became an advantage as it connected him to a larger community of Vietnamese migrants in Europe. This shows how ethnicity can be both a challenge and an opportunity, depending on the situation.

Labor and Social Class: Doan's case also shows how labor status and social class impact migrants. When he arrived in Hungary, he was stuck with low-paying, tough work in the restaurant industry, which is common for many first-generation immigrants. Many end up in jobs with little chance of moving up. However, Doan's use of his social networks helped him break out of this cycle. When he moved to Germany, he found a better job with higher wages, better conditions, and more chances for growth. This change from low-wage labor in Hungary to a better job in Germany shows how labor status and social networks can shape migrants' experiences. By using the networks he

built, Doan was able to improve his social class and overall quality of life.

Gender and Migrant Labor: Although Doan's story focuses on his experiences as a man, it is important to think about how women face different challenges. Female migrants may deal with exploitation or have fewer chances to move up because of family duties or gender expectations. For example, Vietnamese women working in restaurants or in domestic jobs often face more barriers to upward mobility because of these roles. While Doan was able to use his networks to improve his situation, women in similar jobs may have to face more challenges because of their gender.

Transnationalism and Economic Mobility: Doan's journey shows how transnational migration networks can help improve the economic status of migrants. His ability to move between Hungary and Germany, improving his life each time, shows how these networks allow migrants to access better opportunities in different countries. Doan used his contacts in Hungary to move to Germany, showing how ethnic and social networks can help migrants find better conditions. His success shows the potential for upward mobility when migrants can use their connections across borders.

In conclusion, Doan's case illustrates how different factors like ethnicity, labor status, and social networks come together to shape migration experiences. By using his ethnic networks and connections, Doan was able to move from a difficult situation in Hungary to a better life in Germany. This highlights the role of social networks in migration and shows how migration can be influenced by labor status, ethnicity, and the opportunities these networks bring.

Case study 2: Mai and her constrained relationship with her parents

Mai is 21 years old and was born in Budapest to Vietnamese parents who immigrated to Hungary in

the late 1990s. Like many first-generation immigrants, her parents faced many difficulties when they arrived – language problems, low-paying jobs, and limited opportunities for advancement. They worked hard in Vietnamese-owned restaurants and cleaning businesses to make sure that Mai and her younger brother would have a better life. From a young age, Mai was aware of her parents' struggles, but also felt proud of their resilience. Her parents always told her how important education was because they knew it was the best way to help their children have a better future.

Growing up in Budapest, Mai had to deal with balancing two cultures. While her parents worked long hours, she went to Hungarian schools and learned the language quickly. She got along well with her Hungarian classmates, joining extra-curricular activities and socializing freely. But at home, she had to follow Vietnamese traditions. Her parents made sure she spoke Vietnamese, celebrated Vietnamese holidays, and participated in community events, especially the Tet celebrations. Even though they tried to keep their cultural heritage alive, Mai sometimes felt like she was living in two different worlds: one where Hungarian values of individualism and independence were important, and the other where family and tradition came first.

As she got older, Mai started to feel the challenges that many second-generation immigrants face. There was always a feeling of being caught between two cultures. At school, she was just "Hungarian," and no one really asked about her ethnicity. But at home, her parents reminded her of her duties as a Vietnamese daughter. This included helping her mom around the house and taking care of her younger brother. These two roles – being independent at school and being responsible for family at home – became harder for Mai to manage, especially as she started to become more independent during her teenage years and made her own decisions about career and social life.

After finishing high school, Mai decided to study sociology at a Hungarian university. She wanted to understand more about the issues of identity, migration, and social integration – things she had always thought about because of her own experiences. During her university years, Mai navigated her academic life in Hungarian, but she still stayed involved in the Vietnamese community. She volunteered at cultural events and helped her parents at their restaurant. Even though she did well at school and had a Hungarian social life, Mai still faced microaggressions from both her Hungarian peers and the Vietnamese community.

While her parents were proud of her success in school, they were worried when Mai started spending more time with her Hungarian friends and distanced herself from the Vietnamese community. They were afraid she would forget her heritage and the sacrifices they made to give her a better life. On the other hand, Mai was starting to feel frustrated by the pressure to follow cultural traditions that felt more distant from her everyday life in Hungary. She was grateful for everything her parents had done, but at the same time, she wanted the freedom to define her own identity in her own way.

Mai's story shows the struggles of second-generation immigrants, especially when it comes to balancing two cultures. She had to navigate between the traditions of her Vietnamese parents and the Hungarian world outside. This tension is common for second-generation immigrants who often feel torn between fulfilling family expectations and finding their own place in the society where they live.

Analysis Using the Intersectionality Approach

Mai's experience shows how her gender, ethnicity, and social class come together and shape her identity, her way of dealing with different cultures, and her place in Hungarian society.

Ethnicity and Social Integration: As a second-generation immigrant, Mai faces the challenge of balancing her Vietnamese background with life in Hungary. She speaks Hungarian fluently and has done well at school, so she fits into Hungarian social circles easily. However, even though she is doing well in Hungarian society, Mai still experiences exclusion because of her ethnicity. Sometimes, her peers make assumptions about her, thinking she does not belong, even if she speaks the language and participates in Hungarian culture. Mai also feels torn between her Hungarian identity and her Vietnamese heritage. Growing up with both Hungarian individualism and Vietnamese collectivism, she finds it hard to blend these two ways of thinking. She tries to find an identity that makes space for both (Rumbaut, 2004). So, her ethnicity is both a tool that helps her connect to Hungarian society and a barrier, marking her as different, even though Hungary is a diverse country.

Gender and Family Expectations: Gender also plays a big role in Mai's life as a second-generation immigrant. As a young woman, she has to balance her dreams for school and her career with the expectations her family has of her. Her parents, especially her mother, still have traditional gender roles for Mai, asking her to help at home and to take part in the Vietnamese community. But Mai also feels the Hungarian value of independence, which clashes with her parents' expectations. This is a common problem for second-generation immigrants, who often have to live with both the cultural expectations from home and the new values of the country they live in (Chau, 2017). For Mai, this problem is even harder because the expectations placed on her are gendered. While her Hungarian peers are encouraged to focus only on themselves and their careers, Mai is expected to fulfill cultural duties, which adds more pressure to her sense of self.

Generational Conflict and Cultural Continuity: Another important issue in Mai's story is the conflict between her and her parents, which is something many immigrant families experience. As Mai gets older, her relationship with her parents becomes more difficult because they have different views on culture. She wants to honor the sacrifices her parents made, but at the same time, she wants to build her own life in Hungary. This is typical of many second-generation immigrants, where the first generation holds onto traditions while the second generation is exposed to new values that focus on independence and social mobility (Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Mai's decision to spend less time with the Vietnamese community, but still join in cultural events, shows this conflict. She is trying to find a balance between the two cultures she belongs to.

Mai's story is a good example of how intersectionality works in the lives of second-generation immigrants. Her experience of dealing with Hungarian society, her ethnic identity, and the expectations from her family show how complicated it can be to form an identity as a migrant. Gender, ethnicity, and the different generations in her family all influence how Mai sees herself and her role in both the Hungarian and Vietnamese communities. Even though her journey is not easy, it shows her ability to navigate these challenges, making choices that reflect her unique position as a second-generation immigrant in Budapest.

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