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Class Influences on Life Chances in Post-Reform Vietnam

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A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Sociology

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p. 10: **Box I.2.** Education system in Vietnam and ISCED equivalents.

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Abstract

This study provides a critical analysis of the influence of social class on life chances in post-reform Vietnam. As the country underwent a profound structural transition from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy in the mid-1980s, social class gradually replaced political class as a major source of inequality. Knowledge about this phenomenon is rudimentary – not least because of the continuing power of state ideology in contemporary Vietnam.

Throughout the investigation, Bourdieu's framework of class reproduction guides both a quantitative analysis of the Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth 2010 and a qualitative research of 39 respondents in the Red River Delta region, including young people of the first post-reform generation – now in their 20s and 30s – and their parents. The study discusses the ways in which class determines the ability of parents to transmit different resources to their children, focusing on those that are usable and valued in the fields of education and labour. It finds that, across several areas of social life in contemporary Vietnam, implicit class-based discrimination is disguised and legitimised by explicit and seemingly universal 'meritocratic' principles.

The study makes a number of original contributions to sociology, three of which are particularly important. (1) Empirically, it breaks new ground for a sociological understanding of both the constitution and the development of class inequalities in contemporary Vietnam. (2) Methodologically, it offers numerous useful examples of mixed-methods integration. (3) Theoretically, it proposes to think *with, against* and *beyond* some of the most relevant Bourdieusian research on this topic. The empirical application of Bourdieu's framework *in toto*, as opposed to a more customary partial appropriation, facilitates comprehensive insights into: class-specified practices as governed and conditioned by internalised powers and structural resources; the multidimensionality of class-based advantages and disadvantages; and the causative transmission and activation of capital across and within generations.

List of abbreviations

CECODES	Center for Community Support Development Studies
EGP	Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portacarero
GSO	General Statistics Office
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
MNL	Multinomial Logistic Regression
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
NS-SEC	National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification
SAVY	Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth
TI	Transparency International
TT	Towards Transparency
UCW	Understanding Children's Work
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNPF	United Nations Population Fund
VCP	Vietnamese Communist Party
VHLSS	Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey
VLSS	Vietnam Living Standards Survey
VOSC	Vietnam Occupational Standard Classification
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

The assumption that *social class shapes life chances*, supported by empirical evidence stretching across different areas of social life and contexts, constitutes a well-established theme in sociology and has enjoyed a surge of research interest since the 2000s (see, for example, Lareau 2003, 2011, Atkinson 2010c, 2012, Bukodi & Goldthorpe 2011, 2013, Sullivan *et al.* 2013). Yet, in contemporary Vietnam, the ruling Communist Party still boasts a non-conflicting social structure of peasants, workers and intelligentsia nearly three decades into a reform programme that has gradually replaced a socialist state-regulated economy with a capitalist market-driven economy (see Vietnam National Assembly 2001, Do TK 2002, Nguyen VK & Nguyen TA 2014). This thesis ventures to debunk claims about the non-existence of social class inequalities in post-reform Vietnam (see, for example, Nguyen KM 2007, Nguyen TTu 2007, Ngo NT 2012). Informed by Pierre Bourdieu's framework of practice, as well as by both statistical and qualitative analyses, the study explores key issues arising from the influence of social class, arguing that class constitutes a principal determinant of life chances in post-reform Vietnam.

In this research, a *social class* is conceived of as a group of people sharing similar life conditions and life chances. *Life conditions* refer to access to economic, cultural and social resources that can be mobilised to gain material and/or symbolic profits. *Life chances*, understood in a positive light in the inquiry at hand, refer to access to scarce and rewarding outcomes; in the contemporary Vietnamese context, these are contextually delimited to college/university education and leader-professional employment. *Class reproduction* denotes the phenomenon of people perpetuating the same, or a similar, socioeconomic position as their class background. The study observes the patterns and mechanisms of class reproduction, shedding light on the extent to which, as well as the ways in which, class background influences life chances.

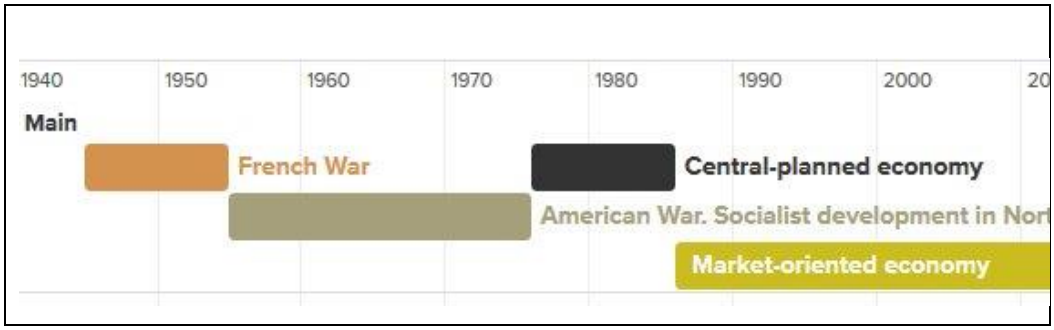
The Introduction of the thesis will set out the research context, making a case for the importance of carrying out sociological research on social class in contemporary Vietnam. In addition, it will spell out the main research

aims, as well as the theoretical framework and methodology, of the study. Finally, it will provide a synopsis of the thesis.

Research context

Why bother with social class in Vietnam? As laid out in this section, inequalities based on social class are a *relevant*, *pressing* and *challenging* topic for sociological research about Vietnam. On the one hand, existing empirical evidence suggests the emergence of profound class-based inequalities in post-reform Vietnam. On the other hand, in terms of both scope and depth, sociological research on the role of social class in contemporary Vietnam is limited and has been confronted by a number of significant obstacles.

Box I.1. Brief timeline of Vietnamese history (1945–now)



In recent decades, Vietnamese people have been enjoying un-precedented opportunities in education and employment; at the same time, however, they have been experiencing unprecedented degrees of social inequality. Since 1986, under the pressure of a deep socioeconomic crisis including an annual inflation rate of 400%, widespread poverty, and short supply of food (World Bank 2016), together with waning post-war international funding, Vietnam has undergone a major transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-driven economy. This economic reform has effected decollectivisation, elimination of the subsidy system, and removal of restrictions on private economic sectors.

There has been much discussion, yet hardly any consensus, regarding the exact features of the Vietnamese economic reform, which arguably were appropriated from the Chinese model (Malesky & London 2014: 20.12). It is widely agreed, however, that both the Chinese and the Vietnamese reform experiences were different from those of the former Soviet Union,

due to the two countries' long history of Confucius cultural influence, ethnic homogeneity, and continuity in the communist parties' political monopoly before and after the transitions (Kerkvliet et al. 1998: 4-5). Observers remain divided over the question of whether China's and Vietnam's reforms of the state-owned sector and introduction of market forces have been gradual and flexible (Ramo 2004: 23, Yueh 2013) or mirrored the former Soviet Union's 'shock therapy' route during its early 1990s transition towards the establishment of a market economy (Riedel 1995). Nevertheless, researchers such as Rana (1995: 1159-1160), Riedel (1995), and Szelenyi (2015: 230) attribute the Asian nations' successful economic growth, in contrast to the former USSR and central/eastern European nations' severe GDP decline, to the fact that their dominant agricultural sectors and household-based economies, which were significantly self-sufficient and resilient, exhibited a robust response to market-oriented reforms.

Since the dawn of reform, Vietnam has been experiencing strong and relatively stable economic growth, with GDP growth per capital averaging 5.5 percent a year and a three-and-a-half-fold increase in average income during the 1991–2012 period (World Bank 2016).

The Vietnamese industrial structure has dramatically transformed from a heavily *agricultural* economy to an economy based on a diverse and relatively balanced *combination of agriculture, industry, and services*. Regarding GDP shares, whereas services increased from 39% to 42% and industrial production rose from 23% to 39% between 1990–2012, agriculture halved from 39% to 20% over the same period (OECD 2015: 42). In terms of employment shares, industry's rise from 11% to 21% and services' rise from 21% to 32% between 1996–2012 was paralleled by agriculture's decline from 70% to 47% (OECD 2015: 42). Notably, over the three agricultural censuses (2001, 2006, 2011), there was a steady move of labour shares out of agriculture into industry and services by 10 percentage points each five years (OECD 2015: 54-55).

Reform has elevated the general living standard and weakened social barriers set up by the state in the socialist era. Vietnam has been praised for its remarkable achievements in relation to the sociopolitical challenge of poverty reduction (see Taylor 2007: 8, London 2014, World Bank 2014). According to national household living standard surveys, the number of

people living below the poverty line fell from 70% in the mid-1980s to 60% in the early 1990s – and, indeed, to 30% in 2002 and less than 10% in 2010 (Nguyen NA *et al*. 2015: 5). It should be taken into account, however, that due to allegedly high degrees of bias influencing the results of these survey samples researchers such as Hansen and Le DT (2013) have warned of a possible overestimation of poverty reduction in Vietnam.

Other post-reform achievements include greater geographical mobility, job mobility and school enrolment. The relaxation of the household registration system has allowed rural residents to migrate to and relocate in urban areas to earn a better living (Dang *et al.* 1997: 321, GSO & UNPF 2004: 61–75). The rapid growth of the private sectors has freed people from depending on the state allocation of a small amount of salaried employment, thereby facilitating social mobility between economic sectors and jobs (O'Connor 1996: 30, Pham 1999: 93, 95). Safety-net programmes, as well as the universalisation of primary education by 2000 and of secondary education by 2010, have promoted poor people's access to formal schooling (London 2007, Vu 2012: 39).

The grip of family political background on social life has been relieved under reform. Researchers concerned with the study of the socialist era in Vietnam tend to agree that family political background was the determining factor of life chances both in the 1954–1975 period of socialist development in the Northern regions and in the 1976–1985 period of the centrally planned economy nationwide (see Marr & Rosen 1998: 145, Pham 1999: 80, Taylor 2004: 7–8, London 2006, Hardy 2011: 190). Despite the public appearance of an egalitarian distributive system, people who came from families with proven loyalty to the Communist Party – families of revolution officials, peasants, and workers – were rewarded with almost guaranteed access to college/university education, education abroad, state employment, and other social services. By contrast, those who had (or were thought to have had) any kind of relation to the landowners, to colonialists during the French war (1945–1954) and the American war (1955–1975), to banned political parties, and/or to the bourgeoisie were largely denied these services. Since the beginning of the reform programme, the formal barriers created through political screening have been gradually eradicated. Efforts have been made by the state to promote universal and equal access to employment in the state sector and to

education through national exam-based admissions to college and university (Hausman 2009, Poon *et al.* 2009).

Yet, since the beginning of the post-reform period, social inequalities have increased significantly in Vietnam. In this context, it appears that class as measured in *socioeconomic* terms has replaced class as defined in *political* terms as a major source of inequalities. The income gap between the richest quintile and the poorest quintile of the Vietnamese population doubled between 1990 and 2006, according to results from the Vietnam Household Living Standard Surveys (Vu TA 2008). By 2010, the richest 10% of the population, which gained the most from the 2002–2008 economic growth, earned on average 15 times more than the poorest 10% (OECD 2014: 21). According to governmental statistics, Vietnam's Gini coefficient stood at 0.424 in 2012 (rising from 0.33 in 1992–1993) (Do TK 2015: 4), which was lower than in China (0.47 in 2012), Indonesia and Thailand but higher than in Cambodia and India (World Bank 2014) and OECD countries (average 0.31) (OECD 2014: 21).

There is evidence that inequalities in life chances have been growing in contemporary Vietnam. In particular, a wealth of evidence demonstrates a significant and positive association between children's schooling and household incomes (see World Bank 1997, Behrman & Knowles 1999, Vu NQ 2004, Do TK 2005, Fritzen & Brassard 2005, Vu HL 2012) or household socioeconomic status (a combined measure of varied demographic characteristics including parental education and parental occupation) (see Nguyen TKC *et al.* 2004, Nguyen PL 2006, Georgiadis 2013). Such educational inequality has been linked to the gradual shift of the financial responsibility for education from the state onto households since the early 1990s (see Gainsborough 2010: 483, Bui CB 2013: 24–28, London 2014). There is emerging evidence of a link in Vietnam between family background and occupational attainment. People from privileged backgrounds have been found to have superior chances in securing satisfactory and stable employment (Dang NA *et al.* 2005), acquiring professional positions (King *et al.* 2008), and setting up their own businesses (Turner & Nguyen 2005).

In the pre-reform period, services and opportunities were subsidised by the state, yet openly discriminated against politically disadvantaged groups. In the post-reform period, even though services and opportunities

are open to all regardless of political background, they are accessible at a cost that not everyone can afford, and thus implicitly discriminate against socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. Little has been discovered, however, about these post-reform socioeconomic groups – what they are, the ways in which they are differentiated, and the mechanisms underlying their differentiation. The two stratifying factors of contemporary Vietnamese society that researchers have been investigating are income (see Nguyen VTi 1993, Nguyen VTh 1995, Behrman & Knowles 1999, Do TPL *et al.* 2001, Deolalikar 2002, Fritzen & Brassard 2005, Vu HL 2012, Nguyen VC *et al.* 2013) and economic sector (see Korinek 2006, King *et al.* 2008, Coxhead & Phan 2013). Yet, whereas division by income – a consequence of inequalities – does not facilitate an examination of the cause of inequalities, a dichotomy between a small state elite and a non-state mass cannot adequately represent the post-reform multisectoral economy. An alternative way to meaningfully address and explain inequalities in the Vietnamese population is much needed.

In a wide range of social contexts, occupational categories, which encapsulate, to variable extents, the characteristics (skill, employment status, industry) of the gainful economic activities in which their incumbents are engaged on a regular basis, have been the principal criterion on basis of which to define social class (see, for example, Kohn 1989, Eriksson & Goldthorpe 1993, Bian 2002, Rose & Harrison 2010, Bukodi & Goldthorpe 2013, Sullivan *et al.* 2013). In contemporary Vietnam, there is emerging evidence of occupation as an indicator of life conditions and life chances. Analyses of national surveys have singled out the occupation of the head of a household as a significant predictor of household income or expenditure (see Do TK *et al.* 2001, Dang *et al.* 2005, Minot *et al.* 2006, Tran DD 2007, Le MS 2010), as well as of children's occupational opportunities (see King *et al.* 2008, Emran & Shilpi 2011). Several academics working in the social sciences have noted the emergence or maturation of occupation-based social strata and classes, covering both single groups, such as the middle stratum or entrepreneurs (see Luong & Unger 1998, Heberer 2003, King *et al.* 2008, Beresford 2008), and hierarchical occupational structures constituting a number of groups (see Kim 2004, Do TK 2010b). This evidence suggests that it is vital to take occupational class into consideration in the array of dimensions of social inequality in the post-reform Vietnamese context.

Social class is underrepresented in current research on the processes that inform people's lives in contemporary Vietnam. Researchers' ideological and political presuppositions, state control over domestic social-scientific research, lack of survey data, and lack of theoretical frameworks all impede the development of a literature on class in Vietnam. Large parts of the existing literature on social class in Vietnam (examples follow) have been inhibited by deterministic political agendas. Establishment researchers – those employed and funded to do research by the Vietnamese state – conform to the state-ideological notion of 'class alliance' between social groups and to the notion of merit-based legitimate stratification (see Nguyen TTu 2007, Nguyen KM 2007, Nguyen Dta 2010, Ngo NT 2012). They have employed state orthodoxy on class as a political tool with which to side-step, disguise and legitimise class inequalities. Non-establishment and pro-democracy researchers, rather than *studying* class at an empirical level, subscribe to the political agenda of a democratising reform that will put an end to the current one-party system. Therefore, they orient toward a (non-orthodox) Marxist view of a class, which conceives class as a social group with a distinctive political identity and propensity for political action; understandably, they have thought of class as not having been formed in the current Vietnamese context (see Gainsborough 2002, Heberer 2003). The dominance of these research approaches means that, in contemporary Vietnam, class inequalities have been considered either irrelevant or untimely for research.

The aforementioned evidence of growing inequalities and occupation-based inequalities in contemporary Vietnam can be described as follows: *whereas political class was the main collective force determining life chances in pre-reform Vietnam, social class is the main collective force determining life chances in post-reform Vietnam.* It is not only pertinent but also urgent to scrutinise the constitution and development of class – as identified through similar life conditions and life chances shared by its incumbents – in post-reform Vietnam. Such an inquiry is vital to a better understanding of the causes of social inequalities (Sullivan 2013: 5, Tyler 2015), whose pernicious effects on economic growth, human relations, educational outcomes, social mobility, and health (to mention a few) have been underlined by researchers examining different societies across the world (see, for example, Hout 2004, Wilkinson & Pickett 2009, Erikson & Goldthorpe 2010, Ostry *et al.* 2014).

Research aims and subjects

This study examines the question: 'How does class background influence life chances in contemporary Vietnam?' In seeking to respond to this question, the inquiry explores the social mechanisms underlying the production and reproduction of class inequalities in post-reform Vietnam, especially in terms of their impact upon life chances. Particular emphasis is placed on analysis of the perpetuation of social advantages at the upper end of the Vietnamese class structure; this provides insights into inequalities concerning access to the resources that can penetrate existing structural barriers. The research subjects are young people born in the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s in Vietnam; they can be described as Vietnam's first post-reform generation. In their lifetimes, socioeconomic inequalities in educational and occupational opportunities have manifested in a fee-paying educational system and competitive labour market. This generation does not experience political discrimination at school or at work in the ways that their parents did; perhaps, the most important difference consists in the fact that large sections of this new generation may experience *discrimination based on social class*.

The investigation views class influences on educational achievement and class attainment as two major aspects of life chances in contemporary Vietnam. It is crucial to measure life chances in terms of educational achievement since the two are intimately interrelated. A wealth of research establishes education as a major mechanism of social reproduction in advanced societies (see Blau & Duncan 1967, Bourdieu 1976, 1986, [1979] 2009, Featherman & Hauser 1978, Breen & Goldthorpe 1999, 2001, Bourdieu & Passeron [1977] 2000, Lareau 2003, 2011, Ganzeboom & Treiman 2007). Throughout the history of Vietnam, education has been a key warranty for social advancement. It was, for the ruled class, the major route to the ruling class in the pre-colonial feudal society; it delivered higher social status during the French colonial period (1886–1954); and it enabled positions of political power and status during socialism (1954–1986) (see review by King *et al.* 2008). Under reform, the shift away from farming to manufacturing and services and the growth of the private sector have boosted the demand for highly skilled workers and reinforced an emphasis on educational credentials in the labour market (O'Connor 1996, MOLISA *et al.* 2009). The Vietnamese government spent

19.8% of the state budget on education in 2010 – a higher investment compared with the average of 13.7% across East Asia (UNESCO as cited in Hoang 2013). The rapid increase in educational achievement for those born after 1980 (World Bank 2013) has gone hand in hand with heightened earnings returns to education during the 2000s (Kozel *et al.* 2014) – phenomena which have also been observed in the similarly transitional economy of China (see Bian & Logan 1996, Zhou 2000, Wu & Xie 2003, Heckman & Li 2004 as cited in Doan 2011).

Box I.2 and Box I.3 below provide comparative and detailed information on the Vietnamese education structure – one that has remained relatively unchanged since the early 1980s. By 2010, the average number of years of schooling for the adult population (aged 15+) in Vietnam – at 9.1 years – was lower than in many Asian countries such as China, Malaysia, Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand (UNESCO 2011 as cited in Baulch et al. 2012). The primary and lower secondary levels of education are compulsory, universal, and provided free of charge for all Vietnamese citizens. While primary education has been universalised since 2008, net lower-secondary enrolment more than doubled (from 30% to 79%) between 1993 and 2008 (London 2011). Even though upper-secondary enrolment in Vietnam increased sevenfold in the same period (London 2011), it stood at just 65% in 2010, compared with 89%, 95%, and 98% in the US, South Korea, and the UK, respectively (World Bank as cited in MI 2013).

In particular, a focused objective of the research is to scrutinise class differences in access to the highly demanded and rewarded college/university education. It is reported that, as of 2008, the wage premium for college/university graduates (compared to those only completing postsecondary education) surged to 80% (World Bank 2013) – a much larger gap than existed a decade before (Doan & Gibson 2009 as cited in Doan 2011). The number of highly skilled workers has remained short of demand (World Bank 2013). According to official statistics, only 5% and 7% of the Vietnamese population held college/university or higher degrees in 2010 and 2013 respectively (GSO 2010 as cited in Doan 2011 , MOPI & GSO 2014). Quantitative analysis of 2010 survey data in the current study demonstrates that, of those outside the education system aged between 18 and 25, 6% had achieved college/university levels. The percentages of graduates in Vietnam were remarkably low compared to those in OECD countries. As of 2012 in the UK, graduates accounted for 38% of the population aged 25-64 years old (OECD 2012 as cited in Tholen

2013), and the percentage of 19- to 20-year-olds attending university reached 47% (Heath et al. 2013).

Box I.2. Education system in Vietnam and ISCED equivalents

Source: Business-in-asia.com

Box I.3. Education system in Vietnam

General education

Primary school: compulsory, free tuition, grade 1–5, age 6–10

Secondary school: compulsory, free tuition, grade 6–9, age 11–14

Postsecondary school: grade 10–12

Middle-level education (or *vocational school/professional secondary school*): 3–4 year training for graduates of secondary school; 1–2 year training for graduates of postsecondary school

Higher education

College: 3-year training for graduates of postsecondary school or middle-level education

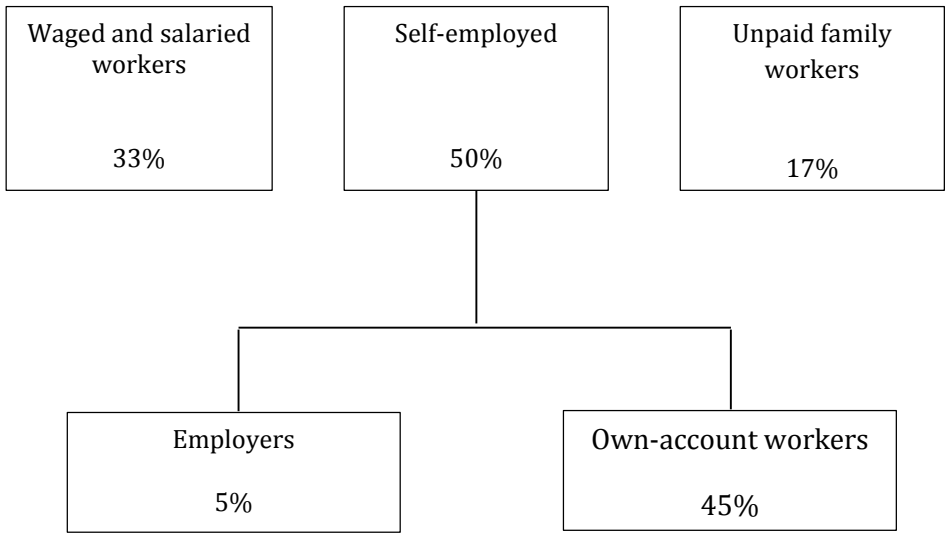
University: 4–6 year training for graduates of postsecondary school or middle-level education; 1–2 year training for graduates of colleges

Masters and PhD degrees

Source: GSO (2011)

This study seeks to understand how class influences on life chances propagate not only through the school system but also through the labour market (see Box I.3). Here, life chances are interpreted in terms of the attainment of social class positions, not just in terms of potential class attainment as implied by educational achievement. Given that the college/university-educated population is relatively small, while the self-employed population is numerous (it accounted for 50% of the working-age population (aged 15 and above) in 2009 (MOLISA *et al.* 2011: 11), it is essential in the Vietnamese context to examine non-educational channels for social advancement. An exclusive focus on the educational channel would exclude a majority of the young population who are outside higher education and waged employment.

Box I.4. Employment structure in Vietnam



Source: Labour Force Survey (2009) as cited in MOLISA *et al.* (2011: 11)

Theoretical framework and methodology

Bourdieu's theory of practice, which provides a framework for understanding the mechanisms of class reproduction, guides and informs the inquiry. According to Bourdieu, social classes are relatively homogeneous groups of people sharing similar access to material and non-material resources. As follows, social classes are reproduced across generations because people of the same class have similar tendencies and conditioning, and thus similar practices, facilitating their occupancy of the same class positions they are born into (Bourdieu 1986, Bourdieu & Passeron [1977] 2000: 203, Bourdieu [1979] 2009: 101, Bourdieu [1990] 2009: 59–60).

The employment of Bourdieu's theory of practice in this study relies on a number of assumptions about its potential usefulness. First, since Bourdieu's conceptualisation of class is rooted in life chances, it allows a much needed divergence from the Marxist, politically laden approach to understanding class, which has impeded understanding about post-reform Vietnamese society among establishment and non-establishment researchers. Second, the framework facilitates investigations into the multidimensionality of class influences: as structural and individual

processes and in economic and cultural dimensions. Third, the theory of practice offers a fuller and more insightful account of human practice – as an outcome of the internalisation of experienced life conditions into an individual's action-generated scheme and the externalisation of this scheme into present action – than that of rational action theory, which overlooks the pre-existing features of practice.

This study proposes to think *with*, *beyond* and *against* Bourdieu (see Wacquant 1992: xiv) and existing Bourdieusian research. While the discussion demonstrates the explanatory power of Bourdieu's framework in illuminating the perpetuation of class disparities in contemporary Vietnam, it diverges from some of the conceptual and empirical dimensions characterising the works of Bourdieu and his followers. Most importantly, the investigation employs the full framework as opposed to the partial appropriations more commonly found in the current Bourdieusian literature. Furthermore, empirical findings in this study suggest the necessity of a critical examination of an emphasis on built-in and culturally embedded inequalities in the existing Bourdieusian literature and the need to pay adequate attention to economically structured inequalities. No less notably, the study looks beyond the transmission of class-based resources across generations to explore the activation process carried out by young people.

The investigation employs a mixed methods design as appropriate to a new and complex subject of inquiry such as class inequality in post-reform Vietnam. Data are collected from quantitative analysis of the Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth 2010 and qualitative interviews with families in the urban and rural areas of the Red River Delta region. Throughout the research process, the quantitative and qualitative components continuously inform, facilitate and illuminate each other to bring about a fuller understanding of class influences on life chances than would have been achieved using just one method. While quantitative analysis provides evidence of the existence and patterns of the relationship between class and life chances, qualitative research helps in interpreting and in beginning to explain the mechanisms of the relationship.

Thesis outline

The thesis consists of this introduction, seven substantive chapters, and a conclusion, as outlined below.

Chapter 1 – Theoretical Discussion. This chapter presents the empirical, context-specific, and conceptual rationale for adopting Bourdieu's framework of class reproduction, embedded in his theory of practice, as the research guidance for this study. It lays out in detail the key theoretical concepts employed, namely *class, capital, habitus*, and *field*. It provides a critical comparative account of Bourdieu's *habitus-guided action* and of John Goldthorpe's version of *rational action* in order to justify the study's engagement with Bourdieu's conceptualisation.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review – Research on Vietnam. This chapter discusses the dominant sociological approaches to studying social division and inequality in the post-reform Vietnamese context. As elucidated in this chapter, these approaches have been developed by both establishment and non-establishment social researchers. The chapter assesses the strengths and the limitations of the current literatures on rich/poor inequality, state/non-state dichotomy, and class. It expounds the absence of a discourse on class inequality in contemporary Vietnam, and examines the ideological, political, and academic challenges arising from the development of such a discourse, thereby making a case for the study's investigation into class as rooted in life chances.

Chapter 3 – Literature Review – Bourdieusian Class Study. This chapter analyses Bourdieusian research on class inequality and reproduction. For the analytical purposes at hand, the studies under review are categorised into two bodies of literature. The first section discusses the *cultural reproduction* literature on the effects of class on educational attainment. This literature is seen as consisting of *cultural agent* studies, which examine the statistical patterns of the relationships between class, culture and schooling, and *cultural class process* studies – the highlight being Annette Lareau's *Unequal Childhoods* study – which investigate the mechanisms underlying those relationships. The chapter selects for initial critical review the groundwork for a Bourdieusian literature on *social reproduction*, inquiring into the impact of class on occupational attainment. It presents Bourdieu's analyses of non-

educational mechanisms of class influence and discusses Will Atkinson's *Bristol workers*, a Bourdieusian study that is particularly relevant to the thesis.

Chapter 4 – Methodology. This chapter presents the rationale for the methodological approaches employed in this study. In addition, it reflects on their respective strengths and limitations. It offers a comprehensive account of the integration between the quantitative and the qualitative components of the research process. It discusses the manipulation and analysis of survey data, focusing on the theoretically informed measurement of variables and the formulation of hypothetical models concerning the causal relationships under investigation (between class, resources, and life chances). It offers a detailed discussion of the qualitative research, wherein data collection and data analysis facilitate one another due to a theoretically informed and reflexive approach.

The next three 'Findings' chapters explore this study's quantitative and qualitative investigations into class influences on young people's life chances.

Chapter 5 – Class Influences on Educational Achievement. This chapter illuminates class inequality in education through analyses of higher- and lower-class parents' cultivations of their children's schooling. The first part sheds light on the universal, as well as the discriminatory, aspects of college/university education as the major channel of class reproduction in contemporary Vietnam. The second part discusses class differentiations regarding educational options, explaining how class shapes an orientation toward or away from the college/university pathway. The third part explores inequality in educational opportunities concerning both the universal necessities for learning and the class-based, discriminating conditions that the current field of education in Vietnam rewards. The fourth part looks into the available channels for educational mobility in the context of salient educational inequality.

Chapter 6 – Class Influences on Occupational Attainment – Parental Cultivation. This chapter illuminates inequality in class outcomes through analyses of higher- and lower-class parents' cultivations of their children's participation in the field of labour. It focuses on parents' comparative ability to facilitate their children's acquisition of rewarding

scholastic and non-scholastic capital, which can be mobilised to ease access to leader-professional positions within the nepotistic state sector as well as employment opportunities opened up by the market-driven economy.

Chapter 7 – Class Influences on Occupational Attainment – Self-cultivation. This chapter advances insights into inequality in class outcomes through analyses of young people's activation and accumulation of the non-scholastic individual capital that helps them achieve leader-professional positions. It explores the connections between parental transmission and individual activation of capital, focusing on the links between parents' cultivations of children's self-development in the family and children's propensity and abilities for self-cultivation. It examines a range of *self-cultivating practices*, through which young people with pre-existing capital are able to acquire the resources that yield profit for them in job attainment and career advancement.

The **Conclusion** reviews the main findings of the study and discusses the theoretical implications arising from its critical engagement with Bourdieu's framework and the Bourdieusian literature throughout the research process. It also addresses the methodological contributions and some of the main limitations of the study.

Chapter 1.

Theoretical Discussion

In this study it is proposed, taking into account the existing empirical evidence and the limitations of current approaches to the Vietnamese context, that Bourdieu's insights into class reproduction are suitable and powerful tools for analysing class in post-reform Vietnam. This chapter discusses the rationales for adopting Bourdieu's theory of practice as research guidance and presents in detail the theoretical concepts employed in the study. First, it appears that available research findings on social inequalities in Vietnam support Bourdieu's notion of the intergenerational perpetuation of class inequalities. Furthermore, Bourdieu's conceptualisation of class allows a necessary divergence from the ideo-politically laden approaches to observing class that have constricted the development of social understanding about Vietnam. No less importantly, Bourdieu's theory promises to facilitate a full account of class influences through its conceptualisation of class in both material and symbolic dimensions and of class reproduction processes as both structural and individual. Lastly, Bourdieu's framework as centred on the concept of habitus helps explain human action more fully and more powerfully than Goldthorpe's rational action theory.

1.1. Bourdieu's framework of class reproduction

The first rationale for the adoption of Bourdieu's theory in this study is that the emerging evidence of an intergenerational continuity in socioeconomic advantages and disadvantages in post-reform Vietnam (see Chapter 2) suggests the relevance of the class reproduction phenomenon – the pivotal theme of Bourdieu's works. Much of Bourdieu's work is concerned with the *persistence* of class inequalities – questions of how class advantages and disadvantages were reproduced over generations without powerful resistance (Swartz 1997: 6, Sullivan 2002: 144, Bourdieu 2003: 12). Bourdieu observes that as capitalist societies shift toward contemporary industrial or post-industrial forms, the overall class situations of all groups generally improve, yet their relative class positions

in the stratification order remain unchanged (Bourdieu 1973, [1979] 2009 as cited in Swartz 1997: 182–183). Bourdieu's theory of practice, which will be presented in brief below, is delineated to explain the mechanisms of class reproduction.

Concept of class

The study's second rationale for adopting Bourdieu is that his conceptualisation of class allows a divergence from the Marxist approach. Politically predisposed reliance on the Marxist notion of class has impeded understanding about class in the Vietnamese context (see section 2.3). Marxists tend to regard class as an entity that exists in reality, as originating in a process of exploitation in the capitalist form of production, and as being mobilisable for common purposes against another class (Sorensen 2000: 16, Wright 2003: 9–11, Bourdieu 2003: 11, Marx and Engels [1848] 2009: 39–41). The Marxist relational conceptualisation of class endorses a dichotomous structure of two essentially antagonistic classes (Giddens 1971: 37, Weininger 2005: 86). Bourdieu posits that Marxists erroneously treat 'classes on paper' as 'real classes' (Bourdieu 1990: 129), and objects to Marxists' employment of sociological constructs to express one group's real-life disapproval of another (Bourdieu 1984: 169). As opposed to the Marxist vision of the mission of sociology in informing political actions, Bourdieu ratifies a social science independent of political interests. Thus, whereas Marxists load the concept of class with much political undertone, Bourdieu moves instead toward an undogmatic conceptualisation (Bourdieu 1990: 129, 2003: 10–11).

For Bourdieu (1990: 117–118, 2003: 10), classes are 'theoretical classes' or 'objective classes' rather than groups that exist in reality by virtue of the researcher's intellectual decision. A class consists of agents who have similar life conditions – similar access to resources, similar propensities to act and similar practices (Bourdieu [1979] 2009: 101). In line with the Weberian understanding, according to which members of a class share similar life chances in terms of individual and intergenerational mobility (Weber [1922] 1978: 302), a class, in Bourdieu's view, brings together agents whose mobility patterns are similar and typical (Bourdieu 1985: 725). In other words, members of a class share what Bourdieu ([1979] 2009: 111) terms 'social trajectory'.

Theory of practice

The third rationale for applying Bourdieu's theory of practice in this study is that this theory provides a framework for both the structural and the individual processes of class reproduction. Departing from Marx's structuralist viewpoint, and influenced by Weber's writings on religion in which Weber reintroduces agents into the theory of symbolic systems, Bourdieu is concerned about agents as well as the structures that condition them (Swartz 1997: 39, Bourdieu 2003: 12, 57). Such concern is entrenched in Bourdieu's wider aim, professed throughout his works, to transcend the dichotomies that come under the umbrella of objectivism (structure, economism, macro approach, positivism-empiricism, scientists' conceptions) and subjectivism (agency, culturalism, micro approach, informal techniques, agents' conceptions), which has been integral to Western epistemology (Bourdieu 1989: 15, Brubaker 2005: 34–37).

The framework of how practice is generated is summed up in the formula '[(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice' (Bourdieu [1979] 2009: 101). Practice is the combined effect of habitus, field, and capital, which respectively account for the dispositions guiding practice, the context of practice, and the usable resources available to agents within such context (Crossley 2001: 86). In short, classes are reproduced because people born into the same class have similar conditions of existence, which produce similar schemes of appreciation, perception and subjective chances governing and generating their action, and thus similar practices leading them to occupy the same class positions as those into which they are born (Bourdieu & Passeron [1977] 2000: 203, Bourdieu [1990] 2009: 59–60). Class reproduction is an outcome of two intertwining processes: the internalisation of objective structures into the agent's action-generated scheme, and the externalisation of this scheme into the very practices that will reproduce structures.

Capital

People from the same class share similar conditions of existence or similar endowments of capital. 'Capital' refers to active resources and powers which can be efficiently mobilised, appropriated and employed by agents (Bourdieu 1986, [1979] 2009: 114) to earn access to scarce rewards (Lareau & Weininger 2003: 587). It should be noted that for Bourdieu, not all but

only 'actually usable resources and powers' ([1979] 2009: 114) with 'scarcity value', that yield profits (1986, 1987: 4), can be considered capital. Capital comes in many forms – economic, cultural, social, and so on, all of which can be interconverted into each other. Capital conversion refers to the translation of forms of capital into other forms; the root form, economic capital, is usually exchanged for other forms of capital, which are then converted back into economic capital (Bourdieu 1986, Bennett & Silva 2011: 429–430).

Habitus

A social class comprises individuals concurrently sharing not only similar conditions of existence but also the same habitus (Bourdieu [1990] 2009: 59). Bourdieu ([1990] 2009: 53) defines habitus as:

> a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.

By conceiving of habitus in terms of 'structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures', the above definition describes both the process through which habitus is formed by structures and that by which it governs practices and reproduces structures.

What are 'structured structures'? Arguably, the most essential element of habitus is the presence of past experiences (Chandler 2013). As a set of 'structured structures', habitus is a product of the process, which begins in childhood, of objective structures being internalised into the subjective experiences of agents (Lamaison & Bourdieu 1986). A product of upbringing, habitus is shaped by the amount and forms of capital available within the family during their child's socialisation (Swartz 2002: 655). As such, habitus represents the historically and socially situated conditions embodied in the form of dispositions (Bourdieu 2003: 24–25). The notion of disposition, as used by Bourdieu ([1977] 2003: 214), clarifies the habitus by denoting 'the result of an organizing action… a way of being, a habitual state… a predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination'.

Inscribed in habitus are 'schemes of perception and appreciation' (Bourdieu [1979] 2009: 468). Swartz (1997: 76) provides an insightful interpretation of this aspect of habitus. According to Swartz, children who receive a culturally advantageous upbringing internalise 'cultivated dispositions', which propel and enable them to continue self-cultivation independent from their parents' direct influence. The structures structured in habitus also refer to the life chances associated with a class. The collective chances enter the habitus as individual chances – successive movements and trajectories deemed probable and achievable for agents of a particular class (Bourdieu 1983: 346, [1990] 2009: 53, Atkinson 2010c: 416). Chances of success or failure are inscribed into agents' aspirations or expectations as a 'sense of one's place', which imposes limits on the goods, persons, places, and so on that agents assume they are included in or excluded from (Bourdieu [1979] 2009: 471).

With the concept of habitus, Bourdieu aims to capture a basis of human action that, differently from intention, allows an action to be interpreted as goal-oriented but not as conscious invention (Bourdieu 2003: 97–98). As such, habitus orients practice by projecting 'practical hypotheses' based on past experiences. It sanctions the 'possibles' – thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions – that it considers realistic and reasonable, while excluding those it does not. Guided by their habitus, agents do not act under mechanical forces, automatically obeying rules, nor do they act with full, conscious knowledge; they are 'active and knowing agents equipped with a 'feel for the game', a '*practical sense* for what is to be done in a given situation' (Bourdieu [1977] 2003: 73, 79, 1990: 10–12, 2003: 24–25, 98, [1990] 2009: 53, emphasis added). Bourdieu notes that, while not being purely mechanical and reproductive but instead 'generative' (Bourdieu 1990: 9), habitus is largely a closed system (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 133). Habitus enables improvisations within the limits imposed by the objective structures constitutive of it (Bourdieu 2005: 46).

Bourdieu conceives of habitus as 'durable, transposable' ([1990] 2009: 53). On the one hand, dispositions are not formed entirely by early childhood experiences but acquired throughout agents' lifetimes (Bourdieu 1990: 9, 13). He notes that habitus is perpetually reinforced but can also be transformed (Bourdieu 1990: 116). A typical case for habitus

transformation is social mobility, when new dispositions are incorporated into habitus to create what Bourdieu calls a '*habitus clivé*', a 'divided', 'destabilised' habitus that is 'torn by contradiction and internal division' (Bourdieu 2000: 160, 2007). On the other hand, as 'structured structures', habitus is largely shaped during early socialisation. Bourdieu (2005: 46–47) emphasises that reinforcement of habitus is much more likely than transformation of habitus to take place in largely stable societies.

Habitus thus functions as a set of 'structuring structures', contributing to the reproduction of the social world of which it is part. It is much more likely that habitus will give rise to those expectations and practices that match the structuring properties of its early formative environment than it will to those which do not. There are limits to the improvisation and diversity of patterns of action that the habitus can generate. This explains why people who share similar conditions of existence tend to produce similar practices in tune with their conditions. As a result, these conditions are perpetuated through time without their conscious resistance (Bourdieu [1990] 2009: 54-5, Bourdieu 2005: 46).

Field

Practices do not emerge from habitus alone, but from the encounter between habitus and field. A field is 'a network… of objective relations between positions' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 97). The unequal positions making up a field – comprising dominating groups and dominated groups – are determined by the unequal distribution of capital within it (Bourdieu 2003: 32). The forms of capital that yield profits within a field are determined by its logic of functioning (Bourdieu [1979] 2009: 113). A field is created through struggles in which agents compete with each other to seize access to particular forms of capital and obtain a certain amount of legitimacy, through which process the field is created and reproduced (Bourdieu 1990: 37, Calhoun 2013: 50). In other words, capital is the object of field struggles; practices are capital-oriented; and, therefore, there are as many fields as there are forms of field-specific capital (Bourdieu specifies the economic field, cultural field, legal field, artistic field, religious field, political field, etc.) (Cvetičanin 2012: 26, 30, 36).

The habitus–field–capital relations explain why a field tends to be reproduced while resisting transformation, or why reproduction happens and perpetuates. 'Field' refers to both the environment in which habitus is primarily formed and the environment in which habitus generates practice (Bourdieu [1979] 2009: 113). Agents who are brought up in an environment that closely resembles a field come to possess a practical sense of the logic of the field. This practical sense, as a component of habitus, helps agents successfully accumulate capital in the field, which will then enable them to define the logics and reproduce the structures of the field. This is why, as Bourdieu ([1990] 2009: 63) notes, 'near-perfect' reproduction occurs when the habitus-forming field and the field of action match. Dominating groups, who possess a pre-existing sense of the logic of a field and its matching capital, have the best chance of prevailing in field struggles (Bourdieu 1983: 349, 2003: 32). As soon as the dominated groups manage to get access to a profitable capital, dominating groups will try to counterbalance the situation by changing the logic of the field. This will result in the devaluation of a form of (now) widely accessible capital (such as an academic degree). By doing so, the dominating groups seek to maintain the distinctiveness of the assets that give them a head start in the competition over a limited number of privileged positions, while excluding others from accessing these assets (Bourdieu [1979] 2009: 161).

Forms of capital

The fourth rationale for employing Bourdieu's framework is that the framework informs an understanding of *multidimensional inequalities*. This proceeds from Bourdieu's endeavour to transcend the Marxist infrastructure–superstructure conceptual distinction (Bourdieu 1990: 34, Swartz 1997: 39, Marx [1859] 2000/1977: 424–428). Drawing from Weber's ([1922] 1978) analysis, which unpacks both the materialist and the symbolic characters of religion, and from Durkheim's ([1912] 1995) idea of a correspondence between symbolic classifications and social classifications, Bourdieu views the symbolic dimension of social life as interrelating with (rather than as separate or derived from) the material dimension of social life (Bourdieu 1990: 36, 1991: 4–5, Swartz 1997: 39–40; 42; 51). Class circumstances, for Bourdieu, possess both material and symbolic dimensions.

It follows that capital comes in material and non-material forms. According to Bourdieu (2003: 6), the two most efficient principles of differentiation in advanced societies are economic capital and cultural capital. While economic capital can be institutionalised in property, cultural capital can be institutionalised in the form of educational qualification and transformed into economic capital. Differential endowments of both the economic and the cultural conditions of existence determine differential class positions (Bourdieu 1986).

The concept of cultural capital has occupied a central role in Bourdieu's analysis of reproduction as well as in Bourdieusian education research. It should be noted that, although Bourdieu cites culture as constitutive of the reproductive process, the accusation by Jenkins (1991) and Goldthorpe (2007a) that he is a cultural reductionist is disputable. As Swartz (1997: 7) reminds us, Bourdieu emphasised culture not because he attributed to it any theoretical priority, but because he believed that culture had been either neglected by orthodox Marxists (who rendered it secondary to economy) or idealised by non-Marxists.

Bourdieu develops what is commonly known as the theory of cultural reproduction to explain the unequal educational attainment of children from different class backgrounds amid salient class inequalities in French higher education in the 1960s (Swartz 2005: 21). This theory traces educational inequality to the class-differentiated endowments of cultural capital upon the family throughout upbringing. Bourdieu (1986) seeks to challenge what he calls 'commonsense' explanations that link differential academic achievements to differential natural aptitudes, as well as economistic ('human capital') explanations that emphasise differential monetary investments from parents (see, for example, Becker 1964).

Bourdieusian cultural capital comes in three states: the embodied state, the objectified state, and the institutionalised state. In its embodied state, cultural capital exists as 'long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body' (Bourdieu 1986: 243). These dispositions are formed through a lifelong process of embodiment of inherited cultural capital, in which the entire socialisation period in the family figures as the most crucial period (Bourdieu 1986: 243–245). Children can inherit various, sociologically variable, characteristics from their parents, notably aesthetic taste, linguistic style, cultural competence and social etiquette. Embodied

cultural capital, as Ball (2003: 82) and Kraaykamp and van Eijck (2010: 210–211) helpfully note, is indicated by the manners by which cultural capital– in its objectified forms, such as books and musical instruments – are appreciated.

Children from a dominant class, being brought up in more cultivated homes, are better endowed with inherited cultural capital than those from a dominated class (Bourdieu 1976: 114, 1986). Since the cultural differences between these children are formed during their upbringing, however, they may appear to represent "natural" differences. This is why Bourdieu considers the transmission of cultural capital from parents to children the best-hidden form of intergenerational capital transmission (Bourdieu 1986), and thus places considerable emphasis on it in his explanations of educational inequality.

In Bourdieu's analysis, the school plays a pivotal role in allowing cultural distinctions to facilitate differential academic outcomes, yet at the same time disguising class distinctions as "natural" distinctions. As Bourdieu affirms, in relation to the French context, the culture and modes of inculcation of culture that schools and teachers practise and reward are similar to those adopted in cultivated homes. School success is strongly determined by one's pre-existing familiarity with the school culture – a product of one's upbringing. Through the inherent dominant-culture biases in curricula and evaluation criteria, schools help to transfer inherited cultural capital into institutionalised cultural capital (educational credentials), whereby they legitimise class privileges as merits associated with talent and effort. Recognising and treating a social gift as a "natural" gift, schooling takes part not only in the reproduction of advantages and disadvantages but also in legitimising such reproduction. Yet, by allowing a marginal number of children from disadvantaged backgrounds to succeed, a school might appear to be a level playing field (Bourdieu 1976: 86, 110–114, 117, [1979] 2009: 23, 26, 122, Bourdieu & Passeron [1977] 2000).

Bourdieu's concept of social capital will be particularly useful in analysing the Vietnamese society, where existing research evidence suggests that social connections, especially familial ones, are instrumental to job attainment in the state sector (see section 2.2). Contrary to Coleman and Putnam, who conceptualise social capital as widely available as collective

assets, Bourdieu defines social capital in terms of the class-specified resources that can be effectively mobilised and transformed into economic capital. For Bourdieu, social capital is also closely interconnected with other forms of capital. Thus, the value of one's social capital depends on the value of various forms of capital held by the self as agent, and by other people in one's network (Bourdieu 1986, Lin 1999: 32, Outhwaite 2007).

1.2. Habitus versus rational action

The final rationale for depending upon Bourdieu's framework rests on its fuller conceptualisation of action than that found in rational action theory. This framework facilitates a more satisfactory account of class reproduction. At the micro-level of sociological analysis, class production and reproduction are understood as outcomes of the sums of individual practices. Two of the major principles underlying individual practices have been Goldthorpe's version of rational action and Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Neither Goldthorpe nor Bourdieu aims to explain the actions of single individuals but rather those of aggregates of individuals. Both Goldthorpe's rational action theory and Bourdieu's theory of practice are constructed around the idea that people of the same class tend to act similarly and, therefore, to achieve similar class outcomes. Yet, the two theories inform us of the fundamentally different manners in which people act. According to rational action theory, actors are informed by their conscious calculations of the perceived costs and benefits of a range of options in light of given opportunities and constraints (Breen & Goldthorpe 1997: 278, Goldthorpe 2007b: 10). According to the theory of practice, agents are guided by their habitus, or practical sense – causal structures embodied in them during a lifelong internalisation process that starts and peaks in early childhood – as it adapts to the particular contexts in which they act (Lamaison & Bourdieu 1986: 112, Bourdieu 1990: 116, [1990] 2009: 53).

The following discussion compares Goldthorpe's rational action and Bourdieu's habitus as principles of action in terms of their *conceptual strengths* and *potential for empirical research*. The inferences from such a comparison contribute to justifying this study's adoption of Bourdieu's micro-level account of class reproduction over Goldthorpe's. Even though there have been numerous discussions on the strengths and limitations of

each individual principle of action (see Scott 1996, Devine 1998, Edling 2000 on rational action; King 2000, 2005, Crossley 2001, 2003, Sweetman 2003, Lau 2004, Brubaker 2005, Pickel 2005, Archer 2007, 2010, Elder-Vass 2007, Hilgers 2009, Lizardo 2009, Sayer 2010, Burawoy 2011a, Chandler 2013, Farrugia 2013 on habitus), and a few that compare Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory and Goldthorpe's rational action theory (see Hatcher 1998, Sullivan 2003), it seems a comparative evaluation of habitus and rational action as principles of action is lacking.

To begin with, Goldthorpe stresses the explanatory power of rational action as much as Bourdieu stresses the explanatory power of habitus. While Bourdieu ([1979] 2009: 173) considers habitus a 'unifying, generative principle of all practices', Goldthorpe argues that his rational action strategies epitomise 'central tendencies' (1998: 168, 2007b: 285) or 'macrosocial regularities' (1996a: 485) in the aggregated actions of a large number of individuals. Bourdieu only acknowledges the possibility of rationally made choices under unsystematic empirical circumstances, which concurs with Goldthorpe's view of class-based norms. But whereas Breen and Goldthorpe (1997: 299) conceive of norms as 'guides' to rational action, Bourdieu ([1979] 2009: 468) insists that habitus operates 'below the level of consciousness', and that only in moments of crisis will it be possible that the immediate adjustment of habitus to field be disrupted by other principles such as rational calculation (Bourdieu 1990: 108, Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 131).

Nonetheless, habitus facilitates a much more nuanced understanding of practice than rational action. While rational action is pushed and pulled by immediate opportunities and constraints, habitus-generated practice is shaped not only by the present context of action but also by experiences from the past. One implication of such disparity is this: Goldthorpe fails to provide sufficient links to establish that actors of similar backgrounds act similarly. Goldthorpe argues that actors of similar backgrounds are confronted with similar situations and similarly guided by rationality. Opting for a weaker version of rational action theory that takes into account subjective perceptions, he adds that actors make rational calculations subjectively based on their own perceptions and imperfect knowledge of their situations (Goldthorpe 1996b: 115–116, 121, 1998: 179). It follows from Goldthorpe's two assumptions that, in order to act in

similar ways, people of the same class must have similar perceptions of their shared situations. However, since Goldthorpe does not explain why members of the same class share similar perceptions of their situations, he lacks grounds upon which to assume that people of the same class act similarly. Rational action appears, then, to be adaptation to immediate conditions without history. Goldthorpe does not consider that, even though rational actors share immediate conditions, their subjective perceptions of their individual costs and benefits may vary widely, and thus they may not necessarily come up with similar calculations and actions.

Contrastingly, Bourdieu explains the condition–perception link through the concept of habitus. People from similar backgrounds have their similar conditions internalised through an early-childhood process of socialisation in the form of similar schemes of perceptions, which guide them toward similar practices. While Goldthorpe offers a crude view of action as predominantly reflecting the present context in which it is made, practice, as conceptualised by Bourdieu, reflects the encounter between the present context and dispositions from past experiences. According to his theory of practice, agents are bounded not only by the immediate opportunities and constraints of the context of present action but also by past opportunities and the constraints of the context of their socialisation.

Bourdieu also theorises more fully the conditions of action. In Bourdieu's framework, opportunities and constraints are understood in terms of the amount and distribution of both material and non-material capital that an agent possesses as part of her/his background or current position. A wide range of contexts exerts its influences on habitus, including the class-cultural context (Reay *et al.* 2005: 27). In contrast, Goldthorpe thinks of the opportunities and constraints that inform rational action strictly in terms of material resources (Goldthorpe 1996b, 1998). In his recent works, Goldthorpe has moved to take into account non-material resources (Goldthorpe 2012, Bukodi & Goldthorpe 2013), in response to his widely criticised economistic view of action (see critiques by Devine 1998: 28–33, Hatcher 1998: 16, Savage 2000: 149, Power *et al.* 2003: 5, Weininger 2005: 83, Wright 2005b: 182), but still Goldthorpe leaves underconceptualised the notions of economic, cultural and social resources that he employs.

Therefore, rational action and habitus have different powers for empirical research. Rational action has limited explanatory capacity. Because the

conceptualisation of rational action constricts action to its immediate environment, rational action can only partially account for choice-making. The conceptualisation of habitus, on the other hand, facilitates the interpretation of a wide range of practices, including choice-making and also the mechanisms of processes of generation and realisation. The reproduction of advantages and disadvantages can be interpreted through agents' engagement in all kinds of activities throughout their entire lives, and not merely through some decision made at a particular point in time. While rational action theory explains how social reproduction results from specific individual choices, theory of practice facilitates our understanding of how social reproduction can occur beyond deliberate choice.

Rational action theory imposes a singular explanation of action. By reducing the multifaceted relationships among human beings to 'the one relation of usefulness' (Marx as cited in Hatcher 1998: 16), it ignores the richness and complexity of human practice. Apart from its clear-cut, quantitatively testable assumptions (Breen & Goldthorpe 1997, Need & de Jong 2001), Goldthorpe's concept of rational action has limited value for empirical research. In fact, rational action empirical studies either confirm or reject the theory's pre-existing assumptions without being able to illuminate their own findings in an in-depth manner (see, for example, Need & de Jong 2001, Davies *et al.* 2002, van de Werfhorst & Hofstede 2007, Jaeger & Holm 2012). Habitus, instead, provides a way of thinking about practice in its richness and complexity. As Wacquant (2011: 90–91) puts it, habitus 'is not an answer to a research question but rather an organised manner of asking questions about the social world'.

As will be explained in subsequent chapters, Bourdieu's framework can be employed both as a thinking tool and as a methodological device, breaking the ground for investigating the underexplored social phenomenon of class reproduction in post-reform Vietnam, where it has rarely – if not never – been applied before. The next chapter will demonstrate how a discourse on class inequality and continuity in Vietnam has been impeded by the ideological and political preconceptions that rest upon Marxist explanations of class.

Chapter 2.

Literature Review – Research On Vietnam

Academic sociological research on contemporary Vietnam is inchoate. The sociological research controlled and financed by the Vietnamese establishment – that is, research conducted by academics who are employed by Vietnamese state firms, state institutes or state think tanks – has roughly the same age as the reform. The Vietnam Institute of Sociology was established in 1983. The first issue of the *Vietnamese Sociological Review* – the only existing sociological journal in the country – was published in the same year. Establishment research on social stratification did not emerge until the early 1990s (Do TK 2010b: 3). The first time the term 'social stratification' was ever mentioned in Vietnamese research was in a 1992 study about social changes during reform in Hanoi, carried out by the researchers of the Institute (Trinh DL 2004). Non-establishment sociological research on Vietnam seems even more recent. Most academic articles and working papers by foreign or foreign-based researchers discussing political-social issues in Vietnam (those not directly related to the war topic) date from after 1995. This was the year of Vietnam's entry into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a framework agreement with the European Union, and establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States – all marking Vietnam's official international debut.

This chapter discusses the main existing approaches to studying social stratification and class in the post-reform Vietnamese context by both establishment and non-establishment researchers. While research on social stratification in post-reform Vietnam has been dominated overall by statistical analyses of the rich/poor dichotomy (see reviews by Trinh DL 2004, Ngo NT 2012), non-establishment researchers have also paid attention to the state/non-state dichotomy. Class, however, has been a neglected topic.

2.1. Rich/poor inequality

Income inequality has been the most popular topic in post-reform social stratification research (Trinh DL 2004, Ngo NT 2012). That the rich–poor gap is a consequence of reform has been a consensus among observers of Vietnam (see, for example, Taylor 2004: 2, 6–7). Unlike the flat and egalitarian pre-reform socialist society, the post-reform society has seen an escalation of unprecedented discrepancies among social groups in living standards and access to social services. Researchers have identified these social groups based on household income or expenditure and routinely referred to them as the 'rich' groups and the 'poor' groups.

Much of the rich–poor inequality research that has been conducted in the Vietnamese context has been quantitative, policy-oriented, and focused on poverty issues. The common approaches have been to compare the shares of all income, or those of all expenditure, among five quintiles of the population from poorest to richest, and to calculate a Gini coefficient – a measure of income inequality – based on income data (Do *et al.* 2001: 33–34, Trinh DL 2004, Ngo NT 2012). Whereas the Gini coefficient has generally been employed to evaluate how unequal the country or a part of it was at a particular point in time, monthly *per capita* income has been used by governmental bodies to define the national poverty line; local authorities base their identification of 'the poor' and distribution of benefits on this assessment (Vu TA 2008).

The income inequality literature provides a wealth of nationally representative statistical evidence of the consequences of income stratification. In their earliest studies, establishment academics reported simple descriptive results of the discrepancies among different income or expenditure groups as regards economic living standards – housing conditions, property ownership, and ownership of household durable assets, among others (see, for example, Trinh DL 1992, Nguyen VTi 1993, Nguyen VTh 1995). Non-establishment researchers have made a valuable contribution in initiating investigations of the rich-poor differentials in access to social services. Behrman and Knowles (1999) claimed to have carried out the first ever analysis of the association between household income and children's schooling in Vietnam. Based on 1996 survey data, the authors found such association significant and positive. Since then, numerous studies have reaffirmed their result. Notably, Do TK (2005),

Fritzen & Brassard (2005), and Vu HL (2012) discovered that educational inequality intensified as one moved up the educational ladder. Enrolments among the poor started dropping off at the secondary and post-secondary levels and were dramatically lower than those among the rich at the tertiary level. Researchers also provided statistical evidence of a positive association between household wealth and access to health services (see Do TPL *et al.* 2001, Deolalikar 2002), and between household income and access to formal financial credits (see Tran MMC 2014).

The determinants of income stratification have been scrutinised. A lot of factors were found to exert significant influence on household welfare. These included household demographic characteristics, household assets, household engagement in farm and non-farm activities, educational level of the household head, occupation of the household head, and household geographical location. The last three of these factors have been highly recurrent in the literature. According to Do TK *et al.* (2001), Tran DD (2007), Le MS (2010) and Nguyen VC *et al.* (2013), households with a higher probability of being in the rich quintiles were more likely to have highly-educated heads. Besides, it was more likely for the heads of these households to work in leader-business owner or professional positions, in white-collar, industrial, or services occupations as opposed to agricultural occupations, and in state or foreign-invested sectors as opposed to the private sector. They were also more likely to be located in urban or inner city areas, rather than in rural or suburban areas.

Rich–poor inequality research made substantial contributions to the awareness and policy-making of market-based social inequalities. In the early 1990s, the state started withdrawing provision of social services (Gainsborough 2010: 483; Bui CB 2013: 24–28). Since then, financial responsibility for education has been shifting from the state to households (London 2014). Thus, the consequences of household income on household welfare and children's schooling have become relevant and urgent issues for social research. Through describing these issues, the studies cited above helped inform on timely issues of economic inequality along the income line. They introduced income as an appreciable indicator of inequality in the post-reform society. The evidence they provided helped expose the impact of reform policies on the livelihoods of the low-income groups, and inform pro-poor policies.

There was, however, a number of limitations in the rich–poor inequality literature. The first problem concerned the unreliability of the income and expenditure variables. Even though income data have been widely used by economists and sociologists around the world due to simplicity of measurement, transparency in meaning, and suitability for a wide range of strong statistical tools (Saunders 2010: 35), there have also been reservations about the volatile nature of these data and their proneness to being misreported (Buch 2012). The challenges of income data were especially applicable to the Vietnamese case. Critics estimated that income data in Vietnamese living standard surveys were underrecorded (see for example Bui *et al.* 2001: 93). Reporting accurate income was difficult for a majority of the rural Vietnamese population, who, according to Nguyen PL's (2006: 157) and Liu's (2008: 414) analyses, earned their livelihood from self-employment (agricultural work, unskilled non-farm jobs and seasonal work), and often had multiple and varying monthly income sources. Those who worked in the state sector were also not likely to correctly report their income because many relied on informal sources of earnings, such as exploiting their positions of authority or provision of services for private gains (Gainsborough *et al.* 2009: 22, Acuna-Alfaro 2012: 12).

A complete reliance on quantitative methods, a lack of qualitative inquiries, and an absence of theoretical guidance severely limited understanding. The dominance of statistical techniques in this literature is understandable. Since the benchmark Vietnam Living Standards Survey 1992–1993 (the first national living-standard survey conducted by the General Statistics Office of Vietnam), social researchers have had unprecedented access to nationally representative surveys on Vietnam that employed international standard measurements and procedures (Haughton 1999: 5). A majority of studies cited in this chapter employed these national living standards and household surveys. Quantitative data were favoured in meeting the demands from state and international research funding bodies for formalised indicators and clear-cut statistics for policy-informing purposes (see also Fforde 2011). Qualitative methods such as observation or in-depth interviewing, which would facilitate informed hypothesis testing and explanation and critical evaluation of quantitative results, were almost never utilised.

The lack of theoretical and in-depth inquiries led to superficial analyses. Establishment researchers' analyses of the causes of poverty best exemplified this superficiality. Their common practice was to throw all independent variables available in the datasets into statistical models and, in addition, to accept any variables that yielded statistically significant effects as meaningful predictors, without reflecting on well-founded hypotheses and in-depth explanations, or critically engaging with previous research. As a result, researchers identified a range of predictors of household welfare, as previously mentioned, without being able to interpret the processes through which any one among these predictors exerted its influences (see Do TK *et al.* 2001, Tran DD 2007, Le MS 2010, Nguyen VC *et al.* 2010).

These limitations resulted in a lack of understanding of the deep-rooted causes of income inequality. In fact, researchers analysed income inequality itself *as* the cause of social disadvantages. The cost was that the studies were not able to account for social disparities that did not seem to directly relate to income. For example, income-inequality researchers linked the low rates of poor household children participating in higher levels of schooling to no other factors than unaffordable school fees (Fritzen & Brassard 2005), long travel distances, and lack of access to additional tuition (London 2007). Their policy recommendations were limited to the problem of school fees. Vo *et al.* (2001: 169) and Vu HL (2012: 61) stressed that the government simply needed to reduce school fees and provide more fee subsidies for poor children in order to increase their presence in school.

These income-centric policy recommendations could be contradicted by empirical evidence from the same literature. London (2007) and Vu TA (2008) found more than half of their survey respondents cited non-financial reasons for school non-attendance or drop-outs. According to Badiani *et al.* (2013: 5), even at the fully subsidised secondary level, far fewer children from low-income families were being enroled in school than their better-off counterparts. In addition, Nguyen PL's (2006: 161) analysis showed that differentials in school attendance remained net of household expenditure on education. This evidence amounted to suggesting that disadvantaged people's school continuation also depended on other factors than their ability to pay the school fee.

Inability to illuminate the non-economic factors in social disparities was a major limitation of the above-mentioned studies in particular, and of Vietnamese rich–poor inequality research in general. It should be noted that this critique has, in part, been informed by Bourdieusian cultural class literature on educational inequality in Western social contexts (see, for example, Bourdieu 1976, Bourdieu & Passeron [1977] 2000, Lareau 1987, 2003, Sullivan 2001, 2007), which will be reviewed in the next chapter.

2.2. State/non-state dichotomy

In social stratification research on Vietnam, the social division between those working in the state sector (also known as 'the public sector') and those working in the non-state sector (also known as 'the private sector') attracted the attention of non-establishment researchers. Researchers grappling with the state/non-state dichotomy had a different view of post-reform social stratification from that of the researchers focusing on the rich/poor dichotomy. They rejected the orthodox consensus that pre-reform Vietnam under the subsidised economy was socially equal (for accounts of the orthodox view see Luong & Unger 1998, Do TK 2002, Ngo NT 2012). Instead, they saw the pre-reform society as *polarised* between *statesmen*, who enjoyed economic and political advantages, and *ordinary people*, who did not (for counterarguments to the orthodox view see Gainsborough 2002, 2010, London 2014).

Researchers concerned with the state/non-state dichotomy diverged from what Gainsborough (2010: 486) called the 'default discourse' in scholarship on Vietnam that reform was tantamount to change; instead, they stressed perpetuation and reproduction. They viewed the post-reform society as a continuance from its antecedent. Underlying this view was the assumption that there could be no social change without political change. As these researchers saw it, there were social stratification patterns along the state/non-state line that had remained largely undisrupted in the transition from a state-centralised to a market-driven economy under the Vietnam Communist Party's sustained monopoly of political power (see Korinek 2006, King *et al.* 2008, Coxhead & Phan 2013).

Researchers speculated that state-employee parents under socialism were able to transmit their privileges to their children under the market system, and research studies proceeded to examine the patterns and mechanisms of such transmission. The empirical patterns that they found, however, only supported the presumption of transmission to a limited extent. In an analysis of household survey data on a Red River Delta province in 1995, Korinek (2006: 64) discovered the following: whereas many more children of state parents than those of non-state parents were highly educated, children of state and non-state parents achieved roughly similarly in occupational terms. These results suggested that, compared to non-state parents, state parents might have been more able to give their children educational advantages, but not occupational advantages. Coxhead and Phan (2013) also reported that children of state parents were more likely to enrol in tertiary education than those of non-state parents. Their analysis of data from 1993–2006 national household surveys revealed a modest 1.3 times gap. King *et al.* (2008), based on Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth 2003 data, claimed that there was continuity in state employment between the young post-reform generation and their parents who were employed in the socialist system. The authors demonstrated that 51% of children of state-employed professionals, compared to 44% of children of technicians and 33% of children of unskilled workers, ended up working in the state sector. They did not report the significance levels of these differences.

These studies were also not able to illuminate the mechanisms through which state employees might have transmitted their advantages to their offspring. Korinek (2006) suggested that the educational system enabled such transmission. Yet, the evidence his study provided – significant correlation between parental status and children's educational attainment and between children's educational attainment and children's occupational attainment – far from sufficed to support his assumption. No significant link was found between parental status and children's occupational attainment. To explain the differential likelihoods between state household and non-state household children entering high education the authors outlined a rational-action hypothesis that because state-employee parents already had connections that would help their children gain state-sector jobs, they invested more in their children's education, as opposed to

non-state parents who did not have such connections. This hypothesis was never tested.

It appears that the supposedly key assumption of the literature concerning the alleged inequality of life chances between children of state employee parents and those of non-state parents has not been addressed. King *et al.* (2008) attempted to explain the intergenerational continuity in state employment in terms of *choices*, rather than in terms of *chances*. Based on qualitative interviews with 100 young people undertaken by one of the authors between 1999 and 2002, King *et al.* (2008) observed that those whose parents worked in the state sector were more likely to choose state employment. These young people's decision-making was strongly influenced by their parents, to whom the security and stability of state employment – once enjoyed under socialism – remained desirable in the new economy. Some young people were also attracted to the state sector's provision of overseas postgraduate training opportunities and other benefits. Regrettably, King *et al.* (2008) left untouched the crucial question of how children of state professionals were more able than others to actually enter the state sector.

Despite the limitations of this literature, its presumptions about the continuity in stratification patterns and the reproduction of state-affiliated advantages of pre-reform and post-reform societies remain valuable and demand further investigations. Fford's (2001: 20) suggestion that poverty research in Vietnam should 'start from history and process, not from policy and economics' is also relevant for stratification research. The post-reform patterns of stratification should be seen in part as a socialist legacy as assumed in the state/non-state dichotomy literature, rather than as a completely new phenomenon of market reform as implied in much of the rich–poor gap literature.

Inequality along the state/non-state line stays relevant in the post-reform context. For one thing, state employment remains highly desirable. State positions are (perhaps increasingly) scarce, skilled, and rewarding. Only about 10% of employees in the over-15 labour force worked in the state sector between 1999 and 2010 (MOLISA & GSO 2010, GSO 2011). According to GSO (2011), the state sector was the dominant provider of education and health services. State hospitals accounted for more than 80% of healthcare visits in 2010 while public institutions accounted for

more than 80% of the total colleges and universities between 2005 and 2010. As Imbert (2011) demonstrated, based on Vietnam Household Living Standards Surveys 1993–2006 data, an increasing majority of public employees were working in government, education, and health services. Returns on state employment have been high and on the rise. According to Coxhead and Phan's (2013) analysis of national household data, whereas in 1993 public and private employees had similar earnings per hour, in 2006 the former earned 40% more per hour than the latter. The same study also reported that, in the last decade, *per capita* incomes of households that had at least one state-employee member were considerably higher than those of non-state households. Also noteworthy is the fact that state workers consistently occupied the top positions in a number of post-reform social structures, such as those suggested by Tuong Lai (1993), Kim (2004), and Do TK (2010b).

There has been strong evidence gathered outside the state/non-state dichotomy literature that access to state employment was distributed unequally along the state/non-state line. State/non-state dichotomy studies such as that by Coxhead and Phan (2013) assumed that state employees were able to use their networks to help their children secure jobs in the state sector, but did not provide evidence. Recent discussions and investigations of nepotism and patronage in the state sector have provided that evidence. Consensus here was that state job appointments were to a considerable extent connection-based: direct influences from pre-existing connections within the state sector and monetary bribery were revealed as essential routes to attaining state jobs (see Gainsborough 2006, 2010, Hausman 2009, Poon *et al.* 2009, Hayton 2010, CECODES *et al.* 2011, 2014).

Nonetheless, it is oversimplistic to conceive of contemporary Vietnamese society as divided between a small state elite and a non-state mass, considering its multisector economy and the stratification within each of its economic sectors. Under market economy, the state sector became more stratified. Its pay scale was modified by the government in 1993: the ratio of high to low salaries was raised from 3.5:1 to 13:1 (ILO 1994 as cited in O'Connor 1996). State workers were paid differently based on education, skills, responsibility, and job performance (Moock *et al.* 2003: 504). The state ceased to be the sole source of desirable employment. The non-state

sectors rapidly expanded and provided the highly skilled with rewarding jobs. From the mid-1990s, more and more university graduates began to join non-state enterprises – a phenomenon that was non-existent in the early 1990s (World Bank 1997). The foreign investment sector, in particular, offered lucrative jobs and attracted highly skilled workers. Based on data from the 2002 Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey, Le TD *et al.* (2008) reported that the average earnings of employees in foreign-invested enterprises was 170% of that of those employed in wholly state-owned enterprises.

Neither income grouping nor economic sector grouping serves as an adequate stratifying factor for the population of contemporary Vietnam. What about class? The following section will explain why class has not yet emerged as a valid alternative to the aforementioned factors in current stratification research on Vietnam.

2.3. Class

It appears that the literature on the role of 'social class' in post-reform Vietnam has, paradoxically, been dominated by antitheses to class. The use of the term 'class' has up to now been politically incorrect to establishment academics and politically irrelevant to many non-establishment researchers studying post-reform Vietnam. Establishment writings and research, which conform to state orthodoxy because they are conducted by state-employed academics and funded by the state, show opposition to the notion of class conflicts and resistance toward viewing class as a basis of social inequalities. Class inequality is, in this literature, reduced to non-existence, or legitimated, or detached from structural inequalities. Non-establishment discussions, embedded in a pro-democracy agenda and criticisms of the monopoly of power of the Vietnamese communist state, have mostly attended to the consequences of class formation for an anticipated democratisation process. Since theorists did not observe any formation of classes with distinct political roles, class study was considered premature in the current context.

State orthodoxy and propaganda

'Class alliance' – a counter-notion to the Marxist concept of 'class conflict' – was a core element of the party ideology in communist Vietnam. Article 2 of the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (established in 1946, revised in 1959, 1980, 1992, and amended in 2001) states the following:

> The State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a State of the people, by the people, for the people. All State power belongs to the people whose foundation is the alliance between the working class and the peasantry and the intelligentsia. (Vietnam National Assembly 2001: 2)

As Pham (1999) states, a social structure of workers, peasants and intellectuals was regarded by the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) as a successful outcome of the land reform, which took place during the 1950s under its lead. In the land reform, the VCP employed the Marxist notion of antagonistic classes as a political tool to mobilise landless peasants against those promulgated as the exploitative agents – the land-owning class and the capitalist class. The end of the land reform was assumed to equate to the eradication of all class conflicts and even to the disappearance of classes. As the Constitution proclaims, since land reform Vietnam had become a society governed 'by the people, of the people, for the people', where people of all classes and strata had equal opportunities in all aspects of their lives (Vietnam National Assembly 2001: 2).

There was no place for class in the state discourse. It should be noted that the notion of 'class' that the state avoids is the Marxist one involving notions of conflict and exploitation, especially in relation to political power. Such a notion of class would have evoked serious challenges to the legitimacy of the socialist state, which, as London (2009, 2014) observed, was built upon the state's claim to be the vanguard party of the proletariat and the worker class, and a defender of social equality and social justice. To begin with, the very notion of class is attached to the wrongdoings of the land reform. Even though the land reform changed the lives of millions of peasants for the better (at least for its first few years) by giving them unprecedented shares of agricultural land, it also resulted in loss of lives, and suffering, among a substantial population accused of belonging to or associating with the alleged exploitative classes (Moise 1983, Szalontai

2005, Vu NT 2005). In hindsight, the land reform which, in London's (2009: 380) words, left 'deep scars' on the party, was a shameful, rather than a proud, legacy of the socialist state.

Another notion that the socialist state found threatening to its legitimacy and thus unyieldingly rejected was that of the *cadre-capitalist class*. Non-orthodox Marxist academics such as Djilas (1957) and Cliff (1988) argued that, in post-communist societies (cf. Outhwaite 2007, 2011, Outhwaite & Ray 2005), there existed acute conflicts between a cadre-capitalist class – that is, the capital-owning, *exploitative class* with affiliation to the state – and an *exploited mass*. Djilas (1957) was the first author to envisage that Communist Party bureaucrats in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were constituting 'a new class', which seized political control of productive resources and resembled the propertied bourgeoisie in capitalist societies. Vietnamese and foreign dissident intellectuals, such as Nguyen Kien Giang, a former high-ranking Communist Party official and editor of a state newspaper, and Bill Hayton, a former BBC correspondent in Vietnam, discussed issues of power exploitation and corruption among high-level cadres in Vietnam in terms that much mirrored Djilas's (1957) thesis (see Nguyen KG 1993, Hayton 2010b). Undoubtedly, their publications came under severe censorship of state authorities, as did any criticisms of the VCP made by domestic dissidents and foreign pro-democracy intellectuals and watchers (see Abuza 2001, 2006). Hayton's (2010b) book was never granted a publication licence in Vietnam and the author was banned from re-entering the country, allegedly because of the book (Hayton 2012). Nguyen KG's (1993) book was published by a US publishing house and banned in Vietnam. His writings had disappeared from state press since 1990, and the author remained under police surveillance for his 'revisionist' views for 25 years until his death in 2013 (Nguyen NG 1993, Abuza 2001: 63).

Also found dangerous by the state was the idea that the formation of distinct classes would inevitably lead to political changes. Gainsborough (2002) and Heberer (2003) evaluated the post-reform prospects of classes in mobilising the democratisation process. As these researchers argued, the formation of classes with their own political identities should facilitate social changes and, potentially, give rise to a transformation from the one-party ruling system. Certainly, these ideas were considered reactionary by

the 'hyper-defensive' one-party state that has always equated its legitimacy with the nation's political stability (Abuza 2001: 4, 5, 81). The state has been uncompromising about its monopoly of power. Penal Code Article 88 of the Criminal Law of Vietnam carries imprisonment up to 20 years for the offence of 'conducting propaganda against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam' – that is, against the VCP (Vietnam National Assembly 1999).

It was via pro-party propaganda that establishment academics, especially heads and directors of state institutions, piercingly appropriated and validated the state orthodoxy about the issues of social stratification and class. These writings, published in a wide range of channels – academic journals, state newspapers, and online platforms – and directed at academic as well as general audiences, served to disseminate state views. Seeking to obscure and disregard the existence of class inequalities in Vietnam and to legitimise social stratification and social differentiations, the works discussed below aimed at reinforcing the legitimacy of the state. Across these propagandistic works, two main arguments were employed.

The first was that *high–low positions in a social hierarchy were the objective outcome of disparities among citizens as regards their natural abilities, talents, conducts, efforts and contributions*. Nguyen DTa (2010), for instance, argued that more talented and useful people were deserving of high rewards and social power in return for managing the society, while those less able to contribute deserved low status and low rewards, which made social stratification inevitable and reasonable. Nguyen DTa, as Director of the Institute of Sociology at Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics-Administration, noted that the concept of 'legitimate social stratification' was endorsed in the Institute's programme (see Nguyen DTa 2010: 7).

The second argument was that, since each 'class' or stratum consisted of a wide range of occupations and positions, *classes were equivalent to each other and not antagonistic toward each other*. For example, Nguyen KM (2007) defined 'the worker class' as consisting of all workers 'in production and reproduction of material goods' regardless of their skills or positions. Nguyen TTu (2007) and Ngo NT (2012) discussed social stratification in terms of within-class income stratification. Ngo NT (2012) claimed that 'the peasantry' included both 'billionaire farmers' and deprived hired

labourers. Nguyen TTu (2007) used the terms 'middle social group' and 'affluent household group' to refer to 'the elite components' that were present in 'all social classes and strata'. According to this author, because within each class there were high earners and low earners who differed in their abilities and skills, the three income groups in the society – 'rich', 'middle', and 'poor' – were dispersed evenly across different classes.

Both arguments, however, were ill-founded and, arguably, lacked scientific evidence. First, the argument employed to legitimise social stratification – namely, that individuals deserved the places that they earned on the basis of their own natural talents and conducts – rested on arbitrary assumptions regarding which the authors did not provide substantial evidence. This argument echoed Davis and Moore's (1945) functional view of social stratification, which had long been contradicted and invalidated. As Crompton (2009: 13) contended, by arguing that unequal positions were an outcome of natural inequalities in personal endowment, functionalist theorists were rewarding moral justifications of economic inequality. The idea of legitimate stratification can also be refuted outright by available research evidence of the association between social background and individual achievements in post-reform Vietnam (see 2.1 and 2.2).

Second, the authors adopted the notion of 'class' that the state employed as a political-ideological tool. Even though 'the working class' or 'the peasantry' might represent homogeneous groupings in historical-political terms for the specific Vietnamese case, they were far from the socioeconomic or sociocultural groupings commonly employed by mainstream social theorists. Nowhere else but in these Vietnamese propagandistic writings could we see a class defined as a social group consisting of people of different – or even opposing – occupations, positions, and conditions. Nguyen KM's (2007) and Nguyen TTu's (2007) classification of 'the working class' as including both higher-income skilled workers and lower-income unskilled workers had no value other than in satisfying the political purpose of obscuring the existence of class differentials – in this case, those between skilled and unskilled workers.

Establishment research

The lack of establishment academic research on class is not difficult to explain. Establishment researchers avoided any topic of which the state

disapproved. It is a widely known fact that domestic intellectual freedom and freedom of expression have been strictly limited under the governance of the Vietnamese socialist state (Abuza 2001: 2). The scholarly environment in Vietnam stayed under the rigid control of the state. All research institutes were state-owned and there were no independent think tanks. The role of these state institutes was to provide intellectual and policy support to the state (Stone 2005). As Tuong Lai (1993), former Head of the Vietnam Institute of Sociology, acknowledged, Vietnamese sociological studies were implemented 'by demands' from authorities at the provincial and state levels. Thus, much of the establishment academic research strictly conformed to the views of the state.

Consequently, research on social structure and class was rare in Vietnamese sociology. Among twelve state-level research projects conducted between 1978 and 2015, one-third studied migration, proportionally followed by topics of housing, rural social life, grassroots political systems, and the environment. There was only one study on social structure, published as a journal article (Tuong Lai 1993), and no studies on class (see Institute of Sociology n.d.).

In his unique study on social structure, Tuong Lai (1993) made unprecedented speculations about the connections between political power and economic advantage in post-reform Hanoi. At the time of writing this thesis, this was the only establishment academic work available in which an author explicitly addressed political power as the main basis of wealth differentiations. In every report but Tuong Lai's (1993), income inequality was glossed over as an inevitable, harmless outcome of market transition, but Tuong Lai has recognised it as a threat to the regime's promise of sustaining social equality. However, since his report, establishment research has almost altogether avoided the notion of power and strictly refrained from linking issues of social inequality and the credibility of the state.

It can be speculated that Tuong Lai's (1993) claims made the state notice the possible challenges that emergence of a discourse about the link between power and social inequality could pose to its leadership and political stability, and that therefore the potential discourse has been shunned or shut down. However, this cannot fully explain the absence of research about *social structure* and *class*. Researchers could have studied

social structure and class from perspectives that did not emphasise political power, and that hence posed less risk of offending the state orthodoxy. One such perspective might examine class in terms of *occupational class*. So why is the research absent? Do TK (2002: 52, 56) argued that occupation did not become the main indicator of social stratification in Vietnam as it did in countries such as the US and Japan because the Vietnamese socialism-oriented market economy was different from Western market economies. Despite its vagueness and questionable validity, which would be a matter for another debate, Do TK's (2002) argument at least made it clear that domestic researchers used to view 'class' as studied in industrialised societies as not applicable to the Vietnamese context. Such a view must have been reinforced by the lack of survey data suitable for class analysis. The most used Vietnam Living Standards Survey (VLSS) and Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey (VHLSS), as criticised by Pincus and Sender (2008: 125–126, 139), excluded detailed labour market information such as wages, working conditions, security, sector compositions, seasonality and mobility, which led to an overemphasis on demographic and geographical characteristics at the expense of structural factors such as class in explaining people's access to stable employment.

Interestingly, Do TK (2010b) conducted the second and most recent establishment study on social structure in post-reform Vietnam. Contrary to his own view from several years previously (see Do TK 2002), Do TK's (2010b) new study viewed occupation as a 'comprehensive criterion that reflects socioeconomic status', and set out to identify occupation-based social groupings. Based on VHLSS 2002–2008 data on education, expenditure, residence value, possession of computers, and access to Internet, Do TK's (2010b) classification produced nine hierarchical groups: (1) leaders and managers, (2) entrepreneurs, (3) high-level professionals, (4) salaried officers, (5) factory workers, (6) the trading/service stratum, (7) the handicraft stratum, (8) simple workers and freelancers, and (9) the peasant stratum.

Do TK (2010b) made an initial attempt to devise a post-reform Vietnamese social structure based on coherent criteria and empirical evidence. This study provides a valuable demonstration that occupation has become a meaningful indicator of social differentials under market economy.

Previous researchers' attempts at categorising social groups were mainly literature- and observation-based, incomprehensive, and methodologically inconsistent. Among those which were single group-focused were Heberer's (2003) discussion of the nascent social stratum of private entrepreneurs, and King *et al.*'s (2008) analysis of the young, urban, salaried professional 'middle class'. Similarly to Do TK (2010b), Kim (2004) also delineated a complete occupational hierarchy based on Vietnam Longitudinal Survey 1995 data. It consisted of state-sector jobs, off-farm self-employment, and private farmers, with a small elite of administrators and professionals at the top, relatively better-off workers in the middle, and farmers at the bottom. It was uncertain whether the analytical principle that Kim employed for such a classification was occupation, economic sector, or form of employment.

To be clear, Do TK's (2010b) study did not consider class as a structural variable influencing people's life conditions and life chances. Its arguments obscured issues of unequal opportunity and provided support for the state orthodoxy of legitimate stratification. The author argued that, in order for the offspring of disadvantaged agricultural workers to escape farming, they required, first, 'personal efforts', and, second, 'changes in the national economic structure' (Do TK 2010b: 31). Instead of linking agricultural workers' disadvantages with their offspring's life chances, Do TK's (2010b) argument reflected the state functionalist orthodoxy that individuals' achievements are outcomes of their talents and efforts. The author overlooked the *role of the opportunity structure in determining social mobility chances*. Disadvantaged people's upward mobility depends not only on greater availability of socially attractive and desirable positions, or on changes in the objective economic structure, but also, and more importantly, on greater *substantive* equality in *access* to those positions – in other words, changes in the opportunity structure (see Goldthorpe *et al.* 1987). In Do TK's (2010b) report, the effects of people's social origins on their abilities and opportunities were left out of the discussion.

Non-establishment research

Despite the fact that non-establishment researchers' research interests were not restricted in the same way as were establishment researchers', non-establishment research on class was also found to be lacking. Though non-establishment researchers did not shy away from the class topic, their interests in it were predominantly focused on class politics. In much of the available literature, class was understood in Marxist terms as a group with an established consciousness of its identity, a real potential to be mobilised for political purposes, and a clear-cut capacity to act. For instance, in a discussion of Vietnamese entrepreneurs in the post-reform era, Heberer (2003: 71) argued that entrepreneurs would constitute a class on the basis of their 'desire to change the system' and political power, as well as their active involvement in democratisation. Gainsborough (2002) similarly analysed emerging classes under reform in terms of their prospective roles in a democratisation process. As such, both authors claimed that 'classes' had not yet been formed in the post-reform context. The implication was that a class study in the current context would be premature (Heberer 2003).

In the non-establishment literature, the class most analysed has been a so-called emerging middle class. Middle-class studies were divided between those that focused on consumption patterns and those on political roles, but there was also convergence between the two. King *et al.* (2008), Elfick (2011) and Nguyen-Marshall *et al.* (2011) looked at the ways in which middle-class identities were being established and expressed through consumption behaviours. Yet, these authors did not provide a coherent definition of 'middle class'. Their results combined, the middle class might include people who occupy leader, professional, high- and middle-technical positions, as well as university graduates (King *et al.* 2008), plus entrepreneurs and artists (Nguyen-Marshall *et al.* 2011). On the other hand, Gainsborough (2002) and King *et al.* (2008) noted that even though characteristics of a middle stratum have emerged in the post-reform context, a middle class has not. According to these authors, the middle class is mature only when it becomes a purposive and creative agent in a democratisation process. Since the current Vietnamese middle stratum remained intimately dependent on the state for salaried jobs and

other benefits, it had not developed into a class (Gainsborough 2002: 707; King *et al.* 2008: 806).

Having evaluated the establishment and non-establishment literatures on and involving class, it seems that political biases have been holding back the progress of academic knowledge about post-reform Vietnamese society. In establishment research, class was used as a political tool, paradoxically, both to obscure and to legitimise social inequality. Do TK's (2010b) study exemplified how powerfully the state antitheses to class inequality have been imposed on and embedded in establishment social research (see 2.3 – Establishment research). In non-establishment, foreign-based research, class was used as a political tool for observing and predicting a democratisation process that would transform the current one-party system. Its dominant approach to understanding class, informed by the Marxist framework of class consciousness and political action, succumbed to pre-existing political agendas of researchers who thought of political reform as inevitable.

Class has not been adequately examined as a potentially meaningful stratifying factor of the post-reform Vietnamese society. Attaching the notion of class strictly to politics, researchers have not paid sufficient attention to the *multiple – notably economic, social and cultural – dimensions of class.* Their overemphasis on social change diverted attention from studying social continuation and social reproduction. This is not a uniquely Vietnamese situation. In Western sociological research, the Marxist notion of 'real classes' or 'class for itself' was utilised by researchers to refute class as a meaningful social indicator (see critiques by Chauvel 2006: 298, Chan & Goldthorpe 2007: 514).

When class is understood as rooted in life chances, its existence and significance are undeniable (Chauvel 2006: 298, Chan & Goldthorpe 2007: 514). The notion of 'class' is very active across the Bourdieusian literature that the next chapter will discuss. From this literature, particularly, there is much that can be fruitfully applied to a class study on Vietnam.

Chapter 3.

Literature Review – Bourdieusian Class Study

This chapter discusses two bodies of the Bourdieusian class literature most closely relating to this study: *cultural reproduction studies* and *social reproduction studies*, both of which have been categorised for the analytical purposes at hand. The cultural reproduction literature represents a large and constantly evolving body of research that investigates the effects of class on educational attainment. The social reproduction literature examines the effects of class on occupational attainment.

The wider class literature can be roughly categorised into three topics: class structure, class mobility and class processes. Whereas *research on class structures* deals with the *allocation of class positions*, and *research on class mobility* focuses on the patterns of *movement both between and within classes* (Goldthorpe 2007b: 126), *research on class processes* seek to understand the *processes and mechanisms through which such allocation and movement take place* (Crompton 2009). The Bourdieusian studies under review belong to the class processes strand.

The Goldthorpian programme of class structure and mobility research dominated the class literature in the UK during the 1970s and 1980s and has remained influential well beyond these geographical and temporal boundaries (see Erikson, Goldthorpe & Portacarero 1979, Goldthorpe 1987, Marshall *et al.* 1988, Goldthorpe & Marshall 1992, Evans 1992, Erikson & Goldthorpe 1993, Chan *et al.* 1995, Cheng & Dai 1995, Erikson & Jonsson 1996, Evans & Mills 1999, Goldthorpe & Breen 1999). The Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portacarero (EGP) class schema, as well as its offspring, the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) scale, have been to date the most widely used and validated class schemas (see Evans 1992, Evans & Mills 1998a, 1998b, 2000, Goldthorpe 2007b: vol. 2 ch. 5, Lambert *et al.* 2007: table 1, Bukodi & Goldthorpe 2013, Sullivan *et al.* 2013: 5). The EGP schema was in this era considered a useful tool in measuring employment relations, assisting investigations of

class processes, and predicting a range of life outcomes (see Sullivan 2001, Evans & Whitefield 2006, Bennett *et al.* 2010, Rose & Harrison 2010).

Toward the end of the 1980s, Goldthorpian class research came under vigorous attack for several reasons, notably the following: its statistical procedures, analytical strategies, findings and, especially, its exclusion of non-economic issues (Pahl 1989: 715, Crompton & Scott 2000: 4, Devine & Savage 2005: 8); its overemphasis on investigating patterns and trends at the cost of neglecting the processes and mechanisms of the mobility process (Ganzeboom *et al.* 1991: 289–290); and its (arguable) inability to explain its empirical findings, due to an absence of a theoretical framework (Sorensen 1991, Pahl 1993, Scott 1994: 935, Breen & Rottman 1995: 458, Morgan 2006: 7).

Into the 1990s, and as the Goldthorpian approach waned, a 'cultural turn' took place within class analysis, especially in Anglophone and Francophone debates. Informed by the works of Pierre Bourdieu, particularly his concept of cultural capital, the 'cultural turn' in class study hailed culture as the central mechanism through which classifications were produced and reproduced (Crompton 2009: 23, 94) (in sociology more generally, the 'cultural turn' tends to be associated with cultural studies, poststructuralism, postmodernism, and so on (see Susen 2015). In class study, the cultural turn has undergone some transformations in recent years. Underlying these transformations has been a new commitment to employing a wider range of Bourdieu's theoretical repertoire rather than only partially applying the concept of cultural capital. Researchers have sought to reinforce the culture–class link that was once obfuscated by an overemphasis on culture. Prieur and Savage (2011), for example, advocated addressing 'cultural capital' as resources with symbolic value, profitability, and links to social domination, which better captured the essence of Bourdieu's understanding of stratification processes in highly differentiated societies.

Despite the production of a rich Bourdieusian literature on class differentials in cultural consumption, lifestyle and taste (see, for example, Devine *et al.* 2005, Bennett *et al.* 2010, Friedman 2013), the literatures under review concern the consequences of class differentials in education and class achievements. In these literatures, researchers examined the patterns and mechanisms of the intergenerational transmission of class

advantages and disadvantages, in order to understand the effects of class background on class outcomes.

3.1. Cultural reproduction

Regardless of their different interests and approaches, researchers concerned with social class have largely agreed that education has been a major mechanism of social reproduction in advanced societies. Education being a reproduction channel is likely to have been the case in post-reform Vietnam too. Not only has education been a key route to high-status achievement throughout history, but it has also been increasingly pursued and rewarded under the market reform (see Introduction). More importantly, available research evidence demonstrated an appreciable association between socioeconomic background – whether defined in terms of income grouping, economic sector, or occupation – and educational attainment in the current Vietnamese context (see Chapter 2).

The current section reviews the education literature that follows a Bourdieusian approach. Its underlying assumption was that *the reproduction of educational advantages mediates the reproduction of class advantages*. On this account, understanding the former process is crucial to understanding the latter process. This approach possesses distinctive qualities:

The first has to do with its emphasis on the mechanisms through which *educational attainment is influenced by class background*. Even though generations of researchers grappling with the nature of social mobility have developed increasingly sophisticated statistical models to measure the role of educational attainment in the mobility process, their focus on comparing the effects on class outcomes of class background versus those of educational attainment – or class background–class outcomes, and education–class outcomes links – came at the expense of neglecting the *class background–education link* foregrounded by Bourdieusian education research (see, for example, Blau & Duncan 1967, Ganzeboom *et al.* 1991, Hendrickx & Ganzeboom 1998, Breen & Goldthorpe 2001, Ganzeboom & Treiman 2007).

The second distinctive characteristic is encapsulated in *the term 'cultural reproduction'* used by Bourdieu (1977). Following Bourdieu (see 1.1),

researchers have highlighted the influences of class-based cultural resources on academic outcomes. For their relevance to this study's analytical purposes, the literature on cultural reproduction can be divided into *cultural agent* studies and *cultural class process* studies, which differ in their conceptual emphases and methodologies as well as their research aims.

(1) Cultural agent studies, which measure cultural capital as an independent, predetermined variable and examine its direct effect on educational outcomes, identify the statistical *patterns* of the relationships between class, culture and schooling (see DiMaggio 1982, DiMaggio & Mohr 1985, de Graaf 1986, Aschaffenburg & Maas 1997, Crook 1997, de Graaf *et al.* 2000, Sullivan 2001, Marks 2009).

(2) Cultural class process studies provide both in-depth and statistical accounts of the *mechanisms* underlying the above relationships. In this literature, cultural capital is discovered through qualitative investigations into the processes in which it exerts influence on educational outcomes (see Lareau 1987, Reay 1998, 2000, Lareau & Horvat 1999, Horvat, Weininger & Lareau 2003, Lareau 2003, Gillies 2005), hypotheses generated from which are then examined through quantitative methods (see Ream & Palardy 2008, Tramonte & Willms 2010, Bodovski & Farkas 2008, Sullivan *et al.* 2013).

Cultural agent

Across cultural agent studies, Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is the key – and, arguably, most influential – point of reference. The studies' backbone assumption about a *link between cultural capital and educational attainment* rests on Bourdieu's analysis that a fit between school culture and the educated-home culture rewarded children from educated homes (see Bourdieu 1976, Bourdieu & Passeron [1977] 2000). To test the validity of this assumption, researchers employed a range of measures of cultural capital, among which high-culture participation and reading behaviours have been the most popular.

For a substantial period, the dominant interpretation in education research was to denote cultural capital by a person's competence and involvement in high-brow cultural forms such as fine art and classical music (Lareau & Weininger 2003: 575). This practice was built upon DiMaggio's (1982) study – the first attempt to empirically explore the concept of cultural capital via a wide range of measures (Sullivan 2002: 157). DiMaggio (1982) categorised children's 'status culture participation' in terms of their cultivated self-image, interest in symphony concerts, and participation in cultural activities such as drawing, acting, and reading literature.

Contrary to Bourdieu's thesis on cultural reproduction, however, DiMaggio (1982) found the impact of cultural capital on school success to be relatively independent of family background. Among the population he studied, there is a weak link between parental education and children's status culture participation, and a significant one between the latter and children's high-school grades. Based on such evidence, DiMaggio (1982) formulated the *cultural mobility thesis*, which claims that cultural capital promotes social mobility rather than reproducing class differentials via education. A number of studies that endorse the high culture interpretation yield support for the cultural mobility thesis – including DiMaggio and Mohr (1985), Aschaffenburg and Maas (1997), and de Graaf *et al.* (2000).

Such results, which contest Bourdieu's notion of cultural reproduction, do not represent the literature as a whole. The results might have been context-biased. De Graaf *et al.*'s (2000) support of the cultural mobility thesis was based on data from the Netherlands, where education is free of direct costs for all citizens. There may be greater educational inequality in countries where education is not subsidised, and even in those in which it is costly. Additionally, the rest of the aforementioned studies used data from the US where, as Lamont and Lareau (1988: 162) pointed out, high culture participation is not as significant a basis for social and cultural exclusion as it was in Bourdieu's French context and is thus not a relevant indicator of cultural capital.

The dominant view came to be the most disputed interpretation of cultural capital in educational research – not only for its likelihood of being France-specific, but also for its alienation from Bourdieu's

conceptualisation of cultural capital and analysis of cultural reproduction through schooling. As Lamont and Lareau (1988: 160) insightfully explained, cultural capital as narrowly defined in terms of high-culture participation in the works of DiMaggio (1982) and DiMaggio and Mohr (1985), among others, failed to integrate the issues of symbolic domination and social exclusion which Bourdieu incorporated in his original conceptualisation. Among the *components of cultural capital* that researchers have suggested need further emphasis in educational research are *linguistic sophistication* (Sullivan 2001, 2007), the *combined effects of status and ability* (Lareau & Weininger 2003: 576, 582), specific *sets of skills and habits rewarded in the academic system* (Farkas *et al.* 1990), and *symbolic mastery* (Atkinson 2012: 739).

Compared to the measure of high culture participation, measuring reading behaviour seems to better capture some of the abovementioned implications of cultural capital for educational inequality. Several studies, which employed data from different countries, found high culture participation to have a weaker impact than reading patterns (whether from parental reading behaviour, home reading culture or children's reading behaviour) on children's school performance (see de Graaf 1986, Crook 1997, de Graaf *et al.* 2000: Dutch data, Sullivan 2001: UK data, Wang *et al.* 2006: Chinese data, Marks 2009: Australian data). It should also be noted that even though researchers have applied the concept of cultural capital in examining the 'digital divide', positing Internet use as a cultural resource (see Emmison & Frow 1998, DiMaggio & Hargittai 2001, Hargittai 2002, Mattei 2010), analyses of the links between Internet use and educational and social achievements are lacking.

Indeed, the concept of cultural capital poses major challenges for the quantification of its subtleties and complexities. Such challenges were exacerbated by the fact that, as Sullivan (2007: 6.1) noted, some researchers mainly relied on general survey-based and not specifically designed measures for their quantification. More severe limitations of this literature have to do with the detachment of 'culture' from 'class'. In fact, one may wonder whether it is ever 'cultural capital' that has been measured by the aforementioned researchers. Many of the measurements and analyses dealt not with cultural capital as defined by Bourdieu but, rather, with cultural resources, since many important links in the

relationship between class and cultural capital remain inadequately examined. A majority of studies that linked their indicators of 'cultural capital' to family background measured family background in terms of parental education, while parental class should also have been taken into account. According to Bourdieu's conceptualisation of capital convertibility, education is important in the construction of some forms of capital, yet capital is ultimately rooted in class. Capital is, above all, class-based, rather than education-based.

Another missing link was the transmission of cultural capital from parents to children, which researchers at best assumed, but did not provide evidence for. In Sullivan's (2001) study, for instance, the author argued that parental cultural activities promote linguistic skills and knowledge at home and that these have a positive impact on children's educational performance. However, Sullivan did not investigate how such promotion may take place.

It is fair to say, therefore, that the main contribution of this literature has been to *identify effects of cultural resources on educational attainment*. Its own pivotal question of the relationship between cultural capital and educational attainment (Sullivan 2007) remains unsatisfactorily resolved. The wider question concerning social class differences in educational attainment has only been partially tackled. For a more adequate answer to these questions, further investigations are required into the processes through which class-based resources are transmitted from parents to children at home, and also into the extent to which these resources bestow children with educational advantages in school. In methodological terms, we need more in-depth inquiries that sit apart from statistical analyses; these inquiries will allow researchers to explore the reasons underlying the class–culture–education relationships and, in theoretical terms, to move away from focusing on culture to focusing on class. Some of these shifts have taken place in the literature discussed in the following section.

Cultural class process

The studies under review investigated the processes and mechanisms of the transmission of cultural and other resources between parents and children at home. This transmission reproduces educational advantages and disadvantages at school, representing an issue that the previous

literature left open. The key concept informing the inquiries remained *cultural capital*, particularly its embodied form, generally understood as class-specified internalised powers and resources, and interlinked with other concepts in Bourdieu's reproduction framework (see Bourdieu 1986). The key explanation (not always made explicit) for the reproduction of cultural class inequalities through school was that school favoured and rewarded the parenting practices of advantaged-class parents who had the resources for school involvement and child cultivation as per school requests, while it undervalued the parenting practices of disadvantaged-class parents.

Parental involvement: US and UK studies

Two parallel bodies of research, one in the US and the other in the UK, employed qualitative methods to examine class inequalities in the level and manners of parental involvement in children's schooling. In the US, studies by Lareau (1987), Lareau and Horvat (1999), and Horvat, Weininger and Lareau (2003), based on participant observations of classrooms and in-depth interviews with parents and educators, exposed contrasts between middle- and working-class families regarding school involvement. The later iterations of these studies reached more specific conclusions about class patterns in school involvement. Lareau (1987) noticed that middle-class parents were able to be much more intensively involved in their children's schooling than were their working-class counterparts. Lareau and Horvat (1999) noted how middle-class parents were able to build relationships with their children's school personnel on the basis of 'comfort and trust', as opposed to working-class parents, who experienced great difficulties in communicating with school personnel. Horvat, Weininger and Lareau (2003) added insights about class differentials in school intervention. According to the authors, middle-class parents were far more likely than working class parents to draw upon contacts with professionals in order to mobilise the 'information, expertise, or authority' needed to challenge the judgements of school officials and to react collectively alongside other middle-class parents. These parents were thus more effective in intervening in their children's school matters (Horvat *et al.* 2003: 344–345).

In discussing the forms of capital employed by middle-class parents to advantage their children at school, these important studies represented a

decisive break with the dominant interpretation in the previous literature, of cultural capital as high culture. Cultural capital was approached with a closer understanding to Bourdieu's conceptualisation, in terms of the cultural resources that were *valued* by dominant institutions and, thus, investable and employable in specific time and place settings (see Lareau 1987: 83–84). Middle-class parents were able to provide their children with educational advantages, not because family–school relationships in the middle class are better for children than those in the working class, but because they complied with the schools' definition of a good family–school relationship. Middle-class parents' resources were valued highly and thus capitalisable in school (Lareau 1987: 82).

Specifically, Lareau (1987) listed middle-class parents' financial power, and their matched educational skills and occupational prestige to those of the educators, as forms of capital that enabled their involvement in their children's schooling. Lareau and Horvat (1999) also emphasised the mutual communicative benefits of the cultural and social forms of capital that middle-class parents had in common with their children's teachers. Horvat, Weininger and Lareau (2003) highlighted middle-class parents' access to professionals for necessary information and expertise, as well their networks of parents of the same class for collective support, as facilitating any school intervention they perceived necessary.

It was from among their rich, in-depth qualitative data that US researchers unearthed such context-specific and theoretically sensitive indicators of Bourdieu's concepts of capital. The same applied to the UK researchers who explored the relationship between class and parental school involvement among English school-aged children. As Reay (1998, 2000) explained, working-class mothers observed in her studies were not able to deal as effectively with school as middle-class mothers because they lacked the self-confident and self-assured dispositions of the middle-class mothers. Middle-class mothers' self-assurance was rooted in their own past school success and was part of their stock of cultural capital (Reay 2000). Working-class mothers, in Reay's (2000) analysis, shared the sense of security felt by the middle class, which was more likely to be achieved through fitting in than standing out. These attributes explained the tendency of middle-class mothers to be adept and assertive in expressing complaints or opposing viewpoints to educational experts, as

opposed to the tendency of working-class mothers to be uncertain, apologetic, and self-contradictory. Reay's interpretations have seemed inviting to other researchers who otherwise might not have intended to emphasise the effects of social dispositions. For instance, Gillies (2005) attributed a middle-class mother's successful attainment of special treatment at school for her daughter who had developmental problems to the mother's legitimating power and sense of entitlement – the ability and confidence to be heard and to claim legitimacy. This conclusion was drawn even though, on the whole, the author emphatically attributed working-class childrearing practices to structural constraints.

As Reay (1998, 2000) attempted to delve into the nuances of deeply-embedded class inequalities, however, she did seem to have overemphasised the role of embodied capital; this contrasts with US researchers' more balanced approach. Even though the UK researchers' observations about the differences between middle-class mothers' *self-confident dispositions* – an epitome of cultural advantages – and working-class mothers' lack thereof were insightful and innovative, their discussions verged on obscuring the class-based gaps in these mothers' relative access to physical resources. The explanation that working-class people's built-in disadvantages prevented them from successfully navigating dominant social institutions unwittingly concealed the *effects* of structural disadvantages. Such explanations risked being misused as reasoning for shifting the blame – which should have been placed on schools for failing to accommodate disadvantaged people – onto already disadvantaged parents who were deemed inevitably hopeless and unable to deal with schools in an effective manner.

Unequal Childhoods

Developed upon the aforementioned US qualitative works, Lareau's (2003) research, presented in her book *Unequal Childhoods*, was a breakthrough and deserves special mention. Whereas, in previous works, school involvement appeared to be largely restricted to parents' interventions during difficult times, in Lareau's (2003) study it entailed not only parents' routine involvement in schooling but also their childrearing practices – understood as spanning the organisation of daily life, and language use, as well as intervention in institutional frameworks. Lareau's analyses were based on data and field notes from 'naturalistic'

observations of twelve families with nine- and ten-year-old children; Lareau and her ten research assistants conducted these inquiries over the course of two years (1994–1995), as the families engaged in their daily activities including before-school preparations, errands, church attendance, family events, and evening homework sessions. Distinctively, in order to make sense of class differentials in childrearing practices, Lareau (2003) employed as her 'thinking tools' Bourdieu's conceptual trilogy of 'habitus', 'capital', and 'field', instead of focusing on just one of these concepts.

Lareau (2003) observed that *the logics of childrearing between middle-class and working-class families were fundamentally different*. The main differences (Lareau 2003: 2, 4, 6, 238, 241–245) between the two logics can be summarised as follows.

- The *middle-class childrearing approach* is encapsulated by the term *'concerted cultivation'* – that is, fostering children's talents in a concerted fashion through organised activities. In middle-class families, parents invest their wide-ranging resources on their children's well-rounded development, actively and tirelessly nurturing their children's abilities and skills. Children participate in extensive organised activities, such as music lessons and sports classes, under the guidance of professional adults. Lareau (2003) speculated that, thanks to all these practices, middle-class children are instilled from a young age with a 'sense of entitlement': they are skilled in demanding from others (including institutions) and having their demands met, as well as having developed useful job competencies for the future. They have been taught and provided proficiency in reasoning and negotiation, and the ability to deal with others effectively in a wide range of institutional settings.

- *Working-class and poor families' childrearing approach* is denoted as *'accomplishment of natural growth'*. In these families, children enjoy long independent leisure time and are taught to follow parents' directives. Through seemingly natural growth, working-class and poor children are less pressured, bond more strongly with their siblings and relatives, but are much less prepared to deal with the institutional world than are their middle-class peers. Lareau (2003) argued that, because working-class and poor

> children have little opportunity to participate in organised activities or communicate with professional adults, and also often lack parental guidance in developing communication and reasoning skills, they are disadvantaged in institutional contexts and in navigating future educational and employment opportunities. From early childhood, their institutional experiences are characterised by distance, distrust, and restraint. All these disadvantages are internalised by working-class and poor children as a 'sense of constraint' as opposed to self-entitlement. They do not consider themselves worthy of being provided for.

Lareau (2003) offered powerful (though at times unavoidably reductive) accounts of social divisions along the class line, through her engaging portrayals of the lives of children and parents as they go about a wide range of relationships and activities. *Unequal Childhoods* is one of a few recent studies to interpret the ways in which class shapes the lives of individuals and families through intensive ethnographic analyses. Similar accounts can be found in classic ethnographies from a few decades previously, such as Jackson and Marsden's (1962) *Education and the Working Class*.

Unequal Childhoods remains one of the most influential Bourdieusian studies to date (see Wacquant 2013). The study's most significant and influential contribution to the Bourdieusian cultural class process literature has been the insights it provided into the processes of parental transmission of class advantages and disadvantages via childrearing practices, whereas previous studies had been restricted to parental use of class-based resources in school involvement (Lareau 1987, Lareau & Horvat 1999, Horvat *et al.* 2003). Employing Bourdieu's conceptual framework, Lareau (2003) put forward insightful assumptions about the *links between social class conditions, internalised frameworks of dispositions, and class practices* – for example, those between middle-class concerted cultivation, sense of entitlement, and negotiation with institutions. These insights help illuminate the complex processes through which class conditions influence class outcomes. Expanding from her earlier thesis (1987: 82–83) about middle-class parents' school involvement mirroring the requests of schools, Lareau (2003: 4–5) proposed that middle-class parents' childrearing practices yield fruitful results by virtue

of their 'adaptability and responsiveness to changing definitions of parenting'. In an implicit manner, Lareau's analyses suggested that middle-class parents' successful transmission of educational advantages to their children follows the existing logics of the educational system.

Yet, some of Lareau's (2003) key assumptions were made without supporting evidence. As the author acknowledged in retrospect, she was not able to uncover the actual activation process of inherited resources, but only able to speculate about it (Lareau 2008: 126, 131). Lareau (2003: 244–245) proposed that middle-class children acquired 'work-related skills' through their extensive interactions with adults via extracurricular activities – for example, a middle-class child's confidence to shake a stranger's hand and make direct eye contact signalled a future head start in job interviews. Such observations manifested the author's sociological sensibility, yet when scrutinised in a methodical and critical manner lack credibility. Because the children under Lareau's (2003) examination were very young – about nine or ten years old – the author's hints about the effects of their parents' childrearing practices on their educational and occupational attainment were unavoidably stretched.

While Lareau's (2003) assumptions with respect to the *relationship between parental transmission of class-based resources and children's educational attainment* were validated in her brief follow-up study and presented in an updated edition of *Unequal Childhoods* (Lareau 2011: 259–341), issues surrounding the activation of inherited class advantages remained puzzling. The revisited interviews with the now young adults aged between 19 and 21 and with their parents and siblings revealed that educational achievements had continued to be consistent with the level of parental involvement and had thus turned out largely as predicted. As the children aged, middle-class parents continued proactively and efficiently to monitor, support, and intervene in their children's academic careers. Most youths from the middle-class families went to university. In contrast, working-class parents, lacking information about the complex educational system in the US, were unable to help their children embark on the higher education trajectory. Therefore, despite their college aspirations, youths from working-class and poor families did not enter high education.

Nevertheless, even though Lareau (2011) deliberately searched for evidence of the long-term effects, be they direct or indirect, of parents'

concerted cultivation on middle-class young adults' capability to employ their inherited resources, she did not find much. The author's assumptions about the benefits of childhood extracurricular activities, based on ambiguous evidence from middle-class young adults' interview accounts regarding, for instance, college and job applications, remained provisional (see Lareau 2011: 283). The inquiry into the activation process of capital was left unsatisfactorily investigated.

Quantitative research on 'concerted cultivation'

Unequal Childhoods in particular, and the qualitative literature on class, parenting, and school involvement in general, sparked and inspired an interesting body of follow-up quantitative studies. These quantitative studies sought to measure the combined effects of class-based childrearing practices and parental school involvement on children's educational attainment, which their qualitative predecessors assumed but were not able to measure. The key question was whether class differentials in parents' school involvement and childrearing practices were related to differentials in children's school outcomes. Some among the studies specifically put to statistical test Lareau's (2003) concept of the main middle-class childrearing logic – 'concerted cultivation'.

This literature lent varying degrees of support to the link between class-based parental school involvement and educational inequality. The levels of support seemed to correspond to how researchers operationalised the notion of school involvement. Studies that used crude proxies, such as McNeal Junior's (2001) and Barone's (2006), found limited support for the said link, while more comprehensive treatments of the notion of school involvement facilitated greater support for the link. Ream and Palardy (2008) analysed the same dataset used in McNeal Junior's (2001) study, yet revealed contradicting results. The authors reported that higher-class parents' involvement in their children schooling, which was more intensive than lower-class parents', had a positive effect on their children's school performance. While McNeal Junior (2001) measured parental involvement mainly using constructs of parental monitoring, Ream and Palardy (2008) added those of parental supervision and help with schoolwork. Though employing the same dataset as Barone (2006), Tramonte and Willms (2010) contradictorily revealed that parent–children communication exerted strong effects on fifteen-year-old students' school-

related outcomes including reading literacy, sense of belonging at school, and occupational aspirations. Barone (2006) restricted parent–children communication to conversations on cultural topics; Tramonte and Willms (2010) added conversations on political and social matters, school activities, and books that children were reading.

In the two notable studies (Bodovski & Farkas 2008, Sullivan *et al.* 2013) that measured the effects of parents' 'concerted cultivation' on children educational attainment, results of the effects depended on how justifiably Lareau's (2003) original notion of 'concerted cultivation' was operationalised. Bodovski and Farkas (2008) measured 'cultivated cultivation' through detailed itemisation of its three dimensions – parents' perceptions of their responsibilities toward their children, children's leisure time activities, and parents' relationships with schools. They also took into account the number of books children had access to at home. Using data for White American first graders, their results were largely consistent with Lareau's (2003) speculations. There were a positive and very strong *association between parental socioeconomic status and concerted cultivation*, and a positive *association between concerted cultivation and children's academic outcomes* in reading test scores, language skills, and literacy skills.

Sullivan *et al.*'s (2013) study stood out as the only one among the studies under review that deliberately sought to refute, not validate, the notion that childrearing practices play a significant role in reproducing educational advantages. The authors made their case with evidence showing that social class significantly predicted early cognitive scores while concerted cultivation, indicated by constructs of 'parental behaviours', did not. Yet, such evidence did not suffice to challenge Lareau's (2003) main thesis. There was little resemblance between Sullivan *et al.*'s (2013) measures of 'parental behaviours' (home learning environment for a child aged three, which consisted of TV viewing, reading to the child, library visits, and teaching the alphabet and early numeracy) and the key aspects of Lareau's (2003) original notion of 'concerted cultivation', which included the provision of organised extracurricular activities, development of children's communication and reasoning skills, and nurturing of children's ability to interact and negotiate with institutions.

To achieve greater consistencies between nuanced qualitative notions and clear-cut statistical measures in the class literatures of childrearing practices and parental school involvement will be challenging. There exist major gaps between the qualitative literature and the quantitative literature:

(1) In the qualitative literature, such as Reay's (1998, 2000) and Gillies' (2005) studies, the notion of parental involvement simultaneously indicated actual practices (the things that parents did) and the manners by which parents went about their practices (for example, whether they did something with confidence and assertiveness or with constraint and anxiety). While aspects of actual practices would be rather straightforward to quantify, manners of practice would not. Understandably, existing quantitative measures of parental involvement only represented its practical and not its abstract aspects.

(2) While there was an emphasis on problem-based school involvement in much of the qualitative literature (see Lareau 1987, Lareau & Horvat 1999, Horvat *et al.* 2003), in quantitative studies 'parental involvement' referred mostly to routine practices, excluding moments of crisis and struggle in children's schooling (see Ream & Palardy 2008, Bodovski & Farkas 2008, Tramonte & Willms 2010, Sullivan *et al.* 2013).

Even greater problems arise from *quantitative researchers' misinterpretations of qualitative findings*. Sullivan *et al.*'s (2013) accusation was far-fetched that Lareau (2003) promoted the idea that childrearing practices were disassociated from class. In her study, Lareau (2003) consistently demonstrated the associations between class and childrearing practices. It was clear throughout her analyses that childrearing practices depended on the availability of parental resources and that the outcomes of childrearing practices depended on the opportunity structure in the society. As determined by the contemporary opportunity structure, middle-class resources were profitable, while working-class resources were not. Even though working-class parents' childrearing practices were beneficial to the development of children in

various ways – for example, in bonding with members of the extended family or in developing self-sufficiency – they were neither favoured nor rewarded by the contemporary structure. By contrast, middle-class parents' concerted cultivation advantaged their children because it was valued by dominant institutions such as the educational system. Countering Sullivan *et al.*'s (2013) allegation, Reay's (2006: 636) praise that Lareau's (2003) powerful demonstration of the presence of class inequalities challenged widespread discourses of classlessness in developed societies was a fairer assessment.

Despite misattributing faults to Lareau's (2003) study, Sullivan *et al.*'s (2013) skepticism of the culture-parenting discourse in general was justifiable. In line with Skeggs (2004), Gillies (2005), and Gillies and Edwards (2006), Sullivan *et al.* (2013) criticised the culture-parenting discourse and attendant policy interventions in the family sphere in the UK for obscuring issues of inequality by blaming disadvantaged people for their own failures. The victim-blaming insinuation was embedded in the 'culture of poverty' paradigm. Originating from Oscar Lewis's (1961) qualitative analysis of the failure-perpetuating traits of poor Mexican communities, the fundamental premise of the 'culture of poverty' paradigm is that poor people share a deviant, self-defeating culture that is durable and transmitted from one generation to the next, and thus are to be blamed for their own failure (Swartz 1997: 104, Gorski 2008). Even though the 'culture of poverty' paradigm has continuously been debunked in academia, its likeness has reappeared time and again to accompany political agendas, and it remains influential in contemporary policy-making. In the last couple of decades in the UK, the culture-parenting discourse held working-class parents responsible for failing to equip their children with the right skills for success. Policies urged working-class parents to adopt 'middle-class values' and 'middle-class childrearing practices'. Such discourses and interventions, according to the aforementioned researchers, masked issues of inequality of opportunity. The researchers rejected the understanding of parenting as detached from class and rooted in personal development, but instead advocated for an understanding of parenting as class-embedded (Gillies 2005: 838–840).

Though indissolubly linked to the term 'culture', the Bourdieusian literature on mechanisms of cultural reproduction should not be mistaken as directly culpable for a surge in culture-focused explanations of social differentials. The reason for this is that it offered class-focused explanations of the cultural mechanisms underlying the reproduction of class inequalities. The literature contributed tremendously to the understanding of the non-material forms of class inequalities; the hidden, deeply embedded forms of class inequalities; the processes through which class inequalities are transmitted in the family; and the mechanisms underlying the reproduction of class inequalities via institutional schooling.

Distinctive and valuable though it is, this literature also has some primary limitations:

(1) Its *overemphasis on culture* involves a *detachment of culture from class*. In much of the literature on cultural agency, researchers measure 'cultural capital' without linking it to class background, and thus actually measure cultural resources instead of cultural capital. Class is omitted from the class–culture–education link that researchers originally set out to investigate.

(2) Its *overemphasis on embodied inequalities* leads to the *obfuscation of structural inequalities*. In some of the cultural class process literature on parental school involvement, researchers accentuate embodied class differentials, which they see as deep-seated, previously overlooked forms of inequality. Yet, their approach can backfire. There is a fine line between the claim that disadvantaged people lack the right dispositions to deal effectively with institutions, and a 'culture of poverty' argument that disadvantaged people are doomed to fail because of their own inherent deficiencies.

As a whole, this literature's contributions to our understanding of the reproduction process of class inequalities were limited to explicating the *reproduction of educational inequalities*. Class inequalities are produced and reproduced in labour markets across the world. The industrialisation

thesis, which deems that occupations are increasingly education-based and decreasingly origin-based (Blau & Duncan 1967, Featherman & Hauser 1978, Ganzeboom & Treiman 2007), was put to a wealth of statistical tests that mostly provided disconfirming evidence. In the UK, mobility researchers discovered that many effects of class background on class destination were not represented by academic sanctions (see Marshall *et al.* 1997, Savage & Egerton 1997, Breen & Goldthorpe 1999, Bukodi & Goldthorpe 2009), especially as regards elite or high-class positions (see Goldthorpe & Jackson 2008, Bukodi & Goldthorpe 2011). Statistical evidence of the tenacity of social origin in determining labour market outcomes was also reported by mobility researchers in other advanced countries such as France (see Robinson & Garnier 1985), Italy (see Zella 2010), Ireland (see Breen & Whelan 1993, Whelan & Layte 2003), Scotland (see Iannelli & Paterson 2005), Norway (see Hansen 2001, Mastekaasa 2011), and Sweden (see Erikson & Jonsson 1998), as well as in socialist countries undergoing market transition such as post-Soviet Russia (see Gerber & Hout 2004), and even in Eastern European countries under socialism (see Wong 2002). There have not been similar analyses of the Vietnamese society, but considering its current large self-employed population and small highly educated population, it could be assumed that education has not been the only channel for social advancement in the post-reform context. On the whole, the implication for class study in contemporary societies is clear. As long as there is not equal chance for everyone in the labour market, it is imperative to look beyond class influences through schooling and to investigate class influences on occupational attainment.

3.2. Class reproduction

Despite the fact that in much of Bourdieu's own work and the attendant Bourdieusian research there has been a strong emphasis on explaining perpetuating class inequality through perpetuating educational inequality, Bourdieu always stressed that '[e]ducational qualifications never function perfectly as currency' (Bourdieu 1986: 58). If mobility research provided statistical evidence of the influence, unmediated by education, of class background on class attainment, then Bourdieu's framework of class reproduction offered explanations of such influence.

Nonetheless, and despite the substantial Bourdieusian literature employing cultural capital as its pivotal concept, there has not emerged a Bourdieusian class reproduction literature of any substantial scope employing Bourdieu's framework *in toto*. This section of the current study selects for initial review the grounding works for such a literature. First it presents Bourdieu's concepts of 'class trajectory', 'capital conversion', and 'degree devaluation', which help illuminate the non-educational mechanisms of the influences of class background on class attainment. It includes selected analyses from the qualitative anthology *Weight of the World* (Bourdieu *et al*. 1999), which illustrate the meaning and significance of Bourdieu's terminology. Second, it discusses a notable study on class reproduction undertaken by Atkinson (2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2012, 2013), which employs Bourdieu's full framework. This study is most relevant to the current research.

Bourdieu: beyond education

Bourdieu's notion of class trajectory basically suggests that people are destined to the common fate of their class of birth. In a case study of a judge, for example, Bourdieu *et al*. (1999: 241) argued that this judge was 'predisposed' to take up his vocation, like many other middle-class children in the 1960s in France under the influence of their parents' strategies to convert a part of their economic capital into scholastic capital. Bourdieu's framework, particularly the concept of habitus, explains such imprints of collective trajectory on an individual's trajectory. People who are born into the same class share similar conditions of existence and, thus, similar collective chances of moving about in the social space. Yet, class trajectory, as Bourdieu highlights, also refers to an embodied pathway shared by people of the same class background. Their collective chances are internalised into a shared system of individual chances – a component of their class habitus, which guides them toward what is considered reasonable and feasible and rules out what is not. The embodied dimension of class trajectory epitomises the deeply entrenched imprints of past experiences on our decision-making (see Bourdieu [1979] 2009: 110, 471, 1983: 346).

Across Bourdieusian research, the idea of a predetermined embodied pathway has been routinely espoused. Researchers adopted it to interpret

their studies' respondents' claims about educational or career choices being 'clear right from the outset' (Glaesser & Cooper 2013: 10), 'in our mindset' (Kaufman 2005: 262), or the 'natural thing to do' (Atkinson 2010b: 17). A considerable amount of Bourdieusian research on tertiary education accentuated the matter of choice – how middle-class children took choice for granted, while working-class children disassociated themselves from it (see Ball *et al.* 2002, Reay *et al.* 2009, Atkinson 2010c). Other researchers reflected upon class trajectory, attributing experiences of displacement and anxiety in educationally or occupationally upwardly mobile people to the fact that these people went against their embodied pathway, and suffered from torn, divided habitus (see Evans 2009, Reay *et al.* 2010, Ingram 2011, Friedman 2013).

The idea that mobility is possible not only through avenues of education but also through the direct transmission of family resources was shared by several authors (see Bourdieu 1977: 507, Yamaguchi 1983, Hout 1984: 1385–1386, Goldthorpe 2007b: 174); yet, Bourdieu provided theoretical explanations of the phenomenon by means of the concept of *capital conversion*. The notion that different types of capital exist and that these are, in principle, all convertible into one another allows for endless possibilities in the intergenerational transmission of capital. Besides indirect transmission of scholastic capital via school, well-resourced parents are able to directly transmit a range of economic, cultural, social, and other resources to facilitate their children's social achievements. It should be noted, however, that in his discussions of the effects of non-scholastic capitals on class attainment Bourdieu often highlighted embodied capitals. He stressed that the prime winning factor for those bred in the legitimate culture of the bourgeois was their exclusive command of legitimate social and cultural codes and a sense of legitimation, which enabled them to impose legitimacy and get the highest returns on their investments (Bourdieu 1977: 506, Bourdieu [1979] 2009: 91–92).

The concept of 'degree devaluation' was introduced long before Bourdieu entered the scene of sociological debate and controversy. Since the 1920s, Pitirim Sorokin, one of the founders of the subject of social mobility, documented that the expansion of education would not increase social mobility but would actually perpetuate inequality (Heran 2006: 480). Yet,

Bourdieu provided a new and insightful account of the mechanisms underpinning the phenomenon. According to Bourdieu's analysis, a more open educational system did not necessarily mean a more open job system, essentially because as academic degrees became more commonplace their value fell.

Two main groups were victims of the devaluation of academic degrees. The first were people who entered the labour market without degrees because jobs previously available to them began to be reserved for degree holders (Bourdieu [1979] 2009: 134). Disadvantaged by degree devaluation were also, according to Bourdieu, those who entered the labour market as degree holders but lacked the inherited means to capitalise on their degrees. As Bourdieu *et al.* (1999: 421–423) documented, many children from culturally disadvantaged, working-class backgrounds, having embarked on academic enterprises during the expansion of secondary education in France since the 1950s, ended up with devalued degrees and therefore struggled to make ends meet. Bourdieu's (2003: 32) notion of the 'field of struggles' illuminated this phenomenon. Shifting degree valuation was a successful outcome of efforts by the dominant class to reserve their privileges for themselves. With their ability to control and impose what was at stake in the field, the dominant class created and recreated barriers to privilege (Bourdieu [1979] 2009: 161). As Bourdieu ([1979] 2009: 132–135, 143) explained, when academic degrees were scarce the job market functioned in favour of academic capital; as degrees were commonly attained by people from multiple social milieus, however, the job market functioned in accordance with a different logic. Differently tallied and ascribed merits associated with the high classes became increasingly instrumental for regulating entry into these classes. Educated people from lower classes were wrecked by such change. Now that they could afford academic capital, it was devalued and could not be relied upon to advance them. These people failed because they lacked both the financial and cultural capital to help them yield profits from their attained degrees, and a practical sense of the logics of fields to help them make efficient enough academic investments to negotiate the changing situations. This was how their disadvantages were perpetuated, or how class reproduction took place.

Bristol workers study

Atkinson's study of Bristol workers, presented in a series of journal articles (Atkinson 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2012, 2013), resembles Lareau's (2003) *Unequal Childhood* and Bourdieu *et al.*'s (1999) *Weight of the World* in the sense that it employs qualitative methods and Bourdieu's full framework to investigate the processes and mechanisms of the reproduction of class advantages and disadvantages. Yet, as a complete Bourdieusian study (and not a collection of case studies like *Weight of the World*) of class effects on work life (as opposed to *Unequal Childhood*'s focus on schooling), Atkinson's *Bristol workers* study appears to be the first of its kind.

Skeptical about the *individualisation thesis* of the emergence of 'reflexive' workers who plan, consider, and negotiate their work life irrespective of class boundaries (Beck 1992, Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002) Atkinson set out to examine the ways in which class affected people's work life. To do so, he carried out 55 semi-structured qualitative interviews with people aged between 18 and 53 who were employed in a wide range of occupations in Bristol. The interviewees were asked about their childhood, education, and work trajectories; in so doing, Atkinson employed what he called 'the full Bourdieusian explanatory toolkit' (2012: 741). His findings of stark class effects, on his respondents' decision-making in particular and on their life pathways in general, led him to debunk completely the individualisation thesis. Following Bourdieu, he argued that the workers were conditioned by 'objectified capital' – the resources they had access to, as well as their internalised class positions and dispositions ('embodied capital') – and that this governed their action (Atkinson 2010c).

Atkinson made a rare and commendable attempt to use Bourdieu's full framework to guide his inquiries. His adept understanding of his theoretical tools enabled him to dig deeply into his respondents' accounts to grasp underlying motives and contexts of action not necessarily visible otherwise. As Atkinson (2010c: 419–420) observed, even though his respondents viewed their own choice-making as deliberate, evidence of class effects collected from their accounts revealed that their choice-making was governed by reflexivity on a superficial level. Furthermore,

the author offered accounts of the *multidimensionality and complexity of class advantages and disadvantages*. An example was his interpretation of dominant-class children's work trajectories as compared to their dominated counterparts'. For dominant-class children, the availability of parental economic capital created trajectories that were adjusted to distance from economic necessity. Assured by their parents' provision of a financial cushion, they were free and comfortable in searching for truly suitable jobs or in exploring leisure pursuits before embarking on conventional professional careers. With their advantageous stocks of cultural and social forms of capital, they were confident about their ability to retrain at a high level for a certain position if needed and to secure work at any time. By contrast, dominated-class people followed trajectories that were adjusted to proximity to economic necessity. Pressing financial demands forced them to take whichever jobs they could find (Atkinson 2010b: 18–19, 2010c: 423).

Atkinson's analyses were 'Bourdieusian' also in the sense that, following what appeared to be a Bourdieusian tradition, they assigned much weight to the effects of *internalised dispositions* (known as 'embodied capital' throughout Atkinson's texts). Echoing Bourdieu (1977: 495), Ball *et al.* (2002), and Reay *et al.* (2009) among others, Atkinson (2010c: 425) explained that dominated-class people's 'sense of limits' acted as an 'internalised barrier' that alienated them from higher education and caused their struggles at university. Likewise, Atkinson (2013) examined class habitus in terms of dispositions toward the future. He detected three orientations of temporal perception among workers in the era of the economic downturn and austerity in the UK:

(1) the future as controllable;

(2) the future as uncontrollable; and

(3) the future as reasonably controllable.

These orientations corresponded with people's possession of class- and occupation-based resources. At times, fuller understanding of the phenomena under inquiry might have been compromised by the author's bias toward embodied capital effects. Take, for example, Atkinson's (2012: 749) analysis of the case of a daughter following her father's advice in pursuing care work. The author's claim that the father was able to provide

helpful career guidance to his daughter thanks to his understanding of his daughter's 'gendered disposition for caring' was insightful but might have ignored equally important factors. Based on the evidence that Atkinson (2012: 749) provided, it is reasonable to assume that the father's guidance was also informed by knowledge about the scholastic and labour markets associated with care work that he had acquired from his own higher education and career as a care worker.

Notwithstanding, Atkinson's (2012: 741–749) identification of four types of trajectories – 'social space travel', 'the Icarus effect', 'recovered trajectories', and 'dispersed family fields' – could be seen as a combined result of his sophisticated application of Bourdieu's theory and his own innovative, context-specific improvisations. The typologies were developed using Bourdieu's framework of reproduction to illuminate a range of degrees and directions of mobility among a number of case studies. These typologies provided insights into the activation and the transmission of capital as intertwining processes since they took into account not only what the workers inherited from their parents but also how they dealt with their inherited resources. All this was possible due to the author's access to in-depth data about his respondents' life pathways (from their childhood upbringing to their completed education and class attainment).

Atkinson's (2012) insights about the activation process of forms of capital were largely limited to consideration of embodied capital. It appears throughout his analyses that activation of the long-lasting dispositions rooted in upbringing predominantly governed trajectory. The 'social space travel[lers]' moved up from 'the dominated section' to 'the dominant section' via the education system by virtue of their propensity for getting on, instilled in them through the investment strategies of their aspirational parents (Atkinson 2012: 741–742). 'The Icarus effect' was experienced by those from under-resourced, dominated backgrounds who joined higher education but could not finish their study because they lacked legitimated capital (Atkinson 2012: 742–744). Those who had 'recovered trajectories' deviated from dominant class trajectories initially, but eventually returned to their roots due to a propensity for achievement and self-promotion embedded in their inherited embodied capital (Atkinson 2012: 744–746). Lastly, for people brought up in broken families who followed the 'dispersed family fields' pathway, their mixed-up

dispositions led to unstable trajectories, yet did not prevent them from reaching positions equivalent to their more privileged parents' (Atkinson 2012: 746–749).

3.3. Conclusion

Undoubtedly, Bourdieusian reproduction is an evolving, diversified, and sociologically significant field of research. Social researchers have drawn upon Bourdieu's writings to explore and interpret class inequalities in social achievements from various angles, adopting different conceptual tools and employing a wide range of methodologies. Bourdieusian researchers have not only measured, but also explained, the effects of class-based resources on individual achievements. The Bourdieusian reproduction literature has investigated the perpetuation of class inequalities as mediated by the educational system as well as by the labour market. There has been advancement from partial applications of Bourdieu's framework in earlier studies to increasingly comprehensive and sophisticated theoretical reflections in later works, which reflected a sociological refocusing on class rather than only on culture. Cultural capital, the dominant concept throughout the whole literature, was initially detached from class but is now considered class-embedded. Accompanying this theoretical and empirical progress has been an inspiring methodological development entailing an openness toward different methodological approaches as well as a constructive dialogue between quantitatively and qualitatively oriented researchers. Statistical findings regarding the patterns of the reproduction of class inequalities have helped trigger in-depth qualitative examinations of the associated processes and mechanisms; in turn, qualitative research has offered insights, some of which provoked subsequent quantitative investigations.

In sum, Bourdieusian reproduction research has produced valuable accounts of how class informs and shapes lives. The literature has contributed to class study a fuller understanding of the complex processes through which class conditions influence class outcomes. (It should be noted, however, that in studying the transmission and activation of class-based resources, *activation* processes remained underexplored.) Bourdieusian researchers have been able to challenge and debunk a number of (interlinking) discourses that masked and legitimised class

inequalities, including the *classlessness thesis* (see Lareau 2003, 2011), the *individualisation thesis* (see Atkinson 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2012, 2013), and the *culture-parenting thesis* (see Gillies 2005, Sullivan *et al.* 2013).

Across both the literature on cultural reproduction and the literature on social reproduction, sociological understanding is sometimes compromised by researchers' overemphasis on embodied class inequalities, leading them, in many cases, to overlook the wider significance of the *structural* underpinnings of class inequalities. This pernicious tendency emerged, paradoxically, through researchers' well-meaning attempts to unearth what they considered previously neglected and hidden mechanisms of class reproduction. It helps to acknowledge that, throughout his works, Bourdieu himself devoted a significant amount of space and time to discussing how habitus – that is, the '[structures] incorporated, and thus individuated' (Bourdieu 1990: 31) – powerfully yet indiscernibly mediated the reproduction of structural advantages and disadvantages. Yet, there is an important distinction between identifying something as 'individuated' and inferring that it is 'intrinsic'. The idea, lurking beneath much of the qualitative literature, that working-class people lack the proper embodied dispositions for success risks being (mis)interpreted as endorsing the 'culture of poverty' discourse, which purports that working-class people's failures are inevitable and self-generated. This 'intrinsic' approach can then obscure and legitimise the structural inequalities that work to subjugate dominated classes.

Chapter 4. Methodology

This chapter presents the rationales for and the strengths and limitations of the methodological approaches and methods used in this study. The first part explains the choice of the mixed methods methodology, and how the quantitative and qualitative components are integrated throughout the research process. The second part introduces the survey used and discusses the data manipulation and data analysis throughout the preliminary and revision stages of quantitative analysis, with special foci on the categorisation of variables and the formulation of models for analyses of causal relationships. The third part provides a full and detailed account of the qualitative research process, wherein aspects of data collection and data analysis take place concurrently, bound together by the guidance of Bourdieu's theory and persistent bias control efforts.

4.1. Mixed methods

This study employed a *concurrent mixed methods design*. Class in the Vietnamese society was a novel and complex area of inquiry, which a single-methodology approach would have not facilitated as well as a mixed methods one (see Nudzor 2009: 124, Silva *et al.* 2009: 313). The quantitative component, which explored the association between class and life chances, and the qualitative component, which offered insights into the processes and mechanisms that underpin such association, informed, facilitated, and illuminated each other throughout the research process.

(1) Quantitative findings played an important part in informing the design of qualitative research by supplying information for qualitative sampling and preparation of interview guides. The occupational categories found in the survey informed a desired list of occupations to cover in the interview sample. Besides, a number of interview questions were drafted based on statistically generated hypotheses.

(2) Qualitative findings informed analyses of quantitative data. Enabling exploration of a wider range of class-relevant

determinants of individual achievements than has been identified through the first round of survey analysis, qualitative analysis helped expand and refine the hypotheses for further statistical examinations. The new statistical findings then helped inform the validation or invalidation of a number of qualitative assumptions.

Because the quantitative component and the qualitative component took each other into account, the two final sets of quantitative and qualitative findings were collated and compared in coherent and meaningful ways. Qualitative accounts were used to illustrate, clarify, and help explain quantitative results, while quantitative results helped justify the magnitude of the qualitative evidence, so that the end research outcome was an enhanced and more elaborated understanding of the research phenomenon than would have been achieved by a single set of data (see Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004: 21, Greene 2008: 16).

The concurrent design was born of demands that evolved 'naturally' in the course of research, and also inspired by the Bourdieusian reproduction literature in which qualitative and quantitative studies have been constantly developed for reciprocal hypothesis examinations (see Chapter 3). In this study, the mixed methods approach was possible thanks to the coherent conceptual and methodological guidance provided by Bourdieu's framework. Methodologically speaking, the study mirrored the wider Bourdieusian reproduction literature in which it was embedded.

In response to existing epistemological concerns about the incompatibility between the quantitative-positivist form of inquiry and the qualitative-constructivist form of inquiry in a mixed methods study (see Nudzor 2009, Bergman 2011), it was necessary to recognise the ontological and epistemological stances of this study as verging heavily on realism without being rigidly realist. The study's research question, which assumed the existence of a specific social phenomenon, and its aims of testing a pre-existing theoretical framework using empirical data, were unmistakably underpinned by realist assumptions. Class influences were considered real social phenomena that could be validated through the quantification of collective experiences (quantitative inquiry) and explained through the interpretation of individual experiences (qualitative inquiry). The constructivist nature of knowledge was acknowledged in the study in the sense that efforts to identify and deal with biases arising from the

research process were made, however these construction processes were regarded as secondary in priority to the actual topic under inquiry. Identified biases were seen as a complimentary source of data which did not damage but helped enhance the reliability of the research as a whole (Rapley 2004: 16, Alvesson & Skoldberg 2009: 37). Overall, the end goal was neither an objective truth about a single reality nor a set of constructed meanings of multiple realities, but 'better understanding' about a 'multifaceted reality' (Greene 2008: 20).

4.2. Quantitative methods

The quantitative component of this study aimed to determine whether or not there are significant systematic class influences on life chances and to test hypotheses about the mediating factors of such influences. Data from Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth (SAVY) 2010 were managed and manipulated by the statistical software package SPSS with its add-on Complex Samples. Survey variables were translated into class categories and resource categories through multiple stages of theoretical and empirical validations. Simple descriptive, correlative, and Multinomial Logistic Regression techniques were employed on weighted data to produce nationally representative statistics on the relationships between class, resources, and individual achievements.

The survey

The Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youths 2010 was selected for secondary quantitative analysis. At the commencement of this study in late 2009, SAVY 2010 was the largest nationwide survey of young people in Vietnam. It was the result of collaboration between the Vietnam Ministry of Health and the Vietnam General Statistics Office, with technical support from UNICEF, UNFPA, and WHO. The survey was designed to investigate the risks and protective factors associated with the educational performance, employment, and health of young Vietnamese people (MOH & GSO 2010: 3). The survey questionnaire covered a wide range of topics: family, peers, education, work, knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, aspirations, puberty, dating and relationships, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, injury, illness, physical health, violence, mental health,

and mass media. Data were collected from April 2009 via questionnaires partly administered by trained field interviewers and partly self-completed by young people. The multistaged stratified sample included 10044 people aged 14 to 25 in every city and province in the country. A weighting scheme was included in the dataset to allow statistical analyses to take into account complex sampling design issues and to produce nationally representative data. The researcher obtained permission from an authority in the Vietnam Ministry of Health via email communication for individual use of the SAVY 2010 dataset in early 2011, at a time when it had not been made available for public use.

Among available national surveys, SAVY 2010 provided the most suitable and recent data for this study's research purposes. First, the survey offered occupational data, required for class categorisation, on the young respondents and also on their parents. Second, it provided a breadth of indicators of life conditions and individual activities for the investigation of young people's life and experiences in relation to the support they receive from their parents. The family was emphasised in the survey questionnaire since it is assumed to be the primary source of protective factors for young people (see MOH & GSO 2010: 17). It should be noted that since a majority (N=8693/10044 or 87%) of the survey population (14 to 25 years old) were living with their father or mother or both parents, in a majority of cases a young person's family indicated their parental household.

It is important to note that the section of the survey population most used in the statistical analyses in this study was young people *out of education*, *in work*, and *living with parents*, whose 'life chances' (educational and occupational achievements) and parental economic background can be best measured (see also 4.2 – Measurements – Resource variables). Table 4.1 provides the main demographic information of this key population.

Table 4.1.

Demographic characteristics, young people *out of education*, *in work*, and *living with parents*, 2010, percentage by column		
Demographic characteristics	Weighted percent	Unweighted count
Respondent's completed grade level		
No schooling	0.3	13
Elementary school	10.8	378
Secondary school	46.7	1522
Postsecondary school	28.5	896
Vocational school	8.4	269
College/university and higher	5.3	155
Respondent's occupation (in exact wording and order from SAVY 2010)		
Leaders in different sectors, levels and units	0.4	15
Technical specialists (intermediate/advanced levels)	4.2	127
Workers (elementary level, technical workers doing paperwork)	3.1	96
Personal service workers, social safety and security workers and skilled sales workers	2.5	76
Skilled workers in agriculture, forestry and fishery	0.6	19
Skilled artisans and other related skilled workers	14.3	402
Skilled workers in assembling and running machineries and equipments	3.6	103
Unskilled workers	71.4	2375
Ethnicity		
Majority (Kinh)	80.9	2452
Minority (Other)	19.1	790

Gender		
Female	32.4	1064
Male	67.6	2178
Residence		
Urban	12.2	310
Town	8.9	314
Rural	78.9	2617
Age group		
14 to 17	21.9	752
18 to 21	41.0	1334
22 to 25	37.2	1156
Unweighted base		3242

Notes:

Out of education: Young people who answered 'No' to the survey question: 'Do you currently go to school, college, university, or higher?'

In work: Young people who answered 'Yes' to the survey question: 'In the last seven days, have you worked for income?'

Living with parents: Young people who answered 'Yes' to either of the following two questions: 'Do you live with your biological mother now?' or 'Do you live with your biological father now?'

Unweighted base shown (largest) is for Gender. Bases for other variables vary.

Data representativeness

It has been widely noted by quantitative experts that the use of procedures specialised for survey data analysis is crucial in yielding statistics that are robust and representative of the wider population. For one thing, the complex sample design most often adopted in national surveys contains potential sources of bias (West 2008). Data need to be weighted to adjust for these biases (Hahs-Vaughn 2005: 224). Additionally, the standard procedures in statistical software packages such as the SPSS Base system, which are built upon simple random sample assumptions, are unsuitable for the analysis of data collected through complex sampling (Brogan 1996). Using standard procedures for analysing survey data may result in problems such as underestimated standard errors, narrowed confidence intervals, and Type I-error results that are misleadingly statistically significant (Kneipp & Yarandi 2002: 554). Therefore, analysis of survey data requires a specialised statistical package (Crockett 2011).

The abovementioned specialised procedures were applied in this study to the analysis of SAVY 2010 data to ensure that accurate and

representative statistics can be obtained. SAVY 2010's multistaged, stratified cluster sample incorporated a number of properties that posed threats to the representativeness of its data. These properties included nonresponse, oversampling of young people in the largest cities (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City), and undersampling of young people who were migrants or living in institutional settings such as students' dormitories, re-education centres, and rehabilitation centres (MOH & GSO 2010: 21–22). The SAVY 2010 dataset included a 'weight to population' variable created by the survey statisticians and recommended for use by all data analysts. This weight variable was applied in the current study in all analyses from simple descriptive to multivariate regression. Besides, SPSS Complex Samples – an add-on SPSS module designed to perform unbiased analyses of complex sample survey data (SPSS Inc. 2007) was also employed throughout the statistical analysis.

Measurements

In this study, many of the 200 questions on the SAVY 2010 questionnaire, spanning across personal demographics, schooling, employment, attitudes, perceptions, behaviours, friendship, social factors, and future aspirations, were retrieved for analysis. Survey variables were categorised into major conceptual groupings of class background and of different kinds of parental and individual resources. Categorisation was informed by Bourdieu's theoretical concepts, hypotheses built upon existing literatures, and observations drawn from the qualitative component of the study. It is noted that, even though quite a good range of survey variables were obtained for the study, many could only be considered proxies for the indicators of interest. The survey was designed to provide a broad overview of the areas that the study aimed to investigate precisely. Regarding employment, for instance, no data were available on economic sectors (state or nonstate); these would have been useful.

Table 4.2 demonstrates the distribution of class and resource variables of the key population, which will then be discussed.

Table 4.2.

Class and resource characteristics, young people *out of education*, *in work*, and *living with parents*, 2010, percent by column		
Class and resource characteristics	Weighted percent	Unweighted count
Respondent's class		
Leader-professional class	4.6	142
Nonmanual intermediate class	5.5	172
Manual intermediate class	18.5	524
Working class	71.4	2375
Class background		
Leader-professional class	5.4	184
Nonmanual intermediate class	4.0	112
Manual intermediate class	10.6	295
Working class	79.9	2584
Parental economic resources		
High (9–10 household assets)	9.4	268
Medium (7–8 household assets)	36.1	1119
Low (0–6 household assets)	54.5	1853
Parental education		
High (College/university level or higher)	2.8	77
Medium (Postsecondary level)	22.6	578
Low (Secondary level or lower)	74.6	2128
Parental upbringing		
High (3 advantageous upbringing characteristics)	51.2	1628
Medium (2 advantageous upbringing characteristics)	34.0	1124
Low (0–1 advantageous upbringing characteristics)	14.9	490
Educational level		
High (College/university level or higher)	5.3	155
Medium (Postsecondary level)	36.9	1165
Low (Secondary level or lower)	57.8	1913
Job training		
Having had job training	32.1	981
Not having had job training	67.9	2259
Friend group membership		
Having group of friends	85.2	2777
Not having group of friends	14.8	465
Mass organisation membership		
Having mass organisation membership	43.2	1416
Not having mass organisation membership	56.8	1822

Leisure activities		
High (7–8 activities)	13.0	412
Medium (5–6 activities)	34.0	1076
Low (0–4 activities)	53.0	1754
Unweighted base		3242

Notes:
Out of education: Young people who answered 'No' to the survey question: 'Do you currently go to school, college, university, or higher?'
In work: Young people who answered 'Yes' to the survey question: 'In the last seven days, have you worked for income?'
Living with parents: Young people who answered 'Yes' to either of the following two questions: 'Do you live with your biological mother now?' or 'Do you live with your biological father now?'
Unweighted base shown (largest) is for Parental upbringing. Bases for other variables vary.

Class variables

Following the conventional occupation-based class approach, occupation was adopted as the indicator of class positions in this study. Occupational title has been the principal criterion by which to define social class for more than half a century (since Blau & Duncan 1967). The strengths of occupational data, including their availability, accessibility, reliability, popularity, and universality have been widely noted (see Lambert *et al.* 2007: 2.12, Crompton 2008: 1221–1222, Lambert & Bihagen 2011). A wealth of research, Bourdieusian included, provided evidence of relations between occupational class and a wide range of indicators of life conditions and life chances, such as income and living standard (see Evans 1992, Schooler & Schoenbach 1994), economic security (see Goldthorpe & McKnight 2006), education (see Sullivan 2001, Sullivan *et al.* 2013), social mobility (see Breen & Goldthorpe 2001), parenting (see Kohn 1959, Pearlin & Kohn 1966), individual values (see Gecas & Seff 1989), and even class habitus (see Atkinson 2013). Notwithstanding the recent developments in nonoccupational multidimensional class measurement made by Bourdieusian researchers (see Savage *et al.* 2013), the occupation-based approach has retained its appeal. As Sullivan *et al.* (2013: 5) aptly argued, occupation-based class location is useful because it helps distinguish occupational class as a distinctive source of inequality from other sources. In fact, while Bourdieu was critical about locating classes based on occupational titles, his research findings were largely supportive of it. For example, it can be detected from Bourdieu's ([1979] 2009) results of the social spaces that the cultural and social dimensions of

the conditions of existence corresponded highly with the occupational categories being employed.

SAVY 2010's occupational data of young respondents, their fathers and their mothers were collected via the young respondents' answers to the following three questions: 'What is your father's current main occupation? (If deceased: What was your father's occupation before he died?); 'What is your mother's current main occupation? (If deceased: What was your mother's occupation before she died?)'; and 'What is your main occupation in the past seven days?'. Reported field-level occupational information was coded into eight occupational groupings by SAVY 2010 surveyors and statisticians, following a schema denoting industries and occupational titles. For this study, these occupational groupings were categorised into class categories. A young person was located into a certain class category based on his/her recorded occupational grouping, and the same practice applied to his/her father and mother.

SAVY 2010's occupational groupings and orderings were adapted from the Vietnam Occupational Standard Classification (VOSC) employed in yearly national labour force surveys and censuses (see Central Population and Housing Census Steering Committee 2010, MPI & GSO 2011). The VSCO was devised based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations 1988 (ISCO-88) to be able to reflect the country's contemporary employment relations and labour market. ISCO-88 is known as being widely adaptable to different theoretical and practical considerations (see Bergman & Joye 2001), including the Goldthorpe class schema (see Ganzaboom *et al.* 1989, Ganzaboom & Treiman 2003). Thus, in this study, the eight SAVY 2010 occupational groupings were categorised into four class categories, which did not violate their *original order* (and can be considered a variant of the Goldthorpe class schema): Leader-professional class, Nonmanual intermediate class, Manual intermediate class, and Working class (see Box 4.1).

Box 4.1 Occupational categories and class categories

Occupational categories (in exact wording and order from SAVY 2010)	**Class categories**
1. Leaders in different sectors, levels and units	Leader-professional class
2. Technical specialists (intermediate/ advanced levels) in various fields	
3. Workers (elementary level, technical workers doing paperwork) in various fields	Nonmanual intermediate class
4. Personal service workers, social safety and security workers and skilled sales workers	
5. Skilled workers in agriculture, forestry and fishery	Manual intermediate class
6. Skilled artisans and other related skilled workers	
7. Skilled workers in assembling and running machineries and equipments	
8. Unskilled workers	Working class

Parental class – or class background – was identified as the class of a sole parent or, when both parents were available, whichever class was the higher of the father's and mother's. According to calculations from quantitative data, homogeneous class couples – wherein father and mother share the same class – accounted for 81% of all couples. In a cross-class couple, it was more commonly the father who had the higher class position. In 15% of cases, the husband had a higher class position than his wife, compared to only 4% of cases where the wife had a higher class position than her husband. This means that, in a majority of cases, class background was the father's class.

Resource variables

In order to examine the impact of family advantages and disadvantages on young people's life achievements, this study employed a range of variables in the SAVY 2010 dataset, which can be thought of in terms of different types of resources. The categorisation of survey variables into conceptual groupings was continuously revised and refined throughout the research process, under the guidance of Bourdieu's theory, previous literatures, survey documents, and qualitative findings. The triangulation of different sources of information was employed to ensure that categorisation was helpful and creative, and at the same time valid and reliable. Ongoing theoretical reflections were crucial for achieving conceptual consistency of categorisation, as was cross-referencing with past empirical operationalisations of Bourdieu's theoretical concepts for securing well-validated indicators (such as educational level as institutionalised cultural capital), and survey documents for clarifying the ambiguities of some of the survey questions and response categories. In particular, the insights offered by qualitative findings prompted revised categorisation. Interview accounts illuminated a number of themes overlooked at the preliminary stage of categorisation. Interview accounts also helped to refine the set of hypotheses for quantitative analysis and their attendant categories.

The following sections present the main indicators selected and computed for analysis, and the theoretical, methodological, and empirical rationales for their selection and computation.

<u>Parental economic resources</u>

Across research on Vietnam, possession of consumer goods in general and household durable assets in particular has been routinely used to reflect living standards (see Nguyen VTi 1993, Nguyen VTh 1995, Truit 2008, Tran TK & Nguyen ND 2012, Hansen & Le DT 2013, Tran BP *et al.* 2013). In this study, parental economic resources were indicated by whether the family (in which a young survey respondent lives with a parent or parents) owned the following household durable assets: *bicycle/electric bicycle, motorbike, cell phone, telephone, TV, video cassette/ VCD/DVD player, computer, Internet, electric fan,* and *refrigerator*. Most of these household assets have been included in survey-based measurements of living standards in Vietnam in the more recent studies among those aforementioned.

As reported in Table 4.3, 80% to approximately 100% of parental households owned six household durable assets (*TV, electric fan, bicycle, motorbike, video cassette/VCD/DVD player, cellphone*). This number of assets was therefore chosen as the cut-off point into the category of *low parental economic resources*. Under the same rationale, a household that owned seven to eight assets was considered as having *medium parental economic resources*, and one with nine to ten assets as having *high parental economic resources*.

Table 4.3.

Percentages of parental household assets, young people *living with parents*, 2010	
Household assets	Weighted percent
TV	96
Electric fan	94
Bicycle	84
Motorbike	84
Video/DVD	82
Cellphone	81
Telephone	63
Refrigerator	38
Computer	22
Internet	11
Unweighted base (largest)	8693
Notes: *Living with parents*: Young people who answered 'Yes' to either of the following two questions: 'Do you live with your biological mother now?' or 'Do you live with your biological father now?'	

Three household assets listed on the survey have been left out of this study's measurement of parental economic resources. *Car* was more likely to represent a means of livelihood than a household asset: car ownership among households of workers skilled in assembling and running machinery and equipment was much higher than among other types of households. *Radio* was an outdated indicator of living standards: it has been excluded from Vietnam Household Living Standard Surveys since 2004. *Boat* was region-specific: most boat-owning households lived in the Mekong River Delta.

Parental cultural resources

Parental cultural resources were represented by whichever was the higher of the father's or the mother's education level. Parental education was used by Bourdieu ([1979] 2009, 1986) to signify parental cultural capital, or as a proxy for the accumulation of cultural capital within the family, which, according to Bourdieu (1986), was an essential condition for all subsequent acquisition of every kind of useful cultural capital. Across the Bourdieusian literature, parental education has generally been found to be a significant predictor of children's educational outcomes (see, for example, Robinson & Garnier 1985, Sullivan 2001).

High parental cultural resources was specified at the *college/university and higher* levels, *medium parental cultural resources* at *postsecondary* school and *primary/secondary vocational* school levels, and *low parental cultural resources* at *no schooling* and the compulsory, state-subsidised *elementary and secondary* levels (see Box I.2).

Parental upbringing

Parental upbringing was reflected through the following characteristics of the family environments when young survey respondents were twelve to 18 years old: *family members helped one another in difficult times*; *family members knew close friends of other members*; and *in my family, I usually was asked for my opinions and they were taken seriously*.

The categorisation of this variable was informed by Bourdieusian research on childrearing practices, especially the 'concerted cultivation' quantitative literature (see 3.1 – Cultural class process), and by this study's qualitative findings. Some of the components of the variable reflected aspects of advantageous childrearing practices as observed in qualitative research: a monitoring-guidance strategy (*family members knew close friends of other members*), provision of help and support (*family members helped one another in difficult times*), and emphasis on individuality (*in my family, I usually was asked for my opinions and they were taken seriously*) (see Chapters 5–7). A young survey res-pondent who agreed to all three of these characteristics was considered as having received a *high-level parental upbringing*, while *medium-level parental upbringing* corresponded to agreement with two characteristics, and *low-level parental upbringing* with one or no characteristics. It was assumed

that parental upbringing at the high level signalled an environment in which parents provided help and support for their children while closely monitoring them and valuing their individuality, and that this may have had a positive impact on the children's achievements.

Educational level

Education, or *institutionalised individual cultural resources*, was indicated, following Bourdieu's (1979] 2009, 1986) operationalisation, by young survey respondents' highest attained educational level before terminating school. Similarly to the parental cultural resources category (see above), three academic levels – *high, medium*, and *low* – respectively corresponded with *college/university and higher* level, *postsecondary* or *vocational* level, and *secondary school and below* (see Box I.2).

Job training

Job training was identified by whether or not young survey respondents had ever received formal training for a job. This variable acted as a proxy for young survey respondents' *institutionalised cultural resources*, provided that they received qualifications from formal training.

Friend group membership and mass organisation membership

Friend group membership (whether young survey respondents have a group of friends with whom to frequently keep company) and mass organisation membership were selected to function only as proxies for young survey respondents' possession of *individual social resources*. An ideal indicator would have been able to better capture the exclusivity and potentiality of yielding the profits of social capital as defined by Bourdieu (1986).

By Vietnamese mass organisations, the survey referred to social-political organisations led by the Vietnamese Communist Party, such as the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, the Vietnamese Women's Association, the Vietnam Farmers Association, the Vietnamese Confederation of Labour, and others, which recruit large proportions of the national population. According to official 2009 statistics, about 60 million out of a population of 85 million Vietnamese had membership in mass organisations (London 2009: 39). Membership in the non-mass organisation Communist Party, whose members only account for 3–4% of the national population, can be

more appropriately thought of in terms of capital (see Kim 2004), but the SAVY 2010 does not include any information on party membership.

Leisure activities

'Leisure activities' comprised *reading books, listening to music, watching TV, going out for movie/music, playing sport, using Internet, involvement in social activities, participating in sport/entertainment clubs*. (*Going to recreation centres* was excluded for its exclusive urban accessibility). The number of activities (four) enjoyed by a majority of the surveyed population was chosen as the cut-off point for basic engagement in leisure activities. Someone with *low-level leisure activities* expressed interest in zero to four activities, *medium-level leisure activities* in five to six activities, and *high-level leisure activities* in seven to eight activities.

Table 4.4.

Percentages of favourite leisure activities, all young people, 2010	
Favourite leisure activities	Weighted percent
Watching TV	97
Listening to music	91
Reading books	77
Playing sport	61
Using Internet	45
Involvement in social activities	44
Going out for movie/music	25
Participating in sport/entertainment clubs	20
Unweighted base (largest)	10044

This variable served as a proxy for the level of *individual cultural and social resources*. Its categorisation was informed by Bourdieusian research (see 3.1 – Cultural agent) and this study's qualitative findings (see 7.2 and 7.3). To take and express interest in leisure activities such as 'reading books', 'listening to music', 'using Internet' and 'playing sports' required preexisting cultural knowledge, interests, and skills, as well as the availability of financial means and time free from economic necessity (see Bourdieu 1986). Reading has been noted as a particularly important indicator of cultural resources (see de Graaf 1988, de Graaf *et al.* 2000, Sullivan 2001, Wang *et al.* 2006, Nilan 2008), and more recently, so has

Internet use (see Emmison & Frow 1998, DiMaggio & Hargittai 2001, Hargittai 2002, Mattei 2010). Interest in activities that involve going out and meeting and doing things with other people – *going out for movie/music, playing sports, involvement in social activities, participating in sport/entertainment clubs* – was assumed to embody preexisting cultural and social resources as well as to potentially generate these resources.

Regrettably, reading interest as measured in this study might not illuminate the notion of cultural resources as aptly as would data on the amount of time devoted to reading or the types of books consumed, as were measured in many of the reviewed Bourdieusian studies. A similar reservation was cast over the other components of the variable.

Quantitative analysis

In order to examine the extent to which class background influences life chances and the mediating factors of such influence, this study applied Multinomial Logistic Regression (MNL). This technique has gained popular use in sociological research for analyses of mobility tables that incorporate explanatory variables of the intergenerational mobility process (see Dessens et al. 2003, DiPrete 1990, Hendrickx & Ganzeboom 1998, Logan 1983, Wu & Treiman 2007). MNL was chosen because it suited the characteristics of the variables at hand. As an extension of binary logistic regression, MNL requires that the dependent variable be categorical of more than two values and that, furthermore, the independent variables be categorical and/or continuous, which were satisfied by the variables in the current analyses. In addition, MNL was chosen because it does not require strict assumptions such as those regarding normality, linearity, and homogeneity of variance for the independent variables (see Pollet & Nettle 2007: 1799, Starkweather & Moske 2011).

Multinomial Logistic Regression assesses the explanatory power of a given independent variable while controlling for other variables. To examine hypotheses about the relative influences of a range of demographic, class, parental resource, and individual resource variables on respondents' achievements, these independent variables were entered into the MNL models in blocks so that the changes in the coefficients of each of them could be observed and their relative influence inferred.

This thesis selectively reported MNL results of the comparative odds of attaining the most rewarding life chance outcomes (college/university or higher education; leader-professional class) as opposed to the least rewarding (secondary or lower education; working class) for young people of different class, demographic, and resource categories. Odds ratios provided information about the direction and magnitude of the comparative chances; such information were reported and interpreted with caution.

The analyses were conducted on the key population of young people *out of education*, *in work*, and *living with parents* (see The survey).

The following preparations for analyses were conducted:

(1) Non-class demographic variables – *gender, residence, age*, and *ethnicity* were retrieved from the survey in order to be examined together with the class background variable so that the power of class background versus non-class-ascribed characteristics in influencing individual achievements could be evaluated. The selection of these non-class demographic variables was straightforward but also informed by literatures on contemporary Vietnam (see, for example, studies on urban–rural inequality by Vu NQ 2004, Minot *et al.* 2006, Cao & Akita 2008, Le & Booth 2010; and on gender inequality by Long *et al.* 2000, Knodel *et al.* 2004, Liu 2004, Teerawichitchainan *et al.* 2008, Hoang BT 2009, Jones & Tran 2012, Vu MT 2013).

(2) For meaningful analyses, independent variables derived directly from the survey without being reconstructed were also recoded by excluding the categories: *don't know*, *no response*, and *missing values* (the percentages of which did not exceed 0.2% in any case).

(3) The last categories of the dependent variables – *low* [educational level] and *working class* – were deliberately specified as the reference categories.

Box 4.2 and Box 4.3 present the hypotheses and accompanying MNL models for the first analysis of respondents' educational achievement, and those for the second analysis of respondents' class attainment respectively.

Box 4.2. Multinomial Logistic Regression models of young people's educational achievement, 2010

Hypotheses	**Models**	**Variables**	**Categories** (reference underlined)
	Depend -ent	Respondent's Education	1. High; 2. Medium; 3. Low
Class background influences educational achievement.	Model 1	Class Background	1. Leader-professional class; 2. Nonmanual intermediate class; 3. Manual intermediate class; 4. Working class
Demographic characteristics including class background influence educational achievement.	Model 2 +	Ethnicity	1. Kinh; 2. Other
		Gender	1. Female; 2. Male
		Residence	1. Urban; 2. Town; 3. Rural
Class background influences educational achievement indirectly through parental resources: parental economic resources.	Model 3 +	Parental Economic Resources	1. High; 2. Medium; 3. Low
Class background influences educational achievement indirectly through parental resources: parental cultural resources.	Model 4 +	Parental Cultural Resources	1. High; 2. Medium; 3. Low
Class background influences educational achievement indirectly through parental resources: parental upbringing.	Model 5 +	Parental Upbringing	1. High; 2. Medium; 3. Low

Box 4.3. Multinomial Logistic Regression models of young people's class attainment, 2010

Hypotheses	Models	Variables	Categories (reference underlined)
	Dependent	Respondent's Class	1. Leader-professional class; 2. Nonmanual intermediate class; 3. Manual intermediate class; 4. Working class
Class background influences class attainment.	Model 1	Class Background	1. Leader-professional class; 2. Nonmanual intermediate class; 3. Manual intermediate class; 4. Working class
Demographic characteristics including class background influence class attainment.	Model 2 +	Ethnicity	1. Kinh; 2. Other
		Gender	1. Female; 2. Male
		Residence	1. Urban; 2. Town; 3. Rural
		Age	1. 14–17; 2. 18–21; 3. 22–25
Class background influences class attainment indirectly through educational achievement.	Model 3 +	Educational Level	1. High; 2. Medium; 3. Low
		Job Training	1. Yes; 2. No
Class background influences class attainment indirectly through parental resources.	Model 4 +	Parental Economic Resources	1. High; 2. Medium; 3. Low
		Parental Cultural Resources	1. High; 2. Medium; 3. Low
		Parental Upbringing	1. High; 2. Medium; 3. Low
Class background influences class attainment indirectly through individual resources.	Model 5 +	Friend Group Membership	1. Yes; 2. No
		Mass Organisation Membership	1. Yes; 2. No
		Leisure Activities	1. High; 2. Medium; 3. Low

Through reporting the links between individual achievements and a range of parental and individual resources, Multinomial Logistic Regression results helped unpack the mechanisms of how class background influences life chances. A more in-depth account of such mechanisms was offered by qualitative research.

4.3. Qualitative methods

The qualitative component of this study aimed to explore in an in-depth manner the processes and mechanisms through which class influences life chances in contemporary Vietnamese society. Thirty-nine semi-structured interviews were carried out in two phases with people in their 20s and 30s, and their parents, who lived in the urban and rural areas of the Red River Delta region. The interviews concerned the young people's lives during childhood and early adulthood, with a focus on their family upbringing, schooling, and work. Sampling, recruitment of research participants, preparation for and conducting of data collection, and data analysis took place concurrently and facilitated one another in a theoretically informed and reflexive approach. Qualitative observations yielded in-depth insights into a number of areas that quantitative analyses did not cover or merely touch upon. Throughout the qualitative data collection and analysis, questions and hypotheses informed by Bourdieu's framework enabled the researcher to closely scrutinise the research participants' life experiences within the limited timeframe of fieldwork, and to learn something meaningful from the 60-hour volume of rich data. But at the same time, the preexisting theoretical agenda was also one of the main sources of bias, which was tackled by means of reflexive efforts.

Sampling

Young men and women and their parents of different classes and demographic characteristics were interviewed. The Red River Delta region was chosen as the fieldwork site for its good resemblance to the wider population in terms of some of the key demographic characteristics, as well as its ethnic homogeneity, according to the results of analysis of SAVY 2010 data that are displayed in Table 4.5. The Red River Delta was among the Vietnamese regions with a better-educated young population compared to the nationwide average (another is the North Central Coast), as also a better-skilled young employed population (another is the South East). Urban, town, and rural residents of five among eleven cities and provinces in the region (Hanoi (the capital), Hai Phong, Vinh Phuc, Bac Ninh, and Hung Yen) participated in the research.

Table 4.5.

Demographic characteristics by region, total population, 2010									
	Regions								
	Vietnam	Red River Delta	North East	North West	North Central Coast	South Central Coast	Central Highland	South East	Mekong River Delta
Demographic charac-teristics	Weighted percent[1]								
Ethnicity									
Kinh	84	100	51	13	91	96	72	93	92
Other	16	0	49	87	9	4	28	7	8
Gender									
Male	51	50	49	51	50	50	51	54	51
Female	49	50	51	49	50	50	49	46	49
Residence									
Urban	15	16	9	5	3	22	8	40	6
Town	10	6	9	6	10	9	20	8	14
Rural	75	78	82	89	87	69	72	52	80
Father's class									
Leader-professional class	7	7	6	5	7	11	7	6	5
Nonmanual intermediate class	4	5	3	2	2	6	1	6	4
Manual intermediate class	12	19	10	6	7	15	6	20	6
Working class	77	70	80	87	84	68	86	68	85

Respondent's education									
High	5	8	5	4	7	5	2	5	3
Medium	35	41	38	28	46	40	33	35	26
Low	60	51	56	68	47	55	65	60	71
Respondent's class									
Leader-professional class	4	4	4	3	3	7	1	8	3
Nonmanual intermediate class	5	5	4	2	2	6	2	8	5
Manual intermediate class	12	20	7	3	4	16	6	23	11
Working class	79	71	85	93	91	72	91	61	81
Mean age	18.44	18.3	18.67	18.73	18.08	18.18	18.02	18.74	18.65
Unweighted bases[2]	10044	1881	1544	639	1123	879	722	1291	1965

Notes:
[1]Except for mean age
[2]Unweighted bases shown are for Gender. Bases for other variables vary.

The full sample consisted of 39 respondents in 16 families (13 in which both parent(s) and child(ren) were interviewed, 3 in which only a parent or a child was interviewed), including 16 young people and 23 parents located differentially across the class structure. The full sample was balanced in non-class characteristics and purposively biased toward solidly leader-professional families and high-achieving young people to suit the research purpose of investigating the reproduction of class advantages. Located at the end of this section, Box 4.4 presents the main demographic characteristics of all interviewees and Table 4.6 presents a numerical summary of the achieved qualitative sample.

Sampling was largely purposive and theoretically informed. About the first dozen of interviewees were chosen based on a clear-cut set of desirable demographic characteristics. From then on toward the end of the process the selection of interviewees was guided by the quests for, alternately, in-depth data on the focused themes, theoretical generalisability, and demographic balance.

The first constant sampling criterion was the young interviewee's age. Only those in their 20s and the first half of their 30s (those who were born

between 1976 and 1989) were recruited, to ensure that they represented the first post-reform generation and that they largely finished their education and/or had relatively stable class positions at the time of interview. The full sample of young people had an age range of 22 to 36 and an average age of 27.

The second constant criterion was parental occupation, identified as the father's or mother's main occupation when the child was growing up. Here, the key period of young people's growing-up was assumed to last between their transition to postsecondary education which normally took place at 15 years of age and their labour market entry, during which period, supposedly, their most important educational and occupational decisions and investments were made. The aim of the parental occupation criterion was to ensure that a wide range of occupational class backgrounds was covered in the sample. There was nevertheless a purposive oversampling of leader-professional parents for a desired in-depth exploration of the transmission of class advantages.

The third constant set of sampling criteria was young people' educational and occupational achievements. A wide range of educational levels and occupational class positions among the young sample was aimed for. At the same time, though, there was a purposive oversampling of high-achieving young people for desired analyses of successful transmission and activation of resources.

A few key points must be noted about classifications in qualitative research. Because quantitative findings provided occupational information for qualitative sampling, the occupational titles of interviewees in the qualitative sample were all categorisable in terms of SAVY 2010 occupational groupings and quantitative class categories, which helped ensure consistency in classification across the research. The same set of class categories was used for qualitative interviewees as for survey respondents. For example, a business enterprise owner and a local leader were classified as leaders, a university lecturer and a media producer as professionals, a customer service employee at bank as a nonmanual intermediate worker, a truck driver as a manual intermediate worker, and a textile-waste trader and an own-account fruit seller as unskilled workers.

In qualitative analysis, due to the characteristics of the procured sample and for analytical purposes, distinctions were often made between *higher-class families* where at least one parent was in the leader-professional class and *lower-class families* where at least one parent was in the working class, as are contrasts between *solidly leader-professional families* where both parents were in the leader-professional class and the rest of the population (family class or class background being identified, as for quantitative analysis, as the higher of the father's or mother's class or as the sole parent's class). Further distinctions were sometimes made between *higher-class workers* (leader-professional workers, and nonmanual intermediate workers with prospects of moving up to the leader-professional class) and *lower-class workers* (intermediate-class workers without upward mobility prospects, and unskilled workers).

In the oversampling of the advantaged and achieved, of 16 young interviewees in the full sample 7 came from disadvantaged families, while 9 came from advantaged families, with 6 of the latter group born and raised in solidly leader-professional families. Of the 16 young people, 10 had formal college/university degrees and 9 were working in leader-professional positions. These young high achievers were recruited from a range of class backgrounds, but predominantly from leader-professional families. All 6 young people from leader-professional families were college/university graduates and occupying posts in the leader-professional class themselves.

Regarding non-class criteria, efforts to maintain balances in terms of gender and geographic location were made. The young sample included 7 females and 9 males. Geographically, 5 came from urban areas, 5 from towns (low-rank urban or suburban areas), and 6 from rural areas. Efforts were made to include both state and nonstate workers in the sample, but without any stringent target. The final parental sample had8 state employees, and the young sample had 4. Because the Red River Delta was an ethnically and religiously homogeneous region, the inclusion of one ethnic-minority interviewee and two religious interviewees in the sample were purely coincidental.

Besides the abovementioned demographic guidelines, theoretical considerations were essential to further ensure the collection of data that could reflect both the diversity and the depth of experience. Sampling and

data analysis were conducted iteratively and interactively (see Strauss & Corbin 1990: 201–216, Mason 2005: 137–138). The further the data collection progressed, the more sampling was informed by preliminary findings from completed interviews. Emerging themes propelled the search for confirming cases that potentially could facilitate in-depth analyses of the themes. At the same time, existing evidence prompted the search for disconfirming cases, which, by offering contradictory evidence, allowed both critical evaluation of the existing assumptions and emergence of new themes.

The initial decision to stop sampling was not made based on theoretical saturation, as was generally considered ideal for theoretical sampling (see Ambert *et al.* 1995, Darlington & Scott 2002: 53–54), but was based on achieving a relatively satisfactory blend of demographic balance and 'theoretical sensibility' (a term used by Willis & Trondman 2002: 15). Interviewing was usually considered finished as soon as preliminary analyses suggested that a relatively broad range and some depth of the experience of social mobility of different classes had been obtained. However, subsequent in-depth analyses prompted interviews with two additional disadvantaged families, so that more reliable assumptions about the experience of disadvantaged young people could be made.

The following evaluations of the final sample can be put forward. The normality of cases in the full sample (no extremely wealthy or destitute families, no foreign-educated or unschooled young respondents, no cases of extreme class mobility, etc.) means that stark contrasts were limited, but that biases resulting from extreme cases located at each end of the class spectrum were avoided (see Hartnett 2011). Besides, confirmation-oriented sampling yielded some degree of theoretical generalisation among selected sections of the qualitative sample, such as the young urban leaders and professionals from advantageous backgrounds (see 7.3) and the low-educated, unskilled eldest daughters from working-class families (see the situations of Ly, Ha and Mrs. Lam's eldest daughter in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6).

A relatively diverse collection of non-extreme cases and purposive oversampling of the advantaged and achieved groups yielded findings that were revealing of systematic patterns, even though were not similarly powerfully generalisable across all sections of the sample population. The

presence of a good range of both individual and family class standings in the full sample signified a breadth of perspectives on the research themes, which enabled analyses of class differentials. The presence of a proportionately large number of solidly leader-professional families and young high achievers enabled in-depth insights into class reproduction, especially in the society's upper echelons (see Chapter 7). In line with the study's aims, data from the interviews better facilitated analyses of the reproductive mechanisms of class advantage than those of class disadvantage or class mobility.

Box 4.4. Demographic characteristics of interviewees

Pseudonym	Sex	Age range	Family residence	Education	Family class	Current class
Mr. Tam	M	>55	**Rural**	Postsecondary	**Lower-class**	MI
Mrs. Quyen	F	>55		No schooling		WC
Thanh	**M**	**>25**		**Vocational**		**MI**
Mr. Kiet	M	<55	**Urban**	University	**Higher-class**	LP
Mrs. Chi	F	<55		University		LP
Thu	**F**	**<25**		**University**		**LP**
Dung	**M**	**<25**		**University**		**LP (expected)**
Mrs. Na	F	>55	**Urban**	Vocational	**Higher-class**	LP
Hiep	**M**	**>25**		**University**		**LP**
Mrs. Quynh	F	>55	**Town**	Secondary	**Lower-class**	WC
Ly	**F**	**>25**		**Elementary**		**WC**
Mr. Vung	M	<55	**Town**	Secondary	**Higher-class**	WC
Mrs. Yen	F	<55		Postsecondary		LP
Long	**M**	**<25**		**University**		**NI (expected)**
Mr. Lap	M	<55	**Town**	Vocational	**Higher-class**	LP
Hoa	**F**	**<25**		**College**		**LP (first entry: NI)**
Mr. Thiem	M	<55	**Rural**	Secondary	**Lower-class**	MI
Mrs. Giao	F	<55		Secondary		WC
Tuan	**M**	**>25**		**Postsecondary**		**WC**
Khanh	**M**	**<25**		**Vocational**		**NI**
Mr. Giang	M	<55	**Rural**	University	**Higher-class**	LP
Manh	**M**	**<25**		**Master**		**LP (first entry: NI)**

Mr. Luc	M	>55	**Town**	University	**Higher-class**	LP
Mrs. Vui	F	<55		University		LP
Duc	**M**	**>25**		**University**		**LP**
Mrs. Mai	F	<55	**Urban**	Vocational	**Higher-class**	LP
Tien	**F**	**>25**		**University**		**LP**
Mr. Quoc	M	<55	**Rural**	Secondary	**Lower-class**	MI
Mrs. Lam	F	>55		Secondary		WC
Dao	**F**	**<25**		**College**		**NI**
Mr. Phuc	M	>55	**Urban**	University	**Higher-class**	LP
Mrs. Huong	F	>55		Ph.D.		LP
Linh	**F**	**>25**		**Ph.D.**		**LP**
Mr. Bien	M	>55	**Town**	Secondary	**Lower-class**	NI
Mrs. Phuong	F	>55		Secondary		WC
Son	**M**	**>25**		**Secondary**		**MI**
Mr. Dong	M	>55	Town	Postsecondary	Higher-class	LP
Mrs. Luyen	F	<55	Rural	Elementary	Lower-class	WC
Ha	**F**	**<25**	**Rural**	**Elementary**	**Lower-class**	**WC**

Notes:

- LP: Leader-professional class; NI: Nonmanual intermediate class; MI: Manual intermediate class; WC: Working class
- Young people's names are presented in bold and their pseudonyms without titles; if their class at labour market entry differs from their current class, it is given in brackets.
- Young people's expected class is based on information about their recent job offers and career plans.
- Parents' pseudonyms are presented with titles (Mr./Mrs.) (all cases in qualitative research are formal marriages).
- Three families in which only one parent or a young person is interviewed are listed at the bottom of the table.

Table 4.6.

Summary of achieved qualitative sample	
Demographic characteristics	**Count**
Parent's class	
Leader-professional class	12
Nonmanual/Manual intermediate class	4
Working class	7
Parent's education	
High (college/university)	7
Medium (postsecondary/vocational)	6
Low (secondary level and below)	10
Young people's class entry	
Leader-professional class	7
Nonmanual/Manual intermediate class	6
Working class	3
Young people's current class	
Leader-professional class	9
Nonmanual/Manual intermediate class	4
Working class	3
Young people's education	
High (college/university)	10
Medium (postsecondary/vocational)	3
Low (secondary level and below)	3
Young people's family-class background	
Higher class	9
Solidly leader-professional	6
Lower class	7
Young people's gender	
Male	9
Female	7
Young people's original residence	
Urban	5
Town	5
Rural	6
Young people's age	
<= 25	8
> 25	8

Recruitment

A range of recruitment methods was employed. The most frequently used method relied on *known networks*. Its first step was to identify prospective agents within the researcher's own social circle who were able to provide links to desired subjects, the selection criteria for whom were

undemanding at the preliminary stage. Typically, the researcher's relatives, friends, or acquaintances nominated and made introductions to their acquaintances, colleagues, or people in their neighbourhood – those they knew but were not close to – as prospective participants in the research. The potential participants, selected by the researcher, were then asked directly by phone or email for their permission to be interviewed. Consenting interviewees were also expected to introduce the researcher to other members of their families, a 'favour' that was asked of them upfront. In a majority of cases, the interview proceeded only if at least one interview with a parent and one with a child within the same family had been secured. About two-thirds of the resulting interviewees in this study were people (and their family members) from the networks of the researcher's acquaintances.

The strengths of the known networks method lied in the balance of familiarity and distance between the researcher and the research participants. Respondents were sought within familiar networks to ensure that some prior knowledge about them could easily be obtained and that decisions about their suitability for the research could accurately be made before further steps were taken. A certain level of familiarity also facilitated the establishment of mutual trust between the interviewees and interviewer, which encouraged the construction of in-depth accounts. The most extended interviews (lasting three to four hours compared to the average of ninety minutes) were carried out with those recruited via known networks. At the same time, people who were suspected to be in relatively intimate relationships with mediating agents were not selected to participate in the research so that a consistent degree of distance between the interviewer and interviewees was maintained. Biases caused by presumptions, which could have permeated the interviews, were in most cases minimal.

Using existing research participants to gain access to their family members was particularly fruitful and rewarding. Many people who would have been difficult to approach or whom known agents struggled to locate were successfully recruited with the help of their family members. More than that, as exemplified by the following case, the researcher received help from existing participants not only in securing interviews with their family members, but also in developing a better understanding of them

and their lives. Khanh, the youngest son in a rural family, was introduced to the researcher by a student of the researcher's mother. After his own interview, Khanh arranged a date for the researcher to stay at his parental home to conduct interviews with his parents and his older brother and also to visit the neighbourhood under his guidance and join in his family's activities for a day (hanging around in the afternoon with TV and snacks, followed by dinner). On how to develop bonds with his family members, Khanh gave the following advice: '*You can freely ask questions. People in the countryside are very friendly. Just say that you're studying the life of people in the countryside. Don't say complicated things, they won't understand.*' On two other occasions, the researcher was also invited to stay with families for a day and join in family meals.

Conversely, the complex interactions between researcher, mediating agents, research participants, and their family members posed challenges to bias control and confidentiality. Presumptions about the interviewees, formed due to agents' comments about them, were not always successfully eliminated. In one interview, for example, the researcher overaccentuated an interviewee's rural origin, having heard from his introducer that the young man's career advancement has been limited by his 'provinciality'. Efforts were also made to avoid cross-disclosure of interview content between family members. When interviewees were adamant to know what their family members had said and were refused this information, no matter how subtle the refutation was it might result in feelings of frustration over perceptions of unreciprocated favours and being exploited, which probably weakened the rapport that had been achieved between participant and interviewer. Compromises were made to restrengthen such rapport and at the same time to strictly ensure confidentiality of information through delays, digressions and the researcher's (tactical) personal revelations.

Other recruitment channels that were employed as the interview process progressed and sampling criteria became more complex and specific were *gatekeeper*, *word-of-mouth snowball* and *street-based* methods. These methods were most extensively used during the fieldwork in Tho Tang – a trading town in Vinh Phuc province where the researcher had had no prior contact with the locals. The site was selected for the particular purpose of recruiting non-urban local leaders and wealthy enterprise owners, who

were among the desired parental subjects but to whom none of the known agents were able to provide connections. An introduction letter was obtained from the researcher's former employer at the Museum of Anthropology (Hanoi National University), which helped secure an appointment with the town's cultural cadre, Mr. Xanh, who agreed to act as a gatekeeper. Through the help of Mr. Xanh, interview appointments were successfully arranged with a local leader and his daughter, and another local leader and her husband and son.

It was soon realised that the gatekeeper opened certain doors but at the same time denied access to others, at which point alternative recruitment methods were considered. It was understandable that, as an authority figure responsible for promoting the cultural achievements of his commune, Mr. Xanh strictly nominated families of academically successful children to participate in the research. Following an introduction from an acquaintance of one of the two interviewed local leaders in Tho Tang, an interview with a father who owned a large trading company but whose son did not have higher education was secured. Lastly, interviewees were also recruited on the spot. In Tho Tang, a working-class mother whom the researcher met on a visit to her tea kiosk gave permission to be interviewed and also persuadesd her daughter to follow suit.

Interview guides

Two interview guides, one for interviews with parents and the other for interviews with young people, were drafted and revised through several stages during the research process. Informed by theory, the relevant literatures, and quantitative results, the aim of the interview guides was to facilitate the investigation of the key themes and hypotheses in relation to the research topic, critical engagement with previous research, and integration with the study's quantitative findings.

Pilot interviews (not counted toward the final sample) played an important role in guiding revisions of the content and style of the draft guides. One of the valuable comments, given by one of the pilot interviewees, was that the interview made her less aware of what she achieved than of what she failed to achieve. It seemed that the formulation of the prompting question, 'why not…', had inadvertently evoked feelings of underachievement or failure. Such intrusive and demanding 'why'

interrogation was then replaced with its equally explanation-prompting but less pressuring 'how' counterpart (see Griller 1996: 9–10, Becker 1998: 58–59 as cited in Darlington & Scott 2002: 58, Fries 2009: 343–344).

Preliminary analyses of completed interviews also helped identify issues with the wording and contextual appropriateness of some of the questions. For example, in the first few interviews, most parents, being asked about how parenting responsibilities were 'allocated' between themselves and their spouses, denied that there was such an allocation in their family and did not care to elaborate on the matter. The researcher realised that the Vietnamese connotation of the word 'allocate', which might insinuate parenting as formal and obligatory, perplexed the older generation of parents who preferred to see their parenting roles as instinctual and voluntary. The word 'share' was therefore used instead.

The finalised interview guide cover the life course of young people, thematically focused around family upbringing, schooling, and work, to shed light on the links between these areas and provide insight into the influences of family class background on life chances. Parents were invited to discuss their own background and activities, their children's upbringing, and their roles in the children's educational achievement and occupational attainment. Young people were encouraged to open up about their family upbringing, personal life, schooling, work and, if relevant, their own childrearing practices. Box 4.5 and Box 4.6 list the most frequently and consistently discussed topics for parents and young people respectively.

Box 4.5. Interview topics for parents

General information

- Own background, and educational and occupational pathways
- Interest and participation in cultural and social activities
- Residential home and neighbourhood

Children's upbringing

- Valued traits and knowledge for children, and ways to instill them in children
- Children's personalities and abilities
- Hopes and expectations for sons and daughters
- Time spent with children; communication
- Children's entertainment, extracurricular, and social activities
- Decision-making regarding children's education, career, and other individual matters
- Children's friends and relationships
- Ways to deal with children's misbehaviours
- Children's shares of housework and household labour
- Share of childrearing undertakings with spouse

Children's education

- Decision-making regarding children's schools and majors
- Children's academic performance and behaviours at school
- Ways to ensure children's satisfactory performance and ways to deal with moments of struggle at school
- Involvement in children's school and teacher–parent activities.

Children's job and career

- Expectations and plans for children's jobs and careers
- Involvement in children's job seeking and attainment
- Provision of financial support to children
- Children's future prospects

Box 4.6. Interview topics for young people

General information

- Important milestones
- Educational and occupational pathways
- Background information of key people

Family upbringing

- Life in parental home: socioeconomic conditions, relationships between family members, involvement in household and household labour, parental upbringing
- Family members as role models

Individual life

- Beliefs, hopes, and expectations
- Interest and participation in cultural and social activities
- Close friendships and other social relationships

Education

- Decision-making regarding schools and majors
- Interest and motivation in learning
- Help and support in schooling received from parents, family members, school, and others
- School experience and performance
- Hopes and plans for further education

Job and career

- A 'dream' job
- Job plan
- Decision-making regarding jobs and career
- Sources of influence and support in job attainment and career building
- Job experience – attainment, condition, compensation, satisfaction, prospect: first job, first full-time job, current job, extra job
- Job expectations and career goals in 5–10 years
- Impact of marriage and children on work

Interview conduct and ethics

Between April 2011 and September 2011, 35 interviews were conducted; in April 2014, 4 additional interviews were conducted, generating a total 60 hours of interview data. The interviews were semi-structured and in-depth. Interviewees were encouraged to discuss liberally the themes they felt most compelled to talk about, letting their stories unfold naturally across a number of broad predetermined topics. The researcher's main goal was to assist the interviewees in providing inclusive and rich accounts that were personal and minimally biased. Ethics insurance and communication of commitment were found to be effective practices in building an interview environment of mutual trust and cooperation.

Standard and also customised measures were taken to ensure that the interviewees were aware of their rights of informed consent, voluntariness, and confidentiality. Regarding *consent*, during recruitment and at the beginning of the interviews, the research purposes and the process, use and dissemination of the interviews were explained to the interviewees. Special care was paid to conveying these explanations to each interviewee individually in ways most engaging to them, depending on their age, education, and expressed interest, while not damaging a consistent degree of formality or the accurateness of the information. All interviewees were provided with a similar paper copy of the participant information sheet, which contained all the information that had been explained to them. The interviewees' agreement regarding the ways in which their words and pictures would be recorded and used in the thesis and related publications was obtained on the consent form, a paper copy of which was given to each of them to keep (see Appendix – Interview documents).

Regarding *voluntariness*, the interviewees were informed about their rights to fully determine the level of their participation in the research. The interviewee and the researcher agreed on the time, location and length of the interview together, prioritising the interviewee's arrangements. The interviewees' freedom to decline questions, interrupt the interview, and withdraw from the research at any time is also made known to them prior to the interviews.

Regarding *confidentiality*, the interviewees were ensured that pseudonyms would be used instead of real names in all publications related to the research. In cases where the interviewees – such as two parents who work in the armed forces – requested strict anonymity, alternatives were applied for all their identification information (work place and residence, among others) in published reports, as per their instructions. Interviewees' accounts were to be kept confidential from their family members as well as the agents who introduced them to participate in the research.

Applied with care, ethical procedures did much more than create opportunities for the researcher to display commitment to the research and establish interviewees' trust. The bureaucratic process of obtaining consent seemed to have fostered the study's interviewees' sense of control and validation and thus, in ways that were arguably underacknowledged in previous discussions on qualitative methods, might have empowered these interviewees. The acts of jointly discussing and signing the consent form triggered in both the interviewee and the researcher a shared sense of responsibility toward the interview (which also helped justify, and thus normalised, the presence of the tape recorder which otherwise could have caused enduring tension). In one case, ethics adherence brought about vivid changes in the attitude of a working-class mother toward the researcher and the interview. From initially declining to reveal her real name to the researcher, at which point she was asked to choose her own pseudonym and to sign the consent form with it, the woman became increasingly engaged in the conversation and relaxed around the tape recorder. Toward the end of the interview, she voluntarily offerred help in recruiting respondents within her local area.

The researcher's consistent and persistent efforts in communicating research commitment and developing bonds throughout the whole interviewing process were also instrumental in encouraging rapport, especially in cases where, as Bourdieu *et al.* (1999: 612) also noted, mutual trust was challenging to achieve due to the social distances between the interviewee and the researcher. Some interviewees, at the beginning of the interview, expressed their doubt about the researcher's ability to 'really get it' – 'it' being the *rural life* in the cases of rural interviewees, *life in the past* in the cases of older interviewees, or *life in insufficiency* in the cases

of poor interviewees. This was considered an opportunity by the researcher: by not dismissing but actually acknowledging the interviewees' reservation, the researcher expressed a commitment to learning about their experience – *'I agree with you that I may not know that much, but that's why I'm doing this research – to learn from you'*. Often, upon being assured that their experience was viewed as distinctive and worthy of knowing by the researcher, the interviewees seemed more relaxed and trusting. Enduring efforts in highlighting any proximity or familiarity between the researcher and the respondents were also made to encourage mutual bonds. Noting shared things, meanings, and interests – *'I have the same souvenir that my father also brings back from a trip to X'*, *'I'm under the same star sign as you'*, *'I really like the way you frame your family photos'* – helped the researcher connect individually to an interviewee regardless of preconceived differences.

During the course of each interview, the researcher's challenges in balancing leading and encouraging flow were to a considerable extent eased by the employment of the interview guides. Firstly, the interview guides kept the researcher focused throughout the interview duration. The guides proved effective in ensuring the collection of relevant data within the limited timeframe of each individual interview and at the same time a consistent coverage of the key themes throughout the interviews. Secondly, a number of questions, which were subjected to extensive conceptual and empirical evaluations (see Interview guides) aided not only the collection of unambiguous data but also, unexpectedly, the flow of the interview. Asking the right questions in an appropriate manner reduced interviewees' confusion and misunderstanding – and thus disruption to the interviews – and facilitated their provision of clear, focused answering.

As data collection progressed, the interviews became better flowing and focused, yet less rigidly reliant on prepared materials. Through devoted concentration on the interviewees and their stories, as helpfully advised by Bourdieu *et al.* (1999: 609), the researcher's sensitivity to the interviewees' cues gradually improved, which helped prevent unwanted distraction from their flow of thought. Questions and probes were increasingly effectively improvised in order to deal with digressions and temporary moments of inexpressibility, or to motivate elaborations and in-depth discussions.

Qualitative analysis

The breadth and richness of qualitative accounts posed challenges for analysis, which were dealt with by theoretical tools and reflexive practices. Bourdieu's framework as a thinking tool grounded the wealth of empirical data, which allowed the observation of systematic patterns among them (or to see the wood for the trees) (Figure P.1 illustrates the theoretical framework of class reproduction that is framed upon the Bourdieusian interpretations of empirical evidence in this study). At the same time, theoretical reflection facilitated the translation of abstract theoretical categories into context-specific empirical categories (or, in a way, to see the trees for the wood) (see, for example, Figure 5.2 for a presentation of such translation). These theoretical-empirical intertranslations were governed by unambiguous and stringent criteria derived not from a single concept individually but from the application of the interlinked concepts of Bourdieu's full framework. Thus, for example, the empirical representations of *capital* were distinguishable from a mass of evidence of the *resources*, based on the delimitation of capital as resources that were evidently class-based and profitable. In this study, not all social connections, but only the bonding connections with the leaders and professionals that brought about skilled or leader-professional job opportunities, were seen in terms of social capital.

Reflections upon Bourdieu's conceptualisation of practice also facilitated better understanding about individuals' actions than, for instance, an application of the rational action theory. Instead of taking an interviewee's explanations of her/his actions at face value and risking being misled by self-justification, fabrication, or circumlocution, the researcher sought to construct – out of all the information that had been gathered about an interviewee (inclusive not only of immediate experience but also past and social group) – the context and reasons for her/his action, which helped reduce the aforementioned risks. This is why, in this study, Bourdieu's framework was considered a methodological tool as well as a theoretical guide.

But theoretical reliance can be one of the major sources of bias. Apart from the biases in respondents' constructed accounts, bias may impinge on the researcher's constructed accounts. During the analysis, the researcher has all the power to select and manipulate data to suit preconceived research assumptions. This demonstrates the importance of a reflexive approach. In

this approach, subjective biases are considered an inevitable element of the research, and an investigation of such biases an indispensable part of the research process (see McGraw *et al.* 2000: 68, Breuer & Roth 2003).

Efforts to identify and act upon theory-induced biases were made throughout data analysis via ongoing, concurrent processes of critically assessing the emerging confirming evidence that concurred with the researcher's presumptions, and of rigorously examining the available disconfirming evidence (see Maxwell 2004: 258, Weininger & Lareau 2009: 685, Timmermans & Tavory 2012: 169–170). If, as evaluated by the researcher, there were sufficient discrepancies in the evidence and negative cases against the established assumptions, these assumptions were invalidated.

One of the sources of biases recognised and dealt with was the researcher's enthusiasm to understand the embodiment of class conditions and the effects of such embodied resources on individual actions – a product of the influence of an overemphasis on these phenomena across the Bourdieusian literature and the researcher's own fascination with the concept of habitus. These led to an initial assumption that disadvantaged-class parents lacked the commitment and dispositions to be able to interact with their children's school personnel as proactively and confidently as their advantaged-class counterparts. But through a more cautious investigation into the particular case that first prompted the assumption, that of a working-class mother who rarely attended parent–teacher meetings or talked to her son's teachers, the researcher realised that this mother, working far from home seven days a week as her family's sole financial provider, was deprived of the *physical conditions* for school involvement. A few other cases of lower-class parents who expressed commitment to their children's schooling and recount active, fruitful school involvement further nullified the early assumption. A new hypothesis emerged from these cases that lower-class parents were disadvantaged by the lack of support in parent–school communication and collaboration from the low-quality schools their children attend (see 5.3 – Parental school involvement).

The researcher was influenced not only by preexisting theoretical knowledge but also personal perspectives. Her position as a member of the young, urban, advantaged-class group facilitated in-depth inquiries into this group's self-cultivating activities (see 7.3). It might have been the case that issues familiar to the researcher received more focused examination than unfamiliar ones. It is noted that the findings on self-cultivation may only be generalisable to a tiny section of the wider population that strictly

mirrored the demographic characteristics of the group in the qualitative sample in which self-cultivating activities were observed.

Preface to the three findings chapters

The findings chapters present and discuss results of the quantitative and qualitative investigations into class influences on young people's life chances – that are, educational achievement and class attainment respectively – in contemporary Vietnam. This preface offers an outline of the key arguments and a synopsis of each of the three chapters.

The original research question is as follows: *How does class background influence life chances in post-reform Vietnam?* The below figure, formulated based on a Bourdieusian interpretation of quantitative and qualitative evidence, represents this study's account of class reproduction schematically.

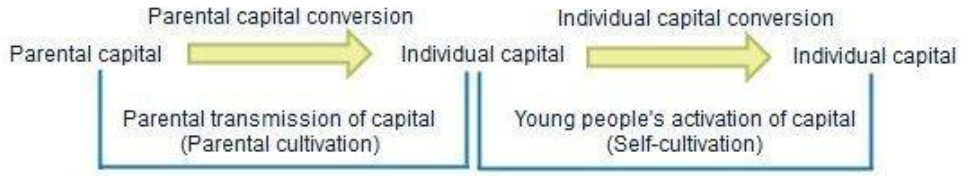


Figure P.1. General framework of social reproduction

The arguments underlying the figure 'General framework of social reproduction' can be summarised as follows. The ways that families and individuals of different classes mobilise their resources, depending on whether or not such mobilisation synchronises with the *rules* of the fields of education and labour, determine their life chances. Rules define the resources capable of yielding profits in cultural fields – that is, the *capital* that will enable its possessors' access to a limited number of desirable positions in a field – access that is guarded by said rules.

People from higher-class backgrounds succeed because they have *capital* at their disposal, that is, because they have access to field-specific profitable resources they have come to possess through *capital conversions across and within generations* in line with the existing rules in the fields of education and labour. A typical process of reproduction involves two causative processes: first, a preceding process of the *transmission of*

capital from parents to children; second, a follow-up process of young adults' *activation of capital*. Underlying the transmission of capital is *parental capital conversion*. Parental resources are translated into children's individual resources through *parents' cultivation* of their children. The young adults engage in *individual capital conversion*, in which they employ their pre-existing individual resources to acquire more resources through *self-cultivation*.

The amount and types of resources involved in the processes illustrated by Figure P.1 intensify through (parental capital) (individual capital) (1) to (parental capital) (individual capital) (individual capital) (2) and so on, reflecting the accumulation and augmentation of capital through successive capital conversions across and within generations. In the context of this study, archetypal outcomes of process (1) are academic degrees for young people from all classes, and higher social positions for young people from lower-class backgrounds whose class attainment relies mainly on their academic degree and their parents' direct transmission of resources. Process (2) is more likely to apply to young people from higher-class backgrounds whose attainment of higher-class positions is owed not only to their academic degrees and parental resources, but also to the resources they have acquired by building on resources directly inherited from their parents prior to their official entry to the field of labour, such as part-time work experiences, foreign-language and computer competencies, and leader-professional connections.

The empirical evidence provided in this study suggests that two levels of rules – *universal rules* and *discriminating rules*, both of which, to use Bourdieu's ([1979] 2009: 113, 1990: 37) terms, function as logics of fields – co-exist in contemporary Vietnamese society. The distinction between universal rules and discriminating rules sheds light on how rules help perpetuate and, at the same time, mask and legitimate various layers of social inequalities. Universal rules (or explicit institutional barriers) – long-lasting, widely known and supposedly easily met by all – exist as testament to social equality, or a façade displaying that everyone is subjected to the same set of criteria. Nevertheless, whether the universal criteria are truly universally attainable and whether they serve as absolute, unchallenged currencies are debatable. In fact, what are seen as universal rules might be subjected to discriminating rules. This study's

empirical evidence, analysed in the following chapters, supports the Bourdieusian theoretical preposition that as logics of fields, discriminating criteria (or implicit institutional barriers), which are changing and might not always be explicitly rewarded, work in favour of those who invent and reinvent them. Only the incumbents of positions at stake in fields possess the controlling power over the discriminating criteria, which serve to safeguard their positions (see Bourdieu [1979] 2009: 161). Universal and discriminating rules exist in fields; it can be assumed, however, that the scarcer and more rewarding a position is, the more the access to this position is determined by the discriminating criteria.

The *explicit universal rule* in contemporary Vietnam is *meritocracy*. Here, the term meritocracy refers to the merit-based principles underlying selection procedures in education and employment, according to which academic ability and achievement are ostensibly rewarded irrespective of family background and demographic characteristics. In contemporary Vietnam, admissions to college/university and the state economic sector are exam-based and supposedly guided by meritocratic principles. All it takes to gain entry to university is to pass a yearly national exam, which is standardised, textbook-based, and open to all graduates of postsecondary level. Likewise, recruitment procedures in the state sector are standardised by law to aim for universality and equality (Hausman 2009, Poon *et al.* 2009).

The *implicit discriminating rules* in the current fields of education and labour have to do with *social class* (rather than with political class in the pre-reform socialist context). As will be shown in the main discussion, there is evidence of strong class effects on educational achievement, as well as of persistent class effects on class outcomes net of education. If political capital acted as a discriminating factor under the pre-reform socialist system (see Introduction), what this study finds in the post-reform period is that many forms of capital – economic, cultural, and social – are being rewarded, in tune with rules, in the fields of education and labour. Class inequality is salient in this rewarding of existing capital. By virtue of their possession of reward-garnering capital, the advantaged classes are able to transmit their advantages to their offspring. In this sense, class-based capital serves to discriminate.

Thus, the following – more specific – question can be put forward: *How are different classes' family and individual life chances determined by mobilisation of resources, relative to differing attunement to societal rules?* This question lies at the heart of the following analyses.

Chapter 5 discusses parents' cultivation of their children's schooling to illuminate how parents convert their economic, cultural, and social capital into their children's individual cultural capital in the form of a college/university degree. The higher one's class background, the more likely one is to orient toward the university pathway and the more able one is to embark successfully on this pathway. Compared to lower-class parents, higher-class parents are no more aspiring toward their children's education. Yet, by virtue of their more advantageous access to resources, higher-class parents are more likely to provide their children with the universal conditions for learning – school costs, basic learning necessities and parental school involvement – and with knowledge beyond basic education through quality schooling and additional education. These are in turn rewarded by the educational field in contemporary Vietnam.

Chapter 6 analyses parents' cultivation of young people's occupational attainment to better understand how parents convert their economic, cultural, and social capital into their children's individual economic capital in the form of a leader-professional job (or a highly skilled job with leader-professional prospects). Specifically, it analyses how parents use their resources to help their children capitalise on their educational degree or to compensate for the lack of an educational degree in attaining higher-class positions. Across different sectors of the field of labour, non-scholastic capital is rewarded in addition to or instead of scholastic capital. Young adults from higher-class families have a head start in competing for positions further up the class ladder by virtue of having at their disposal, ahead of their official entry into the field of labour, profitable educational degrees, parents' leader-professional connections and family funds.

Chapter 7 continues to examine young people's occupational attainment with a focus on their self-cultivation – how young people activate and accumulate the individual capital that helps them thrive in the field of labour. This chapter discusses, first, the parental transmission–individual activation link, shedding light on the direct and indirect ways in which young people draw on their parental capital to acquire their individual

capital (with an emphasis on non-scholastic capital). Links are found between advantageous parental resources, an individuality-emphasised upbringing, a propensity and abilities for self-cultivation, self-cultivating practices, and the attainment of individual resources. Second, the chapter examines how young people mobilise their individual capital in order to enter the higher classes. Through self-cultivation via reading, Internet use, highbrow cultural engagement, part-time work and friend networking, young people earn and nurture a wide range of extracurricular skills, connections, work experiences and lifestyle characteristics – forms of individual capital valued in the field of labour and no less instrumental to their job attainment than their educational degrees.

Chapter 5.

Class Influences on Educational Achievement

In this study, *life chances* are interpreted as contingent upon *educational achievement* (in particular, the attainment of a *college/university degree*; see Box 2). Education has been a major route to social status throughout Vietnamese history, and emphasis on education a long-standing tradition of the Vietnamese people (Nguyen Khac Vien 1974: 26 and Hue-Tam Ho Tai 1992 as cited in Vu 2012, King *et al.* 2008: 797). In contemporary Vietnam, the importance of education for social advancement has been reinforced by an increasing demand for educated workers, in response to a shift toward non-farm economic activities and skilled work, and the growth of the private sector during the transition to a market-oriented economy (see ILO 2009). Researchers note a rise in income returns on private education investment during the 2000s, especially from college/university education (see Doan 2011, World Bank 2013, Kozel *et al.* 2014).

As education becomes increasingly stratified and commodified, educational inequality is on the rise in contemporary Vietnam. There is evidence of differentiated educational enrolments and outcomes across different income groups (see Behrman & Knowles 1999, Do TK 2005, Fritzen & Brassard 2005, Vu HL 2012). The shift of the financial burden of education from the state to the household (London 2006, 2007, 2014), the inability of the current education system to meet the demand for college/university education (Dang HA 2013, Graham *et al.* 2014: 41), and the difficulty for low-income groups in bearing the education cost at the college/university level (Vu HL *et al.* 2010) contextualise the inequality, but there remains much more to understand about the phenomenon, which has not yet been adequately addressed in the current literature on Vietnam.

This chapter offers insights into class inequality in education in contemporary Vietnam, which supports and further illuminates previous research findings. It discusses *parents' cultivation of their children's schooling* to understand how parents translate their own capital into their

children's individual cultural capital in the form of a *college/university degree*. The chapter begins by analysing the role of the Vietnamese college/university degree in mediating the relationship between class background and class attainment, in order to shed light on its universal as well as its discriminating aspects. This study finds that a college/university degree links closely to the attainment of higher-class positions and is more accessible and entitling for young people from higher-class backgrounds. Highly valued and desired by people of all classes, college/university education disenfranchises young people from lower classes.

Next, the discussion turns to class differentiations regarding *educational options* and *educational chances*. Young people's entitlement and accessibility to college/university education are analysed within Bourdieu's full framework of practice, which considers internalised dispositions and access to family resources altogether. Those from higher-class backgrounds are more likely to be oriented toward the college/university pathway, and also to be able to embark on this pathway successfully, by virtue of their parents' provision of both the fundamental, *universal necessities* for learning and the extra, *discriminating conditions* that the educational field rewards.

5.1. Education in contemporary Vietnam: universality and discrimination

This study provides substantial evidence in the Vietnam context of the *prevalent appeal of education* and of a *positive link between educational achievement and class*. There is found across all classes a prevalent attachment of desirable material and symbolic outcomes to educational success, and an aspiration toward higher education, consistent with findings that college/university educations return their investment with the attainment of higher-class positions.

Yet, more importantly, this study finds that education mediates the relation between class background and class attainment. Taking into account the mixed implications from existing research into educational inequality (see Behrman & Knowles 1999, Do TK 2005, Fritzen & Brassard 2005, Vu HL 2012), and into the effectiveness of the Vietnamese educational system in developing students from disadvantaged backgrounds to the expected levels of its curricula (see Woodhead *et al.* 2013), it is worth asking whether education in Vietnam is a mobility or reproduction channel. Though much Bourdieusian research supports the reproduction thesis, some studies, such as those employing Dutch data, argue otherwise (see DiMaggio 1982, DiMaggio & Mohr 1985, Aschaffenburg & Maas 1997, de Graaf *et al.* 2000), and there are documented state measures in Vietnam to promote equality through centralised, exam-based assessment. However, this study's findings suggest that education in present-day Vietnam is indeed a channel for the reproduction of class advantages and for discrimination against people from the lower classes.

Education as universal

Consistent with previous research on Vietnamese people's high expectations of reward from educational success (see Thai 1992, 1996, Tran 1994, Nguyen 1998 as cited in Pham & Griffin 2003), in this study, education is widely regarded by interviewees as 'rewarding'. As exemplified by the following accounts, education is seen as a means to a decent job, valuable opportunities, and a good life.

'*Only by learning one can build his career. Therefore I encourage my children to learn, and my wife fully supports me in encouraging our children to learn.'* (Mr. Lap, higher-class family)

'*What motivates me to study? Probably… for my life. Now if we want to get a job, it must have something to do with a qualification. To be exact, my motivation for studying is to earn a living.'* (Hoa, higher-class background)

'First, if I'm educated, my future will be better. It won't be tough. Secondly, when I go to school, I will have the opportunities to advance, to be in touch with a much more modern environment, so that when I leave school I will be able to help my family. I will interact with a lot of people and have wider connections. They may be able to give me many advices to do my job well, to continue studying or to choose another profession.' (Dao, lower-class background)

'*I advise my children to make an effort to go to school so that they will have a more leisurely job, not having to work hard like their father did.'* (Mr. Vung, lower-class family)

Besides its practical benefits, education is greatly esteemed by interviewees for its symbolic value. People from higher-class and lower-class families alike regard education as a token of family prestige, as the accounts below reveal.

'From 10th grade, I started being aware of how important my learning was, and how it would affect my whole future and my whole career. I observed how educated people live and how uneducated people live, and began to think about the importance of education. At high school I had the reputation of being a good student. If I had failed university I would have gotten such a bad reputation back home.' (Manh, higher-class background)

'So many people have money now, but what people in the countryside like to show off about their family is how educated their children are. Many of my friends' brothers and sisters go to university, so people would see whether I go to school or not, and judge my family and myself accordingly.' (Khanh, lower-class background)

It comes as no surprise, then, that, in contemporary Vietnam, there is a widespread and enormous aspiration for college education and university education, especially for the latter. *More than 90%* of young survey respondents agree with the statement 'I want to enter university', with no significant differences by class background. Regardless of their specific backgrounds and pathways, young qualitative interviewees share a strong commitment to pursuing university, as illustrated by the following account:

'When I learned that I had failed the university exam, I was really sad. I was extremely sad. My parents told me to do what I wanted – whether I wanted to stay at home to revise for the exam re-sit, or to go to college instead was fine. But I know that inside their minds my parents always wanted me to go to university. I myself also always wanted to go to university.' (Hoa, higher-class background)

The prevalent desire for education in general and college/university education in particular is in sync with quantitative evidence in this study of the major role of education in influencing class outcomes. The following

evidence of the *class returns on education*, in particular on college/university level educations, contributes to the current literature on Vietnam, which tends to focus on income returns on education (see, for example, Doan 2011, World Bank 2013, Kozel *et al.* 2014).

(1) In contemporary Vietnamese society, education has become increasingly important to occupational attainment. Comparisons between young workers' educational levels and their fathers', based on Table 5.1, suggest that occupational attainment for the junior generation is more demanding than for the senior generation. For example, whereas more than half the young leaders and professionals have college/university degrees or higher (57%), only one third of the older leaders and professionals do (31%).

(2) In contemporary Vietnamese society, educational hierarchies are more or less in sync with class hierarchies. Higher-educated young people are more likely than lower-educated young people to attain higher-class positions. Based on the statistics highlighted in bold type in Table 5.1, whereas secondary and lower qualifications are most typically possessed by young skilled manual workers and unskilled workers (54% and 69% respectively), and postsecondary qualifications by young skilled nonmanual workers (64%), college/university or higher degrees are most predominant for young leaders and professionals (57%).

Table 5.1.

Percentages of fathers' and young people's educational level by their class attainment, 2010, percent by row						
Educational level						
	College/University or higher		Postsecondary		Secondary or lower	
Class attainment	Fathers	Young people	Fathers	Young people	Fathers	Young people
Leader-professional class	31	**57**	46	41	23	2
Nonmanual intermediate class	3	17	47	**64**	50	19
Manual intermediate class	2	3	29	43	69	**54**
Working class	0	1	13	30	86	**69**

Notes:

There is a highly significant association between fathers' educational level and class attainment: Adjusted F (5.671, 816.625)=124.999***

There is a highly significant association between young people's educational level and class attainment: Adjusted F (5.240, 754.494)=181.334***

The Adjusted F is a variant of the second-order Rao-Scott adjusted chi-square statistic. Significance is based on the adjusted F and its degrees of freedom.

(3) In contemporary Vietnamese society, college/university education is essential to the attainment of leader-professional positions. As shown in Table 5.2, more than half of Vietnamese college/university-educated young people have attained the leader-professional class (52%), compared to a very small proportion of those educated at the postsecondary level (6%) and none among those educated at the secondary or lower level (0%).

Table 5.2.

Percentages of young people's class attainment by their educational level, those *out of education* and *in work*, 2010, percent by row						
Class attainment						
Education-al level	Leader-professional class	Non-manual intermediate class	Manual intermediate class	Working class	Total	Unweight-ed base
College/ University or higher	52	18	10	20	100	184
Post-secondary	6	10	22	63	100	1374
Secondary or lower	0	2	16	82	100	2496
Total	5	5	18	72	100	4054

Notes:

Out of education: Young people who answered 'No' to the survey question: 'Do you currently go to school, college, university or higher?'

In work: Young people who answered 'Yes' to the survey question: 'In the last seven days, have you worked for income?'

There is a highly significant association between young people's class attainment and educational level: Adjusted F (5.240, 728.385)=181.322***

Significantly, as presented in Table 5.3, the results of Model 5 – Multinomial Logistic Regression analysis show that – with the effects of class background, demographic characteristics, parental resources, and individual resources being held constant – young people's educational level influences their class attainment to a significant extent. The chance of attaining a leader-professional position, as opposed to a working-class position, of young people having college/university or higher education is substantially larger than that of those educated to lower levels of education.

Table 5.3.

Multinomial Logistic Regression of young people's class attainment, those *out of education*, *in work* and *living with parents*, 2010 – odds ratios and significance level (*95% confidence intervals in italics*)					
Model	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	Odds of attaining leader-professional class as opposed to working class				
Class background (ref=Working class)	***	***	***	***	***
Leader-professional class	22.0*** *13.4, 36.2*	12.8*** *7.4, 22.2*	5.1*** *2.4, 11.0*	6.2*** *2.9, 13.4*	6.6*** *3.0, 14.5*
Nonmanual intermediate class	7.1*** *3.0, 16.5*	3.3* *1.3, 8.5*	2.8* *1.1, 7.3*	2.2 *0.8, 6.2*	2.2 *0.8, 6.6*
Manual intermediate class	3.6*** *2.1, 6.4*	2.9** *1.5, 5.8*	2.7** *1.4, 5.3*	2.2* *1.0, 4.7*	2.3* *1.0, 4.9*
Ethnicity (ref=Other)		***	***	***	***
Kinh		3.6*** *1.6, 7.9*	3.6*** *1.5, 8.2*	3.0* *1.3, 6.8*	3.0* *1.2, 7.6*
Gender (ref=Male)		***	***	***	***
Female		4.0*** *2.6, 6.0*	3.2*** *2.0, 5.1*	2.8*** *1.7, 4.6*	4.0*** *2.2, 7.0*
Residence (ref=Rural)		*			
Urban		2.5** *1.4, 4.3*	1.4* *0.7, 2.7*	1.5 *0.8, 3.1*	1.7 *0.9, 3.3*
Town		1.6 *1.0, 2.7*	1.1 *0.6, 2.0*	1.2 *0.6, 2.3*	1.2 (0.347)
Age group (ref=14–17)		***	***	***	***
18–21		12.0*** *1.5, 94.8*	3.8 *0.4, 33.1*	2.7 *0.3, 23.8*	2.3 *0.2, 22.0*
22–25		61.4*** *8.0, 469.5*	9.2 *1.1, 77.1*	6.3** *0.7, 54.0*	6.2** *0.7, 57.5*

Educational level (ref=Secondary or lower)			***	***	***
College/University or higher			384.9*** *87.7, 1688.7*	252.3*** *51.6, 1234.3*	168.8*** *31.0, 919.4*
Postsecondary			30.3*** *7.1, 128.8*	21.2*** *4.7, 95.0*	16.8** *3.5, 80.6*
Training (ref=Not having had job training)			***	***	***
Having had job training			0.9 *0.5, 1.5*	0.9 *0.5, 1.4*	0.8 *0.5, 1.4*
Parental economic resources (ref=Low: 0–6 household assets)				**	**
High: 9–10 household assets				2.2* *1.1, 4.5*	2.2* *1.1, 4.4*
Medium: 7–8 household assets				1.5 *0.8, 2.8*	1.4 *0.8, 2.6*
Parental education (ref=Secondary or lower)				*	
College/University or higher				0.3 *0.1, 1.1*	0.3 *0.9, 1.1*
Postsecondary				1.3 *0.8, 2.2*	1.2 *0.7, 2.1*
Parental upbringing (ref=Low: 0–1 advantageous upbringing characteristics)					
High: 3 advantageous upbringing characteristics				3.4 *0.7, 15.2*	2.6 *0.5, 14.3*
Medium: 2 advantageous upbringing characteristics				3.9 *0.8, 18.8*	3.6 *0.6, 21.7*

Friend group membership (ref=No group of friends)					*
Having group of friends					0.8 *0.3, 1.8*
Mass organisation membership (ref=No mass organisation membership)					
Having mass organisation membership					1.7 *0.9, 3.3*
Leisure activities (ref=Low: 0–4 activities)					***
High: 7–8 activities					3.6** *1.6, 8.1*
Medium: 5–6 activities					2.2* *1.1, 4.3*
Unweighted base	3148	3147	3136	2695	2691

Notes:
Out of education: Young people who answered 'No' to the survey question: 'Do you currently go to school, college, university or higher?'
In work: Young people who answered 'Yes' to the survey question: 'In the last seven days, have you worked for income?'
Living with parents: Young people who answered 'Yes' to either of the two following questions: 'Do you live with your biological mother now?' or 'Do you live with your biological father now?'
Significance level: *p<=.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, p>.05 (non-significant)

(4) Education, especially a college/university degree, serves as a means for young people from working-class backgrounds to move upward into the leader-professional class. Among the 2% (N=100/5032) of young survey respondents from working-class backgrounds who have reached the leader-professional class:

a. of those out of education, 46% have achieved a college/university degree (N=34/77) and 40% a vocational degree (N=33/77)
b. of those in education, 75% are enrolled at college/university (N=17/23).

Education as discriminating

Since the early 1990s, the universality of education in contemporary Vietnam has been challenged by the shift of financial responsibility for education from the state to households (London 2006, 2014). Additionally, the current education system has been unable to meet the heavy public demand for college/university education (Dang HA 2013). This study offers unprecedented empirical evidence of class-based discriminations in the contemporary Vietnamese educational field. Quantitative findings expose class background as a significant predictor of educational achievement, and salient class inequality regarding the attainment of college/university education. The findings suggest that education, as a major mediator in the association between class background and class attainment, can be seen as a reproduction channel for class inequality. This observable phenomenon remains largely underexplored in the current literature on Vietnam and challenges the supposedly meritocratic admission and evaluation procedures that are currently in effect in the fields of education and labour.

(1) As demonstrated in Table 5.4, results of Model 2 – Multinomial Logistic Regression point out that a young person's class background highly significantly influences his/her educational achievement, net of his/her other demographic characteristics (ethnicity, gender, and residence).

(2) Table 5.4 also reports significant class gaps in access to high education, compared with access to low education. According to Model 2 – Multinomial Logistic Regression (and controlling for ethnicity, gender, and residence), a young person from a leader-professional background has a significantly larger chance than someone from any lower-class background, of achieving a college/university degree as opposed to a secondary or lower degree.

Table 5.4.

Multinomial Regression of young people's educational achievement, those *out of education*, *in work* and *living with parents*, 2010 – odds ratios and significance level (*95% confidence intervals in italics*)					
Model	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	Odds of achieving college/university education as opposed to secondary or lower education				
Class background (ref=Working class)	***	***	***	*	*
Leader-professional class	34.1*** *19.5, 59.6*	25.3*** *15.0, 42.5*	12.1*** *6.9, 21.1*	3.4** *1.7, 6.9*	3.2** *1.6, 6.3*
Nonmanual intermediate class	6.5*** *2.5, 16.8*	3.5* *1.3, 9.8*	2.0 *0.7, 5.7*	1.1 *0.4, 2.9*	1.0 *0.3, 2.7*
Manual intermediate class	2.4** *1.4, 4.3*	1.4 *0.7, 2.6*	0.9 *0.4, 1.8*	0.6 *2.3, 1.4*	0.6 *0.3, 1.3*
Ethnicity (ref=Other)		***			
Kinh		2.6** *1.4, 4.7*	1 *0.6, 1.9*	1 *0.5, 1.9*	0.9 *0.4, 1.7*
Gender (ref=Male)					
Female		1.6* *1.0, 2.5*	1.5 *0.9, 2.4*	1.5 *0.9, 2.5*	1.4 *0.9, 2.3*
Residence (ref=Rural)		***			
Urban		4.2*** *2.6, 6.8*	1.4 *0.8, 2.3*	1.1 *0.6, 1.9*	1.2 *0.6, 2.3*
Town		2.7*** *1.6, 4.7*	1.7* *1.0, 2.9*	1.6 *0.8, 3.0*	1.8 *0.9, 3.5*
Parental economic resources (ref=Low: 0–6 household assets)			***	***	***
High: 9–10 household assets			145.5*** *74.2, 285.5*	97.0*** *46.1, 204.3*	92.3*** *43.7, 195.0*
Medium: 7–8 household assets			7.3*** *3.9, 13.7*	5.8*** *3.1, 10.8*	5.4*** *2.9, 10.0*

Parental education (ref=Secondary or lower)				***	***
College/University or higher				19.8*** *5.7, 68.3*	21.6*** *6.3, 74.4*
Postsecondary				5.9*** *3.5, 9.9*	6.1*** *3.6, 10.3*
Parental upbringing (ref=Low: 0–1 advantageous upbringing characteristics)					***
High: 3 advantageous upbringing characteristics					5.4** *1.7, 16.8*
Medium: 2 advantageous upbringing characteristics					2.6 *0.8, 8.5*
Unweighted base	3166	3165	3163	2719	2719

Notes:
Out of education: Young people who answered 'No' to the survey question: 'Do you currently go to school, college, university or higher?'
In work: Young people who answered 'Yes' to the survey question: 'In the last seven days, have you worked for income?'
Living with parents: Young people who answered 'Yes' to either of the two following questions: 'Do you live with your biological mother now?' or 'Do you live with your biological father now?'
Significance level: *p<=.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, p>.05 (non-significant)

Class inequality in the achievement of college/university education is further illustrated by Table 5.5. On the same survey population used in Multinomial Logistic Regression – young people out of education, in work and living with parents (see Table 5.4), it is found that there are many more college/university graduates among those from leader-professional backgrounds (28%) than among those from skilled

nonmanual backgrounds (12%), skilled manual backgrounds (6%), and working-class backgrounds (3%).

Table 5.5.

Percentages of young people's educational level by their class background, those *out of education*, *in work* and *living with parents*, 2010, percent by row					
	Educational level				
Class background	College/ University or higher	Post-secondary	Secondary or lower	Total	Unweighted base
Leader-professional class	28	54	18	100	184
Nonmanual intermediate class	12	49	40	100	112
Manual intermediate class	6	39	55	100	294
Working class	3	35	63	100	2576
Total					3166

Notes:

Out of education: Young people who answered 'No' to the survey question: 'Do you currently go to school, college, university, or higher?'

In work: Young people who answered 'Yes' to the survey question: 'In the last seven days, have you worked for income?'

Living with parents: Young people who answered 'Yes' to either of the following two questions: 'Do you live with your biological mother now?' or 'Do you live with your biological father now?'

There is a highly significant association between educational level and class background: Adjusted F (5.100, 693.661)=32.159***

5.2. Class differentiations in educational options

Despite the universal, class-undifferentiated desire to be highly educated that is evident, as presented in the previous section, among both young survey respondents and young interviewees, qualitative findings in this study suggest that there are nuanced class differentiations regarding educational options. As will be discussed this section, young people from higher-class families more emphatically prioritise college/university education than their lower-class counterparts. While those from higher-class families consider university their sole, urgent goal, those from lower-class families picks among a wider range of educational routes. Explanations for such class differentiations in educational options and decision-making, as we will now turn to, draw upon – and, at the same time, diverge from – Bourdieusian *habitus*-focused analysis (see Lamaison & Bourdieu 1986: 112, Bourdieu 1990: 116, [1990] 2009: 53) and *rational action* arguments (see Breen & Goldthorpe 1997: 278, Goldthorpe 2007b: 10) (see 1.2).

Higher-class backgrounds

Why are people from higher-class backgrounds more likely to envision high education? Their *internalised entitlement* to high education – a component of their *habitus* – has been a key and well-repeated explanation in Bourdieusian research (mentioned below). From a Bourdieusian perspective, the objective conditions of a particular class enter the habitus as subjective chances – *embodied chances* of success or failure, which guide agents of that class toward what they consider probable and feasible (Bourdieu 1983: 346, [1979] 2009: 471). Some researchers argue that Bourdieu's idea explains their findings of working-class people's self-exclusion from high education as opposed to middle-class people's self-inclusion (see Ball *et al.* 2002, Reay *et al.*

2009, Atkinson 2010c), as well as findings regarding the experiences of displacement of working-class students at university (see Evans 2009, Reay *et al.* 2010, Ingram 2011, Friedman 2013) (see 3.2).

According to Goldthorpe's rational action framework, on the other hand, educational decision-making is seen in terms of mobility strategies that individuals and families devise *rationally* based on their subjective perceptions of the immediate opportunities and constraints associated with their class situations (see Goldthorpe 2007b: 13–14). As Goldthorpe (2007b: 169–173) maintains, lower-class people, in light of their financial constraint, tend to opt for the more realistic choice of leaving school relatively early to take up vocational training, which might provide them with limited upward mobility, rather than choosing to stay in school and outside of the labour market for too long.

In this study, qualitative analysis proposes that college/university decision-making can be explained more fully as '*practice*' as conceptualised by Bourdieu's full framework – that is, as an outcome of the adaptation of internalised past experiences, or 'practical sense', to the present context of action ('[(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice') (see Bourdieu 2003: 24–25, [1979] 2009: 101). Such decision-making can be seen across different class contexts as *neither purely automatic nor purely calculated.* Apart from the role that *habitus* plays, the externalisation of people's *embodied chances* into their decision-making, as illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 5.1, is strongly affected by their considerations of their access to resources – that is, their *calculated chances*.

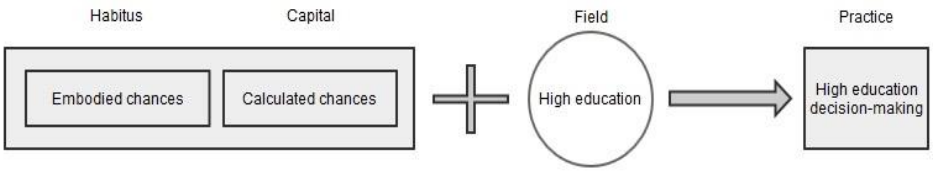


Figure 5.1. College/University decision-making

For young interviewees from higher-class backgrounds, college/ university education seems *obvious*. In light of Bourdieu's theory, a fit between the field of the production of their habitus (educated homes) and the potential field of practice of their habitus (high education) represents an ideal situation in which habitus might govern reproduction. Their *embodied chances* of success – their sense of entitlement toward being highly educated and having a good life like their parents' – would *automatically* govern them in envisaging college/university. Indeed, young people brought up by highly educated parents do not discuss having had to make the decision whether or not to strive for college/university education. As a young woman from a leader-professional family states in her account, going to university is – in her view – just something that *everybody* does.

'*My aim is to at least achieve what the society wants. Therefore, when I couldn't graduate from university due to failing one module, I thought to myself, I'm dead, what should I do, the milestone that everyone else manages to overcome easily, why am I stuck behind?'* (Thu, higher-class background)

College/university education is both historically and socially familiar to people brought up into the higher classes. 'The society', as indicated by Thu in the above quote, refers to the higher-class milieu rather than the larger society. For many people in the leader-professional class,

college/university education has even become the new basic level – the 'literacy' threshold, as the following accounts spell out:

'Having a university degree only means that you have escaped illiteracy. I think that, if in the past a university degree was acceptable, nowadays one must have a master degree. I want my children to have master degree because too many people now have university degree. The general level that people have has been raised to the master level. I will make sure that my younger son will join a master course as soon as he graduates from university.' (Mr. Kiet, leader-professional class)

'A university qualification is only the beginning; so many people have it now. We need to reach a higher level to be proud of.' (Mr. Giang, leader-professional class)

For young people from higher-class backgrounds, their *calculated chances* – self-assessed access to usable resources – are also stacked in their favour. Financial well-being allows them to not worry about the cost of a college/university course. They can afford as many exam re-sits as they need, even while not earning income during prolonged periods of exam revision. They receive full support from their parents in their persistent pursuit of college/university degrees. Several young interviewees from higher-class backgrounds took the university entrance exam two or three times, and during those one to two years of exam revision were either enrolled in some fee-paying academic course funded by their parents in order to 'save face', or simply stayed at home. The impression one gets from the following examples is that young people from higher-class backgrounds talk about their privileges matter-of-factly, as if taking them for granted.

'*When I didn't get a place at the university of my first choice, I was determined that I would join this certain course just for fun, just for a pass-the-university-exam thing so that my friends would not criticise me. All I did while doing the course was revising for the entrance exam of my dream university.*' (Manh, higher-class background)

'*When I failed the university exam, I could have gone to college or something, but I didn't, because I didn't like that. I revised for an exam re-sit. The second year, I passed the university exam. When my mother learned about it, she was so delighted. That was when, after such a long time, she gave me a compliment.*' (Hiep, higher-class background)

Some young people from higher-class families also discuss going to college/university just for the sake of it, in that they don't have to worry too much about the use of a degree. The attitude toward obtaining a degree for credentials' sake, as depicted in the following account, is rooted in *calculations* about the assuring prospect of securing jobs without relevant degrees.

'*For me, passing the university exam only serves to mark the milestone that children are now eighteen years old, and parents no longer need to involve themselves too deeply in their children's decision-making. My father always told me that it was not important which university I went to. He said that the most important thing is to go to some university and that one can totally work in a different field than what one majors in at university. When I finally decided to take up Spanish, my father went along with it even though he wasn't keen on it much. He was like, OK, as long as she will have a degree.'* (Thu, higher-class background)

Lower-class backgrounds

For young people from lower-class homes, higher-education decision-making is *deliberate* – a college/university degree not being taken-for-granted – and *against the odds*. Theoretically speaking, their habitus, constituted within a frame of reference of *lower* education – being the level at which their parents are educated – will not orient them toward effortlessly envisioning higher education. As opposed to their peers from higher-class backgrounds, Vietnamese young people from lower-class backgrounds are instilled with a sense of constraint – a fear of their inability to escape a tough life via the educational avenue, that is rooted in their past deprivation and continuously reinforced by their daily hardships. It does *not* appear, though, that young people from lower-class homes automatically preclude themselves from higher education, as if they were purely habitus-governed. In fact, all but one of the young interviewees eligible to take the university entrance exam – those having acquired postsecondary qualifications – went on to take the exam at least once. It should be noted that the simple, straightforward university admission of the Vietnamese education system – via one yearly national, standardised exam – probably helps make university attempts more viable for all postsecondary graduates than the more complicated, application-based admissions to university in the US or UK.

Nor do lower-class young people's decisions to strive for college/university seem purely driven by rational calculations. As shown in the following accounts, lower-class parents have a strong desire that their children be able to avoid a 'miserable' life of tough manual labour, which they attribute to lack of education. They also exhibit the belief that a college/university degree will bring about a different and better life. Therefore, young interviewees from lower-class homes attempted the college/university exam immediately upon graduating from

postsecondary education, despite lacking the immediate funds to pay for a course, and not having specific job plans to follow.

'What motivated me was my parents' advice that doing agricultural work is hard. I saw how hard my parents have to work; they only get to have dinner at 9pm or 10pm. That's what pushed me. I thought that, only through schooling, I wouldn't have to do agricultural work.' (Dao, lower-class background)

'Every day I told my children that they had to make an effort to learn, so that they would be able to rise above us parents in learning and not end up miserable like us. We parents did not get to go anywhere nor do anything worthwhile.' (Mr. Tam, lower-class family)

'I only want my children to be educated properly so that they won't have a hard life. We parents have little learning so we have a hard life. If I were educated I wouldn't be so miserable. I advise my children that living in the countryside is miserable and tough, and there is only one fastest way to change their life – that is through having education. If now one is not educated or does not have a degree, he won't be able to change his life. Doing field work, one can only earn 50 to 100 thousands a day, enough for food and nothing else.' (Mrs. Giao, lower-class family)

'I believe my son will have a better life. He is going to college, so he must have a better life. I didn't go to school. When I was small, I had to tend buffalos and cut grasses all day, how could I have had a good life? And then I got married and all I'm doing now is cleaning people's houses. I spent a lot of money on my son's study, so he must try to have a better life than I do.' (Mrs. Luyen, lower-class family)

As much as they aspire for high education, though, people of lower-class homes do not insist on the college/university option, desiring *any* form of education or training beyond the postsecondary level because their priority is to have a stable, paid job. Their alternatives include vocational training, middle-level education, and in-service or correspondence college/university courses. People justify these options, as the following accounts suggest, as more *reasonable* and *feasible* than formal college/university. Some do not make more than one attempt at the college/university exam because they are unable to afford the cost of re-sitting an exam or of being out of work during exam revision. Some are disheartened by their self-assessed prospects of exam failure. The decision to forgo college/university education is reinforced by their belief that less ambitious educational options will suffice to help them realise their prioritised goal – namely, to avoid the necessity of unskilled work.

'When I failed the university entrance exam the first time, my parents reassured me a lot. They told me if I cannot go to university, I can take other courses so that I will have some profession and find a job easily. My parents said that with a high-school degree, I can only become a factory worker, which is hard work and the salary will only be enough to feed myself. So I went to middle-level school for a while.' (Dao, lower-class background)

'After failing the university entrance exam the first time, I went to another school. Life was hard then. So I took vocational training because we must know some trade if we want to overcome this agricultural thing.' (Thanh, lower-class background)

'I've always thought that even if [my son] only has middle-level education, it is good, because he will have some qualification to find a job. I have a hard life so I want him to have a better life. If he only has a high-school degree, he will have to work as a builder or something and have a tough life.' (Mrs. Luyen, lower-class family)

Further evidence suggests that people of the lower classes set the literacy threshold at a lower level than their higher-class counterparts do – at postsecondary level as opposed to college/university level.

'Nowadays, not going to secondary school or high school can be considered illiteracy. In the past, literacy was knowing how to read and write, but now it is different. The government would let everyone graduate from the secondary and high-school levels anyway, for the sake of illiteracy eradication. But people in the countryside don't have money to study further, so they can only do manual work.' (Khanh, lower-class background)

'Although my children don't have high qualifications, they have graduated from high school. They have overcome illiteracy anyway. It's not like they can't even get into certain companies to be workers. So I think that although we're not as good as others, at least our children will be above us; they won't be peasants like us.' (Mrs. Lam, lower-class family)

In this study, young people from lower-class backgrounds turn their back on college/university education, not purely because they self-censor due to what Atkinson's (2010c: 425) terms an 'internalised barrier' (the *habitus* explanation), or because their educational aspiration is depleted by economic hardship (the *rational action* explanation). In fact, lower-class young people's motivation to achieve high education levels arises *out of* hardship, only to struggle to stand up against it. For young people from lower-class families, the emergency of income-generating work that confronts them as soon as they complete general schooling seems to be the foremost factor crushing their commitment to college/university education. This is shown most poignantly in the case of a young woman

who could not afford a second chance at the university exam despite her potential to gain a place, as recounted below by her mother.

'My daughter worked extremely hard for the university entrance exam. She often stayed up until 3am to study. But she failed. Just one more mark and she would have reached the entrance score. I didn't really allow her to revise for the exam re-sit, and she didn't insist on doing it either, because she feared that I would not be able to afford both her revision and her two siblings' schooling.' (Mrs. Lam, lower-class family)

Against the odds, and as Khanh's account (to follow) reveals, for some people from lower-class backgrounds the tenacious goal remains a place at university, even though they may not be able to start pursuing it until after they have gathered the necessary funds through temporary employment.

'I was aware myself that I was not capable of passing the university exam, so I took a roundabout route instead. I applied to the middle-school of construction. After two years, I graduated from there and began working. At the same time, I joined a university correspondence course. I am now in my final year. I combine correspondence study and going to work.' (Khanh, lower-class background)

5.3. Class differentiations in educational chances

The empirical evidence provided in this study suggests that young people from higher-class backgrounds are not only more likely to be oriented toward the goal of obtaining a college/university education, but also more likely to be able to gain *access* to it. This section discusses the processes through which class differentiations concerning parental cultivation of their children's schooling link to class inequality in access to college/university education. It begins by demonstrating the quantitative findings and summarising the qualitative evidence from which the overarching arguments have emerged, and outlining the key findings in the form of an empirical model. Then, the section discusses, in detail, each of the aspects of parents' cultivations of their children's schooling that builds toward college/university achievement where class inequality is evident.

General findings

Whereas much of the current research on Vietnam presents family income as the sole determinant of children's schooling (see 2.1), this study finds that both parental economic resources and parental cultural resources play comparably important roles, mutually facilitating the conversion of parents' stock of resources into children's cultural resources (educational degrees). Parents' efficient investment and effective involvement in their children's schooling are enabled by their access to money and time, as well as their knowledge and experience of the educational system. Parents' resources determine whether or not they are able to accomplish the following:

(1) provide their children with the *universal* requirements, which are essential for completing *general education,* and the *discriminating* requirements, which are important to

college/university entrance (applied specifically in the Vietnamese context); and

(2) *monitor-guide* their children's schooling, which helps to ensure children's academic success.

Both *parental economic resources* (measured by the number of durable assets a parental household owns) and *parental education* (measured by the higher of the father's or mother's educational level) emerge through quantitative analysis as comparably significant *class-based predictors of young people's educational achievement*. Multinomial Logistic Regression results show that:

(1) Parental economic resources and parental education explain a substantial proportion of class differences in educational achievement. The effect of class background on educational achievement is considerably reduced as 'parental economic resources' is added to the model (see Model 3 – Table 5.4), and the same reduction applies to 'parental education' (see Model 4 – Table 5.4).

(2) When class background, demographic characteristics, parental education, and parental upbringing are held constant, the chance of attaining college/university education as opposed to secondary or lower levels for a young survey respondent classified as having *high parental economic resources* is far larger than that for someone with medium and low parental economic resources (see Model 5 – Table 5.4).

Likewise, when controlling for class background, demographic characteristics, parental economic resources, and parental upbringing, young survey respondents with *college/university-educated parents* have a significantly better chance of attaining a

college/university degree as opposed to low education, than those with parents educated at the secondary or lower levels as well as children of postsecondary-educated parents (see Model 5 – Table 5.4).

Interview accounts reveal stark class gaps in parents' ability to ensure the desired academic outcome for their children: college/university entrance, as this study detects and explicates. As exemplified by the following extracts, in contrast to parents of higher-class homes who express a strong sense of assurance about their children's participation in high education, those of lower-class homes express uncertainty and powerlessness.

'That my children would go to university was without question.' (Mr. Kiet, higher-class family)	*'My regret is that although we supported our children in their schooling, working hard day and night, they did not succeed. It's the society. I kept hoping that if I let my children go to school, they would learn this and that and do this and that. That's what I dreamt but things didn't turn out my way. We can tell the children to do the right things, but it is their own awareness that matters. Being a mother, who doesn't want her children to succeed? Who doesn't look after them, advising them not to go out with their friends but to stay at home and study? But once they are already ready to go out, what can we do? Nowadays, the society is very complicated, so it's difficult to raise children.'* (Mrs. Giao, lower-class family)

How can this gap be explained? Drawn mainly from qualitative evidence, the analyses in this section will argue that, via investment of both economic and cultural resources, higher-class parents efficiently

cultivate their children's schooling through what can be called *a dual strategy of monitoring-guidance*. Well-resourced parents are able to provide optimal learning conditions for their children through in-school and outside-school quality education, which help maximise their children's academic capacity. At the same time, these conditions facilitate parents' involvement in their children's schooling, enabling them to effectively monitor their children to ensure the expected results of their investment. By contrast, for lower-class parents who have limited economic and cultural resources, monitoring-guidance is not feasible. Thus, even when they do invest in their children's schooling, there is a possibility that their investment will not yield the desired outcomes.

Qualitative observations are consistent with the Multinomial Logistic Regression result for significant influence of *parental upbringing* on young people's educational achievement. Parental upbringing is measured by young survey respondents' agreement to the three following statements about their family environment while growing up (12 to 18 years old): 'Family members helped one another in difficult times', 'Family members knew close friends of other members', and 'In my family, I usually was asked for my opinions and they were taken seriously'. As such, this study presumes that parental upbringing reflects, to some extent, the beneficial childrearing practices of monitoring-guidance and emphasis on individuality which have been observed in this study's qualitative research. A young survey respondent who agrees to all three following statements is assumed to have *high-level parental upbringing*, two statements *medium-level parental upbringing*, and zero statements or one statement *low-level parental upbringing* (see 4.2 – Measurements). Multinomial Logistic Regression analysis demonstrates that, controlling for the effects of class background, demographic characteristics, parental economic

resources and parental education, the chance of being educated at the college/university level rather than a secondary or lower level for someone with *high-level parental upbringing* is significantly higher than that for someone with *low-level parental upbringing* (see Model 5 – Table. 5.4).

It is crucial, however, to not lose sight of the cultural story behind what appear to be differentiated parenting strategies. Monitoring-guidance is not a matter of choice, but of *chance*. Ultimately, the class gap in children's academic achievement echoes the gap in parental resources. Figure 5.2 illustrates the translation of the general framework of reproduction (see Figure P.1) into empirical evidence of the reproduction of educational advantages. As opposed to lower-class parents who struggle to provide their children with the *universal* educational conditions (*school costs, basic learning conditions*, and *parental school involvement*), higher-class parents are not only able to satisfy these basic necessities easily, but also to make efficient investment to equip their children with those *non-universal or discriminating* merits that the educational field rewards. Through *quality schooling* and *additional education*, young people from higher-class backgrounds are better schooled and better exam-prepared, and thus are more likely to have successful college/university entrance.

Figure 5.2. Empirical framework of the reproduction of educational advantages in contemporary Vietnam

Universal conditions

School costs

In the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) statistics in 2012, Vietnam was ranked number 74 among 76 surveyed countries in terms of secondary/postsecondary-level participation rates, with 63% of its 15-year-olds being enrolled (Schleicher 2015). Quantitative analysis in this study demonstrates that only 40% of out-of-school young people aged 14 to 25 have completed the postsecondary level or higher. The implication of these striking statistics is that postsecondary completion is far from being universalised in contemporary Vietnam, and thus inequality in such completion deserves scrutiny. Qualitative evidence in this study suggests that the most fundamental requirements for someone to be able to complete the twelve years of general schooling concern *school costs* – that is, the ability to pay for obligatory school fees, and *basic learning conditions* – that is, having the time and the physical, psychological, and intellectual well-being for learning, and not being compromised by household labour duties. Qualitative analysis finds that only lower-class parents have trouble in providing the basic learning conditions for their children, primarily due to their financial constraint.

As presented in Table 5.6, quantitative findings affirm that young people from lower-class backgrounds are significantly more likely than those from higher-class backgrounds to have left school (here termed 'out of education') due to financial difficulties, which are reflected in statements such as 'cannot afford school fee', 'have to work for family', and 'school too far from home'.

Table 5.6.

Percentages of young people *out of education* due to financial difficulty by class background, 2010		
	Out of education due to financial difficulty	
Class background	Weighted percent	Unweighted base
Leader-professional class	21	292
Nonmanual intermediate class	34	174
Manual intermediate class	29	421
Working class	42	3958
Total	40	4845

Notes:

Out of education: Young people who answered 'No' to the survey question: 'Do you currently go to school, college, university or higher?'

The variable 'financial difficulty' combines three answers to the survey question: 'What was the main reason that made you stop going to school?': 'cannot afford school fee', 'have to work for family', and 'school too far from home'.

There is a highly significant association between reasons for being out of education and class background: Adjusted F (7.058, 1115.165)=13.169***

In qualitative research, only parents in lower-class families report having struggled with their children's *school costs*, or in fact ever care to mention the matter of school costs, as opposed to parents in higher-class families who easily manage costs and thus take this matter for granted. To pay for the compulsory school fee, which includes a tuition fee (mainly in postsecondary level, since lower levels – elementary and secondary – are tuition-free) and a non-tuition fee of in-school extra tuition and school upkeep (in all levels), lower-class families in this

study have to exhaust their budget. Some even resort to loans, as the following interview accounts reveal. Some parents are unable to meet their children's school expenses, forcing their children to terminate school prematurely, no matter how committed they are to their children's education and how hard they try to keep their children in school.

'Although I don't have a lot, I always take proper care of the children's school expenses. I never let my children pay their fees late. If they are late payers and know that their parents don't have money for their study, they will be affected and become bored with learning. Therefore, even when I don't have any money I'll try by every way possible to manage so that my children will always feel relaxed and be able to study. I often tell my children that although we parents are poor and don't have a lot, we'll manage their study expenses to the end, even if sometimes we have to borrow for that.' (Mrs. Lam, lower-class family)

'Our parents did not help us with our study. All they could do was to contribute financially to the school. And even that was difficult for them, because they were not financially comfortable at all. I was always the one who paid the fee latest in class.' (Son, lower-class background)

'My son didn't dare think about getting to the high-school level because we were poor. He was planning to not take the high-school entrance exam until I told him that I'd manage.' (Mrs. Luyen, lower-class family)

Basic learning conditions

Only in lower-class families do children have to spend a considerable amount of their non-school time in their daily routines on *household work*. Their situation seems a far cry from that of children from working-class homes in the US, whom, as Lareau (2003: 3–4) observes, experience 'long stretches of leisure time'. In Vietnam, the household economy has been dominant among the income-generating activities of the population, especially in the agricultural sector, and many types of contributing labour performed by those under 16 years of age are legal (Gallup 2004, Dang KS *et al.* 2006). According to results from the Vietnam National Child Labour Survey 2012, three fourths of working children (children aged 5 to 17, attending school or not, who are engaged in economic activities) are unpaid family workers (MOLISA *et al.* 2014). The following analysis looks at class-specified patterns of household work, impact of household work on schooling, and influences of household work arrangements in the family.

<u>Class-specified patterns of household work</u>

The interview extracts below discuss some of the household work activities that children from lower-class homes in this study are allocated by their parents. This work includes *household chores* such as cooking and doing laundry and *economic (*or *income-generated) activities* – mainly farm work – such as working on paddy fields and animal husbandry (see also MOLISA *et al.* 2014). Most young respondents attend to their household work voluntarily. According to Mrs. Quynh's account, her children even create their own responsibilities, through which they earn money for their schooling. Some, however, are coerced by their parents. Mrs. Luyen recalls having physically punished her son for ignoring his assigned household duty.

'When my oldest daughter was small, she helped me do housework. She washed clothes, cooked, prepared food to feed the pigs and chickens – all the odd jobs around the house. Both my oldest daughter and my second son tended buffalos and cut grass after school.' (Mrs. Lam, lower-class family)

'Before, when my son went to school, it was tough on him. He went to school in the morning and came back at midday, cooked lunch for himself and his grandmother, and after that went to school in the afternoon. He rode seven or eight kilometres to school on his bicycle. At home, he helped his grandmother grow bananas and fruit trees. He also had to help me. When I was a vegetable seller I often soaked vegetables in the pond the afternoon before market time. I usually asked him to collect them for me while I cooked dinner. One time he didn't do it, so I beat him.' (Mrs. Luyen, lower-class family)

'The second brother and his older sister were the most hard-working. After school, they cut grass to feed the calves and tended the calves. At the same time, they caught the dead fishes from the rice field and sold them to buy their own flock of wild geese. They kept the geese until they got big and sold them to buy books and pens.' (Mrs. Quynh, lower-class family)

'*My oldest son – Because in the past I used to use straw for cooking all my pans and pots were soot-smeared. He often carried them all on a yoke to the river and scoured them until they became clean white. That was a rule. I didn't even have to wash clothes. After I came back from the market my children had done all the housework.'* (Mrs. Giao, lower-class family)

The situation of young people from higher-class homes stands in stark contrast to their lower-class counterparts'. The accounts of those from higher-class homes are all nearly identical to the following: *'When I was small, all I did was learning and hanging out.'* (Hiep, higher-class background). Those who do help their parents are involved either in light housework such as cooking or home tidying or, like Thu in the following example, nonmanual, financially rewarding work for her parents' business. The payment Thu received per month in 2003 from her parents for her duty at the their Internet-service shops came to a total of 3 million Viet Nam Dong (VND) – about 10 times the national minimum salary at the time (see Vietnam Government 2003). (As of 2010, 1 million VND – equivalent to about 30 GBP – approximates the monthly minimum wage set by the Vietnamese government.)

'When I was in early high school, my parents had five Internet-service shops. They asked me to manage the books for them, which means that I was the person who noted down the incomings and outgoings of the shops – the everyday receipts and expenses, and my parents gave me a daily salary of 50 thousand. That was kind of their way to justify the stipends that they gave me. After a while my father started to think that 50 thousand weren't enough for me to spend, so my parents raised my payment to 100 thousand a day. I lived so comfortably, having loads of stipend.' (Thu, higher-class background)

<u>Impact of household work on schooling</u>

The time- and labour-consuming housework and farm work that young people from lower-class homes carry out after school may take a toll on the time and energy they can devote to learning. As revealed by the following accounts, the demanding labour that young people have no other choices but to take on can be partially blamed for their modest academic achievement. The evidence supports Bourdieu's (1986: 47)

insight that 'time free from economic necessity' – a form of economic capital – is crucial to the accumulation process of cultural capital.

The first two cases of Tuan and Son illustrate how students' farm labour input affects their academic input negatively. Drowsiness and tiredness from work impede their attention to lectures at school. At home, they have little time or energy for learning. In particular, the pig slaughter Tuan performed when he was under the age of 18 (in postsecondary school) is banned from being undertaken by junior workers under Vietnamese law (see MOLISA *et al.* 2014) and, in his view, has damaged him physically ('*sleepy*' during class hours), psychologically (feeling '*self-pitied*'), and academically ('*no acquirement of knowledge through lectures*'). Tuan is the only child in this study to state having experienced *child labour*. Yet the phenomenon of child labour – according to the Vietnam National Child Labour Survey 2012, 'work classified as exerting a negative impact on the physical and psychological development and the dignity of children' – accounts for over 60% of working children and 10% of the child population (aged 5 to 17) in Vietnam (MOLISA *et al.* 2014: 24).

'Sometimes I feel self-pitied. I faced many things on my own. I was disadvantaged in many ways. Before, my parents used to work in pig slaughter. I had to wake up very early every day. When I was sleeping most soundly, I had to wake up, wrestling with the pigs to slaughter them. That was one of the reasons why, when I was in class, I felt sleepy. I used to doze off during lessons. So there was no acquirement of knowledge through lectures. There were many lessons I didn't understand, which frustrated me. I tried to hide my ignorance though, and my three years of high school were wasted. I really regret it.' (Tuan, lower-class background)

'I was an average learner, not a good one, not an excellent one, because I didn't have time for study. I went to school in the morning and then spent the afternoon tending the buffalos. Most of the time, I looked at the lessons very quickly, so I was not good at difficult subjects like the Vietnamese literature or maths.' (Son, lower-class background)

Consistent with qualitative observations about lower-class children's contribution to household economic activities, quantitative analysis (see Table 5.7) shows that young people from lower-class backgrounds who are currently in education are significantly more likely to work and significantly more likely to work to contribute financially to their parents' households.

Table 5.7.

Percentages of young people who are in work and working to support parental household financially by class background, those *in education* and *living with parents*, 2010				
	In work		**Working to support parental household financially**	
Class background	Weighted percent	Unweighted base	Weighted percent	Unweighted base
Leader-professional class	29	561	72	161
Nonmanual intermediate class	38	256	77	93
Manual intermediate class	38	607	83	226
Working class	46	3143	91	1474
Total	43	4567	88	1954

Notes:

In work: Young people who answered 'Yes' to the survey question: 'In the last seven days, have you worked for income?'

Working to support parental household financially: Young people (living with parents) who selected either of the following two answers for the survey question 'Why did you so this job?': 'My family needs money' or 'To support my family'

In education: Young people who answered 'Yes' to the survey question: 'Do you currently go to school, college, university or higher?'

Living with parents: Young people who answered 'Yes' to either of the following two questions: 'Do you live with your biological mother now?' or 'Do you live with your biological father now?'

There is a highly significant association between being in work and class background: Adjusted F (2.762, 372.832)=15.833***

There is a highly significant association between supporting parental household financially and class background: Adjusted F (7.903, 1066.887)=6.772***

Their indispensable share in household livelihoods even forces those from lower-class homes to give up educational opportunities or cut short their schooling for economic activities. Mrs. Quyen's oldest daughter was not allowed to join a pedagogical course upon finishing postsecondary level, even though the course was fully funded by the government. Instead, she stayed at home to do agricultural work and help her parents feed her four younger siblings. Mrs. Quyen explains her daughter's situation as follows:

'*At that time, if I had let her go, it would have been too tough on our family – five children all going to school. We only had the rice field, we didn't do trading or anything, we couldn't afford letting her go.'* (Mrs. Quyen, lower-class family)

Another young woman, Ly, whose parents were both unskilled workers, had not even finished the elementary level before she left school to look for paid work. From the age of 10 to 23, Ly replaced her father in helping her mother feed and send her two younger brothers to school. Ly reveals:

'I quit school at grade 5. At the time, my family was poor. My mother had to care for three children. My father was sick and couldn't help my mother. It was hard to make money, therefore I had to quit school early. I worked and sent money home every few months to my mother and younger brothers.' (Ly, lower-class background)

Lower-class families' inability to bear the financial cost of their children's staying in school and out of work, as illustrated by the above qualitative accounts, helps explain quantitative findings displayed in Table 5.8 below: the lower their class background, the earlier young survey respondents stopped education and first worked for money.

Table 5.8.

Young people's mean age of stopping school and mean age of first working for money by class background, 2010						
	Mean age of stopping school			**Mean age of first working for money**		
Class background	Mean	Standard error	Unweighted base	Mean	Standard error	Unweighted base
Leader-professional class	19.24	.228	294	19.18	.174	359
Nonmanual intermediate class	17.56	.329	175	18.49	.215	204
Manual intermediate class	16.62	.159	421	17.59	.154	449
Working class	15.94	.053	3964	17.09	.056	4033

Influences on household work arrangements

Lower-class parents' allocation of household work to their children is determined by both economic and cultural factors. The afore-cited interview extracts indicate *economic necessity* as the foremost reason for young people's contribution to household work. Lower-class parents fail to provide adequate learning conditions for their children by demanding the children's labour input, not because they are unaware of the importance of learning, but because they simply cannot afford to do any differently. In lower-class homes, where household livelihoods depend upon time-consuming, labour-intensive work, children's labour input helps to put food on the table and keep themselves in school. Lower-class parents' aspirations for their children's education, as the following

accounts demonstrate, is subdued by the indispensability of the youngsters' share of work to the families' survival.

Mrs. Quyen, an agricultural-worker mother, maintains: *'We provided the conditions for our children's learning. We made sure they learned. We knew that one must have time in order to learn. So whenever they needed to learn we let them. We didn't force them to do anything else. After dinner, they went off to their desks and learned.'* At the same time, though, Mrs. Quyen admits that her children participated extensively in various areas of housework and farm work while in school: '*My sons tended the buffalos, but they didn't have to do field work. My daughters did field work, and they cleaned the house. My daughters also had to make flour, taking water from the well to spray on the flour. Making flour was really hard work.'* (Mrs. Quyen, lower-class family). One of her children even had to forego an educational opportunity to help out in the family's rice field (Mrs. Quyen's account, pg 162). Similarly, Mrs. Giao, an unskilled-worker mother, claims: '*My husband and I only wanted our children to learn well. We didn't make them do a lot of work. We did most of the work for them.'* (Mrs. Giao, lower-class family). Through her account and her son's, on the other hand, we learn that Mrs. Giao's children were responsible for not only household chores (Mrs. Giao's account, pg 157) but also demanding economic activities, which were detrimental to their schooling (Tuan's account, pg 160).

There may have also been cultural influences on lower-class parents' allocation of household work to their children. It can be deduced from qualitative accounts that, in lower-class families, while the younger sons are most likely to be exempted from work, and the older daughters often have to contribute the largest share of labour. Presumably, thus, the younger sons have more time to devote to their study than the older daughters.

Mrs. Quyen's daughter and Ly, as the oldest daughters in their families, both ended their schooling for work that helped toward bringing up their younger siblings (Mrs. Quyen's and Ly's accounts, pg 162). The following account by Thanh, Mrs. Quyen's son, supports the study's speculation about son bias in the distribution of household duties.

'When I was small, my parents were very poor and had to do very hard work. I had three older sisters. I was always pampered. My parents didn't make me do anything. I went to school in the morning, and tended buffalos and cows only when I didn't have anything to do at all in the afternoon, otherwise I would be allowed to stay at home to study. My parents encouraged me to only eat and study – I didn't have to work. My sisters worked, while I only ate, played and studied.' (Thanh, lower-class background)

Such son bias seems to be influenced by Confucius patriarchal norms. As the qualitative accounts expound, some lower-class parents openly value sons' education more highly than daughters', seeing sons as more suitable household decision-makers and caregivers for parents in old age than daughters, who will serve their husband and husband's family. Thanh's father's account sheds light on the special treatment of exemption from household work that Thanh received as a young son in his family: '*Sons are important. Daughters cannot make decisions in important matters while sons can make such decisions in the family'* (Mr. Tam, lower-class family). Likewise, we might understand through her mother's statement why Ly, an oldest daughter, quit school to work to support her two younger brothers without much resistance from her parents: '*After all, girls will get married anyway. My daughter will follow her husband and her husband's family. My sons will take care of me'* (Mrs. Quynh, lower-class family).

The above observations about gender bias in household work involvement and educational opportunities are consistent with several existing survey findings. The Vietnam National Child Labour Survey 2012 reports that girls and children of older age groups tend to spend more time on household chores (MOLISA *et al.* 2014). Nguyen NA *et al.*'s (2015: 13, 35) analysis of the Vietnam School-to-work Transition Survey 2012–2013 exposes the following striking contrast among people not in work aged 15 to 29: while 77% of young women engage in household chores, 77% of young men participate in leisure activities. The same authors further note that young women are more likely than young men to leave school due to economic reasons (not affording school fees or having to earn money to support their family). Likewise, Nghiem (2004), in qualitative research on female migrants seeking work in the garment industries, observes that supporting a family is one of the prime reasons for a daughter to migrate.

It is reasonable to assume that parents' expectations of their children's labour contribution are guided primarily by economic necessity, and only secondarily by cultural norms. If they had greater resources to be distributed among a smaller number of children, parents in lower-class homes might not have been resigned to the fact that some of their children had to sacrifice schooling to help maintain the whole family's survival. (Quantitative findings are that young people from working-class backgrounds have more siblings than those from higher-class backgrounds (on average, three as compared to two).) Their economic deprivation prevents lower-class parents from providing all their children *equally* with the basic conditions for learning.

Certainly, it is difficult to rebuff the important influence of cultural norms on gender bias in contemporary Vietnam. After all, even in well-off families, daughters may receive less parental investment and support especially after they have finished education and gotten

married. Mr. Luc, who asserts his willingness to devote all possessions to his son as the prospective heir to the family enterprise, says the following about his daughter: '*She has to depend on her husband. Her future depends on the future of her husband's family*' (Mr. Luc, higher-class family). In Thu's and Manh's higher-class families alike, the parents harbour higher expectations of the educational and occupational attainment of their sons than their daughters. Manh, the successor to his father's current position as head of their extended family, claims: '*About my elder sister, my parents actually did not have very high hopes for her – mainly a stable job, a stable family. I think my parents are relatively satisfied about her now. But they have pretty high hopes for me… mainly because I'm a male and will be the head of our patriarchy*' (Manh, higher-class background).

Nevertheless, the unquestionable power of cultural norms helps buttress the supposition that if lower-class families had the same resources as higher-class families they would be able to invest in all their children more equally, regardless of their possible son bias. Current evidence suggests that the availability of resources mediates the influence of Confucius norms regarding gender roles on the distribution of resources within the family (see also Wong 2005: 140).

The above analyses suggest that examination of the link between class, family livelihoods, and children's share of household work helps illuminate the causes of educational inequality, especially in contemporary Vietnam, where household economies are the leading income-generating activity. Nevertheless, even though previous studies have looked into the impact of child labour on children's schooling in Vietnam (see, for example, MOLISA *et al.* 2014), there remains an inadequate understanding of the impact on schooling of children's engagement in *household work more generally* (see also UCW 2009). Bourdieusian educational research, with its current larger emphasis on

middle-class advantages rather than on economic disadvantages, may also benefit from revisiting the effects of money and time on schooling, besides continuing to delve into cultural factors and the symbolic dimension (see 3.1).

Parental school involvement

Another relevant aspect of the basic conditions for school continuity is parental involvement in children's schooling. This study examines the issue with a focus on *attendance at parent–teacher conferences* and *home monitoring*. The following section presents and explains class differentiations in the patterns of parental school involvement.

Class-specified patterns of parental school involvement

Most parents attend once-per-term parent–teacher conferences at their children's schools, during which students' progress is discussed. However, those from lower-class homes report less access to these obligatory events. The extracts below are from a leader-professional father and a single working-class mother.

'I went to the parent–teacher conferences regularly. Whenever I received an invitation letter from the children's school, I would go. Even when my son went to school in another city, I never missed a single conference. It's because I took great care of my children's schooling.' (Mr. Lap, higher-class family)	*'The most important thing in my life is that I can earn a lot of money to support my son, so my son will have a degree and a job. Unfortunately, my son is on his own most of the time. Since he was in elementary school until 12th grade, I never went to a parent–teacher conference at his school. He asked his friend's mother to speak on my behalf if the teacher called out his name in the conference.'* (Mrs. Luyen, lower-class family)

Even though both these parents express great commitment to their children's education, their experiences of school involvement contrast greatly. The first reason for the difference between the two concerns the impact of the respective economic conditions underlying their lives. For Mrs. Luyen, a migrant housemaid, it was logistically almost impossible to go to the parent–teacher conferences at her son's school. As she reveals in her interview, Mrs. Luyen worked long hours, not only on weekdays, but also on weekends when the conferences were normally held. The 70-kilometre distance between her workplace in Hanoi and her home in Hung Yen, where her son went to school, took her an approximately 8-hour round trip on her bicycle – the only means of transport that she owned. Therefore, Mrs. Luyen only got to visit home when she had more than one day off in a row – often during long national holidays when schools were closed and no parent–teacher conferences held. By contrast, Mr. Lap, a local leader, had free time and a motorbike that enabled him to frequent the conferences at his son's school in another city. His state job gave him completely free weekends. By motorbike, it only took him an hour to travel from his hometown to his son's school.

Access issues aside, there are class differentiations regarding parents' use of the parent–teacher conferences. As reflected in the following accounts, whereas lower-class parents appear to be passive attendees relying on teachers' reports, higher-class parents actively make the most of these occasions by initiating one-to-one discussions with teachers about their children's progress.

'At the conferences, I wanted to hear the teachers' assessment of my children. Mostly my children were praised, not criticised, by their teachers. I also talked to the teachers myself, asking them about my children's personalities or progress.' (Mr. Lap, higher-class family)

'At home I checked my children's schoolbooks to see whether they got good or bad marks. I didn't know how they were at school, only the teachers did. I went to the parent–teacher conferences and the teachers often said that my children performed OK – not so good, not so bad.' (Mrs. Giao, lower-class family)

'I attended parent–teacher conferences regularly. I often asked my children's teachers about their progress in a constructive manner. I talked to the teachers openly because I understood my children well. I understood their strengths and weaknesses.' (Mr. Phuc, higher-class family)

'With my two elder children, I always left at the end of the parent–teacher meetings. If the teachers said the children were average then that's what I knew.' (Mrs. Lam, lower-class family)

Determinants of parental school involvement

Class differentiations in parents' school involvement – between middle-class parents' assertiveness and effective demands and working-class parents' lack thereof – have been observed in many US-based and UK-based Bourdieusian education studies. In these studies, to account for the relative efficiency of parents' school involvement or the extent to which their involvement fits the expectations of the school, researchers stressed parents' self-confidence in relation to the education system. Writing on how middle-class parents (mostly mothers) are able to

effectively influence school personnel on behalf of their children or claim special school treatment for their children, Lareau (2003) highlighted their *sense of entitlement*, while Reay (1998, 2000) their *self-assured dispositions* (see 4.1 – Cultural class process).

Qualitative evidence in this study proposes a different explanation of the class patterns in parents' school involvement. There are working-class mothers who dealt with and demanded outcomes from their children's school without fear, and they sometimes did attain the outcomes they expected. Even though it cannot be deduced that this is the norm in the wider population and the question is open to future research, the evidence at hand does compel a temporary shift of focus away from parents' self-confidence to parents' *access to economic and cultural resources* in order to better understand their school involvement. The working-class mothers whose accounts are provided below present themselves in the interviews as self-confident people. They are all economically active; some among them are the main earners in their families. If their school involvement is lacking or inactive, it is not because they are not confident enough to get involved, but because they lack the financial conditions to do so. They may as well be seen to lack an awareness of school expectations of their involvement (that which Reay (2004) refers to as knowledge and information). Better awareness of the rules of the education system – in this case, parental involvement in children's schooling – is seen to have helped change the ways they deal with school, yielding educational benefits for their children.

Below are the accounts of three such working-class mothers. Mrs. Luyen, a divorced cleaner, managed to get her complete absence at the parent–teacher conferences accepted by her son's teacher (see also Mrs. Luyen's account, pg 172). Mrs. Quynh, who has brought up her three children mainly on her own doing miscellaneous unskilled work, due to

her husband's sickness and early death, successfully claimed waiver of extra tuition fees for both her sons. Mrs. Lam, an agricultural worker, initiated contact with her youngest daughter's teacher – something she regretted not having done with the teachers of her two elder children (see also Mrs. Lam's account, pg 170).

'When my son was in elementary school, I met his teacher once. I asked her to sympathise with our situation. My son was on his own. I had to work in Hanoi. It would take a lot of time for me to come home for the parent–teacher meeting. The teacher sympathised with us.' (Mrs. Luyen, lower-class family)

'When my children went to school I only looked forward to attending the parent–teacher conferences. At the conference, I only looked forward to asking their teachers about their learning behaviours. And when my two sons were in secondary school our house was too poor. I always had to ask their teachers for them to go to extra classes. Every time their teachers suggested extra classes and my children wanted to go badly, but they didn't have money, I would go to the teachers' houses to ask [for free extra classes]. And they would accept. The teachers encouraged my children to go to these extra classes, not having to pay the fee.' (Mrs. Quynh, lower-class family)

'About my two elder children, I should have asked their teachers, but I was ignorant. With Bac [the youngest daughter] as I was more experienced, I tried to get closer to the head teacher. I told him about how her older brother and sister failed the university entrance exam, and my wish for Bac to achieve better, and that as long as she could get into university we wouldn't mind any expenses, so that he could help her.' (Mrs. Lam, lower-class family)

Higher-class, better-resourced parents go about their school involvement more *consistently* and *equally* effectively for all their children. They are able to do so not only because they have better access to school involvement and awareness of school expectations of their involvement, but also because they have the capability. To examine such capability, we need to take into account *home monitoring of children's schooling*. The following extracts illustrate the conflicting manners that parents of differing classes monitor their children's schooling at home. Higher-class parents portray themselves as dedicated and controlling. Their painstaking monitoring starts from the lowest levels of the children's schooling and peaks in transitional stages, especially between postsecondary level and high education. Their understanding of children's learning capacity and progress, obtained through such monitoring, facilitates their school involvement. By contrast, lower-class parents' accounts suggest a lack of adequate attention and control over their children's academic progress. Their inadequate monitoring of their children's learning at home limits their ability to be involved effectively in their children's schooling.

'Throughout my first, second and third level, my academic results certainly were very important to my parents. If I got a low mark, it'd be very dangerous for me. Throughout my 12-year schooling, my parents encouraged me so much to study. For example, when I was in secondary school, my parents didn't allow me to go to sleep early before having reviewed all my lessons.' (Hoa, higher-class background)

'I don't know whether my children did their homework. I just gave them money to pay their fees.' (Mr. Vung, lower-class background)

'In elementary and secondary school, my mother often forced me to study and pressurised me to study. Especially when I was in high school, my parents' attention to my schooling was enormous. All the time, they push me to study, study, study, study.' (Manh, higher-class background)

'About my schooling, nobody cared. If my parents didn't see me study, they would scold at me, telling me to go study. But no one really knew what I did or monitored me.' (Khanh, lower-class background)

As in the case of school involvement, it can be suggested that class differentiations in home monitoring are primarily linked to those in access to economic resources, and not those in commitment to the children's schooling. Lower-class parents, especially the manual-worker fathers, report the tough, long-hour, everyday labour that leaves them tired in the evenings and unable to take care of their children. The confession from Mr. Thiem, the father of Khanh (whose account is shown above), a long-distance truck driver and seasonal agricultural worker, is typical: '*I went to work all the time. I worked all day and night. In the evening, I only wanted to go to bed. I heard from my children that they did OK at school and that's what I knew'* (Mr. Thiem, lower-class family).

The importance of economic resources in enabling home monitoring is further supported by the evidence that lower-class, less-educated parents are capable of monitoring their children effectively when they have the physical conditions needed to do so. As shown in the following examples, Manh's mother, an agricultural worker educated at the secondary level, and Mrs. Na, an elementary school teacher educated past the postsecondary level, go about their monitoring of their children's schooling in nearly identical ways. Both mothers keep close

track of their children's academic results, set firm study rules for them to follow, and discipline them with strict methods in cases of unsatisfactory performance. Despite their differing educational levels and jobs, what these two mothers have in common is good household finance, to which their leader-professional husbands contribute. Thus, they can both afford to devote adequate time to look after their children's schooling without having to worry much about subsistence issues.

'At home, if my son did not do his homework or learn by heart a lesson, I ordered him to do so or he would not have dinner. Every evening, when it was learning time, he had to go to his desk by himself and learn all his lessons. After he finished his homework, he would have to bring it to me so that I could check for him, and only after that he was allowed to go to bed. But then, during high school, he learned by himself with high self-awareness; I no longer needed to monitor him.' (Mrs. Na, higher-class family)

'My mother was very strict, but thanks to that I have been able to achieve what I have now. When I was younger, she laid down a specific number of hours a day that I had to study. I had to sit at my desk and she did not care what I was doing there. But actually it formed a very good habit for me. Although at first I did not do anything, gradually I started to learn. I also remember that when I got a 4 [out of 10] in mathematics, my mother scolded terribly at me. At my desk, the paper that had that mark was glued on the wall in front of my eyes. All my certificates and awards were removed. The paper with the mark 4 replaced them, right in front of my eyes when I sat at my desk.' (Manh, higher-class background)

Lower-class parents' struggle in providing the basic learning conditions for their children is exacerbated by school-related disadvantages. School–parent collaboration is a two-way relationship that thrives not only on parents' active involvement but also on school provision of support and assistance for parents. Such school provision may be lacking from the under-resourced schools most young people from lower-class homes attend, which they refer to as 'common schools' or 'village schools'.

Thanh describes his village school as follows: *'Studying at my school was quite tough. The school had tile roofs, and then they rebuilt the school. During term time, we had to move from class to class. There were no facilities. I suppose it got better over the years; yet, during the time I was there, there was nothing. When I was in the first level, we sat in a class under a straw roof, surrounded by bamboo pieces. The teachers were so-so. Sometimes when it rained, the roof leaked, and they were not enthused'* (Thanh, lower-class background). Thanh's father comments: '*When my children were in school, parent–teacher conferences were really rare. The teachers didn't really care'* (Mr. Tam, lower-class family). Under-resourced schools like Thanh's contrast starkly with the well-resourced schools that many young people from higher-class backgrounds attend, where parent-school relationship is strongly facilitated. There is a massive gap between having schooling and having *quality schooling*, which is what really counts toward the high-education goal. The next section supports this claim.

Discriminating conditions

This study finds that meeting the universal requirements – school costs, basic learning conditions, parental school involvement – may help one make it through general schooling, but cannot guarantee a successful transition to high education. Higher education is much more

competitive than general schooling. Previous studies on income inequality in contemporary Vietnam have commonly found that educational inequality is greater at higher levels of education (see Do TK 2005, Fritzen & Brassard 2005, Vu HL 2012). College/university education in Vietnam has been expanding rapidly since the 1990s but not been able to meet heavy demand. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education and Training, between the 1990s and the early 2000s only one sixth of students who took the college/university entrance exams were admitted (Dang HA 2013), which increased to one third in the early 2010s (Clark 2014).

The empirical evidence provided in this study suggests that a successful transition to higher education is more assured if one has attributes that are rewarded by the educational field, yet not available on a universal basis. Class inequality is much more salient in these *discriminating conditions* than in the aforementioned universal conditions. This explains why there is a much larger class gap regarding the achievement of a college/university degree than regarding postsecondary completion. As can be seen in Table 5.9, the proportion of postsecondary graduates among young survey respondents from leader-professional backgrounds is not quite twice that among those from working-class backgrounds (55% compared to 32%), but those from leader-professional backgrounds are eight times more represented than those from working-class backgrounds as college/university graduates (24% compared to 3%).

Table 5.9.

Percentages of young people's educational level by their class background, those *out of education*, 2010, percent by row					
	Educational level				
Class background	College/ University	Post-secondary	Secondary and below	Total	Unweighted base
Leader-professional class	24	55	21	100	297
Nonmanual intermediate class	9	51	40	100	175
Manual intermediate class	7	41	52	100	421
Working class	3	32	65	100	3965
Total					4858

Notes:
Out of education: Young people who answered 'No' to the survey question: 'Do you currently go to school, college, university or higher?'
There is a highly significant association between educational level and class background: Adjusted F (5.112, 736.148)=42.398***

Furthermore, according to Multinomial Logistic Regression results, net of demographic characteristics (ethnicity, gender, residence), a young person from a leader-professional background has the most advantageous chance of achieving at college/university level as opposed to low education compared to their lower-class counterparts (see Model 2 – Table 5.4).

What are the discriminating conditions in this context? The findings in this study support, to a certain extent, previous findings of school rewards in Bourdieusian education research (see Bourdieu 1976, Bourdieu & Passeron [1977] 2000, Lareau 1987, 2003). First, this study's evidence of the impact of reading skills being transmitted from parents and grandparents in educated homes to their offspring on the offspring's school performance shares some resonance with Bourdieu's (1976) argument that schools reward the 'cultural heritage' of people brought up in cultured homes (see 7.3 – Reading). Second, evidence of parental involvement echoes in part Lareau's (1987) analysis that schools reward the parenting practices which mirror its requests.

Most importantly, though, the research findings indicate that the educational field in contemporary Vietnam rewards *extra-school knowledge* – knowledge beyond its universal curriculum and outside its universal system. Compared to lower-class parents, higher-class parents are more equipped to help their children acquire such extra-school knowledge, and thus achieve academic success, through their more *efficient cultivation* of their children's schooling. Higher-class parents' efficient cultivation is enabled by their advantageous stocks of capital, including *economic capital* in the forms of money and time, *cultural capital* in the forms of educational knowledge and knowledge of the *discriminating* rules of the educational field (not to mention an 'entitlement' to higher education, see 5.2), and *social capital* in the form of connections that bring about beneficial educational information or other advantages (for example in rural–urban relocation for educational purposes).

Quality schooling and *additional education* are found to be the two principal avenues that higher-class people are able to take in order to acquire extra-school knowledge and secure their place in high education. Overall, this study aligns with the consensus across much

Bourdieusian education research that the school is a reproductive agent. Yet, it is crucial to clarify that in the Vietnamese case, it is through high-quality schooling and additional education – the entrenched yet *non-universal sections* of the school system – that educational *inequality*, especially at the higher end of the education system, has been reproduced.

Quality schooling

This section discusses higher-class parents' resource-demanding orchestration of their children's quality schooling, and the short-term and long-term benefits of quality schooling for young people from higher-class families.

In this study, quality schooling does not refer to one particular type of school, but to a spectrum covering specialised schools, selective schools, and specialised or selective classes within regular schools in general levels (primary, secondary, and postsecondary). Quality schooling is often, though not strictly exclusively, offered at the most well-resourced institutions. The availability of school facilities, such as up-to-date textbooks and learning materials, libraries, computers, and Internet, which policy research in Vietnam (see, for example, Rollestone & Krutikova 2014) and elsewhere (see Henderson & Mapp 2002: 53, Palardy & Ream 2008: 258) have routinely used to measure 'quality education', may not in fact be an adequate predictor of quality schooling in Vietnam. At a glance, a surer predictor of quality schooling is the *non-universal admission* of the institutions in which it is provided. Admission to a quality school/class is via separate entrance exams.

Based on qualitative evidence, this study analyses quality schooling in terms of its *educational benefits* of *fostering students' academic aspirations*, *facilitating parental involvement in children's schooling*, and *ensuring a smooth entrance to college/university* for students (not to

mention the social benefits of helping develop a higher-class network, see 7.3 – Friend networking). Who benefits from the advantages brought about by quality schooling? Even though no statistics on the family status of students who receive quality schooling are available, qualitative observations suggest that people from higher-class families are more likely to be the beneficiaries of quality schooling. It is quite striking that among the young people in the qualitative sample, all of those from higher-class backgrounds have received quality schooling throughout or at some point during their general education, as against only one from a lower-class background.

Parental orchestration of quality schooling

It is primarily due to their parents' resourceful cultivation that young people from higher-class backgrounds have access to quality schooling. In order to provide quality schooling for their children, higher-class parents utilise *information*, *generous funds*, and sometimes also a *supporting network*. Quality schooling in lower grades (elementary and secondary), in particular, is sought out only by the most aspirational and well-resourced parents. As the following accounts by a leader-professional mother and her daughter suggests, parents select the schools, help their children make the applications, and ensure their children are well-prepared for the entrance exams of quality elementary/secondary schools.

'From secondary level, I began to remember about my schooling more clearly, because that was when my mother started to want me to take the entrance exams for specialised schools, selected classes, things like that. At that time, my mother had extremely high expectations about me going to a specialised school, so I took all the exams. My applications were sent to every single specialised school that recruited. I still remember that, at that time, I was highly aware of my schooling. I was really fond of going to the revision class for the entrance exam into the French specialised class at this secondary school. I always dreamt of getting into that school… In the end, I took the entrance exams for four schools in total. I passed two.' (Thu, higher-class background)

'Up to Trang's secondary level, her father was not home, so she had to listen to me completely. For example, I told her that I wanted her to go to the Foreign Language Specialised School, and then I hired teachers to tutor her at home, and she had to do as I told.' (Mrs. Chi, higher-class family)

Even more intensive investments are made by parents who send their children away from home for quality schooling in the lower grades. In the following accounts, a business-owning couple recalls having invested in such relocation for their two children. Their aim is to provide their children with better schooling and a more encouraging environment for learning than that available in their hometown. Apart from their exceptional drive and efforts, these parents deploy a remarkable stock of resources to fulfil their aim. Their urban network supplies the hosts for their children in the early days of relocation. Their wealth enables the purchase of an urban property for their children to settle in. Their spare time and financial comfort allow them to commute to care for and supervise their children, even though the children live quite a distance from home.

'When my son was about 12, 13 years old we had a special strategy for his schooling. We were afraid that if he had stayed here he would have been ruined, because in this village, a 10-year-old could go to the high street and earn money easily. Therefore, my wife and I decided that Tung would only go to elementary school here. When he reached secondary school, we would have to send him far away from this village environment. This is a dangerous environment because children are often afraid of learning and they would follow their friends to leave school and have no career. So when Tung reached secondary school we sent him to school in the city. We did the same with our daughter. In the beginning, they lived with our friends or relatives.' (Mr. Luc, higher-class family)

'We bought some land and built a house for our children in the city. Not many people in the village did the same thing that we did. When my daughter reached secondary school I followed her and my son to the property near the school. Me and my husband rode there in the morning by motorbike, prepared breakfast, lunch, and dinner for the children, and rode back home. The problem was, when the children got back from school they had to revise their lessons, and so I had to do all the cooking and washing. It was hard, and we were doing so for six, seven years straight, coming in the morning and leaving like clockwork.' (Mrs. Vui, higher-class family)

Postsecondary quality schooling is more accessible to higher-class families. Not everyone can afford the financial cost of quality schooling in higher grades. Relocation for quality schooling at the postsecondary level is essential for rural-based families since quality postsecondary schools are mainly located in town and urban areas. Urban relocation is financially demanding, even when children receive support from parents' urban network. Apart from school expenses, parents have to

pay for their children's living costs (including lodging and food), travelling for home visits, and their own travel expenses including fuel and road fares. An example case is that of Mrs. Na, who sent her son away to the big city (Hanoi) to attend a selective class at a postsecondary school. Even though she had her sister provide accommodation for her son and help monitor his schooling, Mrs. Na stresses: '*I sent money to my sister regularly. I always had to come up there [to Hanoi] regularly myself to check on him and remind my sister of her responsibility of watching my son'* (Mrs. Na, higher-class family). In the rather extreme case of Mr. Luc and Mrs. Vui, who sent both their children away from their hometown to the city for quality schooling from secondary level, they bought a house for their children to live in and travelled 20 kilometres everyday by motorbike between their hometown and their children's urban residence during the six years the children were in school (see Mr. Luc's and Mrs. Vui's accounts, above).

Quantitative results support the qualitative observation that higher-class families are more able to afford children's relocation for educational purposes than lower-class families. As Table 5.10 demonstrates, the higher their class background, the more likely young survey respondents are to have lived away from home for more than one month to study.

Table 5.10.

Percentages of young people having lived away from home for more than one month to study by class background, 2010		
	Having lived away for more than one month to study	
Class background	Weighted percent	Unweighted base
Leader-professional class	66	376
Nonmanual intermediate class	48	166
Manual intermediate class	37	343
Working class	32	2895
Total	36	3780
Notes: There is a highly significant association between reasons for living away from home for more than one month and class background: Adjusted F (8.329, 1315.925)=8.753***		

Benefits of quality schooling

One of the benefits that parents expect from quality schooling in lower grades is to shape their children into serious and motivated students, which seems to be realistic. The consensus among young interviewees who have received quality schooling, whose accounts are shown below, is that their quality schooling provided them with a *constructive learning environment* and *positive peer pressure*. Studying in an achievement-oriented environment among peers who are highly aspirational steers students toward ambitious academic goals, among which are to gain entrance to further quality schooling in subsequent years and in higher education. As such, students embark on the very track their parents want for them – continuous quality schooling leading up to college/university.

Following are some accounts by former quality-schooling students from higher-class families. In the case of Thu, her attendance at a specialised

secondary school was entirely decided and arranged by her mother (Thu's and Mrs. Chi's accounts, pg 182), but her attempt to get into a specialised postsecondary school was her own decision, shaped by a mixture of entitlement and peer pressure. Just like her classmates in the specialised secondary school, Thu was passionate and worked hard for the entrance exam of a specialised postsecondary school – what she saw as an *unquestionable* goal. Similarly, Hiep attributes his academic ambition and self-motivation to the influences of peers from his selective class. Whereas in lower grades his schooling was closely monitored by his mother, from early secondary school onward he was trusted to monitor himself and to even make his own educational decisions. Manh's account, in particular, hints at the differences between the level of academic peer pressure in a regular-schooling environment and a quality-schooling environment. Competing against students who had experienced specialised schooling sharpens Manh's learning focus and orients him toward the pursuit of specialised postsecondary schooling. In Manh's view, besides his mother's strict monitoring (see also Manh's account, pg 175), school peer influences play an important role in facilitating his academic success.

'At my specialised school, there was so much learning pressure, together with peers' competition, and so I also studied hard. In the past, that was the time that I was studying most properly. In 9th grade, all my friends took the entrance exams for specialised schools. Everyone was getting hot-headed about getting into a specialised school… I studied very hard. The first exam I took was for the English specialised class at [a national-level specialised high school]. I was really fond of it, I was mad about it. I attended revision classes at [the school] and saw its basketball ground

'When I was small I learned simply because I liked learning. From grade 7 I was friends with two male classmates. I was close to them during secondary school. They were very good and hard-working students. I was the person who was easily influenced by others, and I was fortunate to be friends with those two classmates because I learned from them. The three of us were very good students in our class. So since grade 7 my parents were completely assured about me. They trusted me, which meant that they did not monitor my time too closely. For example, I could hang out with my friends and came home late and didn't get scolded

'Until 8th grade, there were a few good students [at my village school] but they only beat me in handwriting. They could never come close in terms of intelligence. I was thinking 'to hell with them', I was still the best student at school, so sometimes I even skipped classes to hang out. Then in 9th grade, some students from the district specialised school moved into my school and I could see that they were much better than me. Although I used to be the best at my school, those [who were only considered] relatively good students from the district specialised schools were much better than I was.

and everything and I liked it a lot. I told myself I must try hard to get in there.' (Thu, higher-class background)	*at because my parents knew my friends and they knew I had an awareness of myself. So from grade 7 or 8 I earned my parents' trust. I even chose that [provincial selective] high school myself. I submitted my application and went to the exams by myself. I didn't have to ask anybody.'* (Hiep, higher-class background)	*That was when I began to study. Also, that was when I began to be aware that my learning was necessary, and I began to work really hard. I was friends with them, so when they decided to take the entrance exam [of a provincial specialised high school] I followed suit.'* (Manh, higher-class background)

Contrary to the situations found in under-resourced village schools, quality schooling *facilitates parent–school communication and collaboration.* As demonstrated in the following accounts, in a quality-schooling environment, teachers are responsible for and have the means to provide each individual student with meticulous care and monitoring, and to inform parents routinely about the students' progress. In particular, in the case of Mr. Lap, whose children both studied away from home, teachers initiated contact with him through timely long-distance phone calls to notify him about his children's problems at school. Such school outreach, also acknowledged by Mrs. Yen, makes parents' involvement in their children's schooling an easier task.

'When my youngest son was studying at the specialised school away from home, once he was absent from his class for three days… The teacher told me she learned about my son's fever through his friends, and that day she went to his rented flat to see whether it was true. She was afraid the children were not telling the truth. But when she went there she found that my son really had a high fever… At the specialised school, the teachers really cared.' (Mrs. Yen, higher-class family)

'When my daughter Que was not selected to attend the national exam for excellent students in 11th grade, she was greatly shocked. Her teacher called me over and I came immediately to encourage her. Or, when my son Son neglected the subject of Literature, his teacher also let me know right away.' (Mr. Lap, higher-class family)

'The head teacher of my oldest daughter's class didn't pay much attention to his students because it wasn't a selective class. The school was close to our house. Sometimes we invited him into the house but he refused… My youngest daughter attended a selective class so we and her head teacher were closer.' (Mrs. Lam, lower-class family)

'My head teacher at high school was the one whose advice really influenced me. In general, [students in] my class were very fond of him. He was really dedicated to his pupils, and he almost cared for each of them. He knew the strong and weak points of each pupil and offered advice.' (Dao, lower-class background)

It can be suggested, from observing the ideal match between parents' orchestration of their children's quality schooling and the support for their involvement that quality schools provide, that higher-class Vietnamese parents do have some power over the rules in the

educational field. Parental involvement does not simply and passively mirror the requests of schools, as previous Bourdieusian education researchers argue (see 4.1 – Cultural class process, especially Lareau (1987, 2003)). Rather, school expectations of parents' involvement are intensified by the ways in which highly aspirational and well-resourced parents go about their school involvement. It is likely to be the case that the school steps up its outreach in response to demands for improved outreach from highly involved parents. In other words, school demands for parents' involvement and parents' demands for school's assistance with their involvement reinforce each other. As such, *higher-class parents help create the norm*: school emphasis on parental involvement, with which they all have means to comply. But compliance with this 'norm' is challenging for their lower-class counterparts. As previously mentioned, lower-class parents lack not only the resources to become involved in their children's schooling, but also assistance in their prospective involvement from their children's under-resourced schools (see 5.3 – Parental school involvement).

Finally, the ultimate outcome that students and their parents expect from quality schooling, especially at the postsecondary level, is a successful transition to college/university. This expectation seems sensible, considering that the Vietnamese university entrance exam rewards students who are well versed in postsecondary-level knowledge. University admission in Vietnam is solely based on a nationwide standardised exam that takes place yearly in the summer. The exam has been known for its textbook-based character and an emphasis on rote memorisation (Hoang L 2013), but it is necessary to clarify that it is not simply the memorisation of textbooks that can make one pass the exam, but also prepared correct answers to the exam questions. Marking of the centralised university exam strictly follows detailed guidelines of model answers to the exam questions issued by the

Ministry of Education, and there is little space for students' improvisations or creativity. (The guidelines are publicised widely in the media by the Ministry of Education shortly following the exam.) Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that exam takers benefit from *well-guided and focused exam revision*, which, as will be discussed below, quality schooling provides.

Quality postsecondary programmes integrate exam revision. As the following extract exemplifies, quality-schooling students may not require extra tuition outside school because it is sufficiently provided inside school. They learn ahead of the national curriculum timeline in order to have time for extra learning such as exam preparation. Dao, the only young interviewee from a lower-class background to have received quality schooling, describes the special structure of her postsecondary-school curriculum as efficient in this regard.

'Because my class was a selective one, there were a lot of class hours. We didn't need to attend extra classes, but we learned ahead of the program so that we had more time for exam revision. So, I had curricular classes in the morning, went home, had lunch, took a short rest and went to school for extra classes in the afternoon. I learned everything at school. We all took exam revision classes at school where our teachers directly taught us.' (Dao, lower-class background)

Explicitly, quality postsecondary programmes, particularly specialised ones, prioritise a small number of subjects that are relevant to the university exam. A student often gets to select a particular specialised programme at the postsecondary level based on his/her preferred sector of the university entrance exam. For example, someone who plans to take the C-sector exam of social science subjects would enrol in a Literature, Geography, or History-specialised class. The student then has the opportunity to concentrate intensively on only the exam-

relevant subjects throughout the three years of postsecondary school, which will potentially give him/her unrivalled advantages in the university exam as compared to those who do not have such focused learning. The exam-driven programmes help explain why the postsecondary specialised schools in Vietnam (accounting for nearly 2% of the total postsecondary-level students across the country in the 2009–2010 school year) boast exceptionally high rates of successful university entrance every year – 90% to 100% (Nguyen H 2009)).

Certainly, such an exam-focused learning strategy can also be adopted by students outside the specialised-schooling system. One student in the qualitative sample, whose exam choice was the D-sector exam of Mathematics, Literature, and Foreign language, confirms: *'In high school, I only studied the D-sector subjects and did not really care about others'* (Duc, higher-class background). Parents who emphasise the university goal are, predictably, the ones who wholeheartedly encourage their children to follow the exam-focused strategy. In Mr. Kiet's account: '*The most important thing is to pass the university entrance exam. I care most about my children crossing that fence. I told my son that he could ignore other subjects in order to focus on the subjects he would take in the university exam. I knew what he needed in order to be able to cross the fence'* (Mr. Kiet, higher-class family).

It is only for specialised-schooling students, though, that exam-focused learning is legitimately endorsed by schools, to the extent that a former student of a specialised class confesses as follows: '*Since I was in a specialised class of the A sector, I only needed to study maths, physics, and chemistry. I didn't really have to study other subjects and still got 8 [out of 10] for them.'* He praises this learning style for enabling his university entrance. '*I think my most important milestone was entering the 10th grade because it was thanks to studying at a specialised class that I have gained what at the moment can be considered some success. I*

think if at that time I hadn't joined this class, it would have been very difficult for me to pass the university entrance exam' (Manh, higher-class background).

Both the *orientation* toward and *chance* of securing a place in the postsecondary quality schooling system favour students from higher-class backgrounds. Students who receive quality schooling in the lower grades – most often children of higher-class parents who can afford the demanding investment of money, time, and strategic planning in children's early quality education – tend to aspire to and pursue quality schooling in the higher grades. Because the entrance criteria for quality schools/classes are academically demanding, students who receive better schooling in lower grades and better preparation for the entrance exams of quality schools are more likely to secure places. Thu was one of those students able to get into a specialised school thanks to being well-prepared for its entrance exam. Consistent with her mother's account (see Mrs. Chi's account, pg 182), Thu claims: '*Before I took the entrance exams for specialised schools, my mother always hired a private tutor to help me prepare for the exams at home*' (Thu, higher-class background). Thu's account cites one of the advantages that additional education can bring about; the study will now consider this and other advantages.

Additional education

Qualitative analysis finds that it is not only quality in-school education, but also quality *outside-school or additional education* that can bring about academic success. In this study, additional education refers to both *professional tuition*, in line with the common use of the term across the literature, and *parental tuition*. This section discusses in turn each mode of tuition as it translates higher-class parents' educational cultivation into their children's educational advantages.

Professional additional education is provided in lessons outside regular class hours that households purchase as *supplementary tuition, remedial tuition*, or *exam preparatory tuition*, to improve or advance students' performance in the subjects of the formal curriculum and to ensure students' satisfactory performance in transitional or entrance exams (this definition echoes and extends the one provided by Dang HA 2013). Additional education has been known in the education literature across Asia, including Vietnam, by the terms 'extra study, 'private tutoring', 'shadow education system', or 'informal education economy', among others. Quantitative and qualitative evidence in this study strongly supports London's (2013) observation about additional education in Vietnam being an entrenched feature of the schooling system. More than 80% of young survey respondents who are in education (sample size=4820) report having 'private tutoring'. In the qualitative study, as the accounts presented later in this section illustrate, all young people except the low-educated ones cite additional education as a crucial part of their schooling.

The most extensively discussed form of professional additional education in the existing literature on the Vietnamese education system has been the widespread supplementary tuition. Supplementary classes are organised and run by teachers who instruct the regular classes. As London (2006, 2013) notes, additional education emerged in the 1990s in Vietnam in both urban and rural areas as a supplemental source of income for teachers, who received insufficient official salary. Previous survey results bring to light a phenomenon in Vietnam whereby students were pressured to take extra classes held by the teachers of their regular classes, in order to avoid being assessed unfairly by the same teachers (see Acuna-Alfaro & Do 2011, TT & TI 2011). There is supporting qualitative evidence for this phenomenon in this study. As

revealed in the accounts of Mrs. Quynh (pg 172) and Mrs. Giao, their children's participation in extra tuition was *enforced* by school.

'*Here in our village, the children all go to those extra classes. If not, we fear the teachers will give them low grades. So when there are orders from the school, we comply. My children let me know that their teachers told them to go to these extra classes for three or five sessions a week – whatever the classes cost, I had to pay for them.*' (Mrs. Giao, lower-class family)

Therefore, in this study, supplementary tuition is identified as *universal* – its expenses being part of the compulsory school costs (see School costs, pg 155), while its quality being determined by the quality of the regular schooling from which it is an expansion.

Based on qualitative evidence, remedial tuition and exam preparatory tuition, being less widespread, more resource-intensive, and more strongly influential on school and exam successes than supplementary tuition, can be considered *discriminating*. Whereas supplementary tuition is a norm among the young interviewees, only those from higher-class backgrounds recall having received remedial and exam-preparatory tuition. It is reasonable, thus, to assume that these two *non-universal* types of additional education explain most of the statistically significant differences, among young survey respondents who are currently in education, that relate to having 'private tutoring'. The class differences in this regard are not too large, but the differences in economic backgrounds, as shown in Table 5.11, are quite substantial, with a 24 percentage-point gap between students having *high parental economic resources* and those having *low parental economic resources*.

Table 5.11.

Percentages of young people having private tutoring by parental economic resources, those *in education* and *living with parents*, 2010		
	Having private tutoring	
Parental economic resources	Weighted percent	Unweighted base
High (9–10 household assets)	90	586
Medium (7–8 household assets)	79	1503
Low (0–6 household assets)	66	1778
Total	75	3867
Notes: *In education*: Young people who answered 'Yes' to the survey question: 'Do you currently go to school, college, university or higher?' There is a highly significant association between having private tutoring and parental economic resources: Adjusted F (1.995, 269.382)=65.260***		

Professional remedial tuition

According to qualitative evidence, well-resourced parents are able to seek remedial tuition to provide their children with *timely* professional support when their children struggle at school. They are aware of these struggles due to their close monitoring of their children's schooling, and able to act due to their ready access to funds. Remedial tuition is more effective when urgently provided and individually customised. It helps boost students' confidence and interest in learning challenging subjects. Thu, who received private tutoring throughout her schooling, confirms this: '*Whenever I did below average in a certain subject, my parents would instantly send me to extra classes in order to settle my fear toward the subject'* (Thu, higher-class background). In Tien's case, the selective, costly remedial tuition that her mother provided in secondary school

completely turned things around for her, and had a formative effect on her which formal education failed to create. With inspiration and guidance from a private English teacher, Tien was transformed from a weak to a keen and motivated learner of English. She went on to major in English at university and used it as the main language in her jobs for foreign-invested firms. Below is an abridged account of her story.

'In secondary school, in the first term of 6th grade, my performance in English was really terrible… I was really scared of the teacher of my English class. I only got 2.3 [out of 10.0] in English for the first term of my 6th grade. Not until the very end of 6th grade did my mother find a [private] teacher… She gave us exercises to do, and whoever did the work well she would make a note in her book. At the end of the month, she would buy us presents for the good work. And she also organised Western-like parties in her garden… I realised, then, that sometimes in life, you can give others material things and those things will run out quickly, but if you inspire someone your impact on that someone will be very deep and long. Anyway, my private teacher was attentive to each student of her class because it had only five to seven students. Take me, for example. She knew that I was a stubborn one... She gave me quick tests to motivate me so that I felt excited about learning… So, I began to pay attention, I began to enjoy it and learn by myself… During the development of a child, if at some point she has someone who put on the light at the right time, it is a great fortune for her whole life ahead… If I hadn't met her, I'd still have had to learn English but it would have been purely for school marks.' (Tien, higher-class background)

Such timely additional education is challenging for lower-class parents to provide for their children at times of learning difficulties, due to parents' shortage of funds or lack of monitoring opportunity or a combination of both. In the cases of Thu and Tien, their problems are noticed by their higher-class parents, and they immediately receive

remedial tuition. But in the following case, the son of a lower-class family struggles for years before revealing his problem to his agricultural-worker mother when it was too late for his parents to help him, especially given their limited financial budget.

'*When he was in grade 9, my son told me that he liked to learn, but he couldn't catch up. In class, everything became too quick for him to follow, and there was nobody in the family he could ask for help. His knowledge became hollow gradually so he could no longer take in any lessons. I then told him that if he couldn't learn by himself, I'd let him go to an extra class. But he told me that it would only be a waste of money because he was so far behind. He said that if someone were to teach him they would have had to start all over again from grade 6. He was disheartened, so eventually he gave up.'* (Mrs. Lam, lower-class family)

<u>Professional exam preparatory tuition</u>

Extracurricular exam preparatory tuition is described by most young people who participate in this study as necessary and helpful. As previously explained, due to the structure of the university entrance exam, students who participate in well-guided revision may have a competitive advantage. High-quality exam revision, as qualitative accounts suggest, is often provided in classes organised and instructed by teachers from prestigious postsecondary schools or university lecturers who are known (by the parents and the students, through word-of-mouth) to have coached many successful students. These classes are mostly sited close to specialised postsecondary schools or universities in town and urban areas.

Rural-based parents report financially investing heavily in their children's relocation for exam preparatory tuition. Young interviewees from higher-class rural homes spent between one and four months in Hanoi to attend exam-revision classes. A typical situation is described

by an enterprise-owner father: *'My daughter had been revising for the exam when, two months prior to the exam, she asked me to let her come to Hanoi to attend classes. I gave her whatever amount of money she needed to buy the study materials and for the travel expenses. I told her to ask senior students to help her look for a good place to rent. I provided the best conditions possible for her so that she'd perform well in the exam'* (Mr. Dong, higher-class family).

For young people from urban higher-class homes, professionally guided exam revision is easily accessible, to the extent that it is taken for granted and considered *universal*. '*When I revised for the university entrance exam, I went to a lot of extra classes, but at that time everybody else also did, so I didn't find it to be anything special'* (Thu, higher-class background). It seems, however, that exam revision in the city is out of reach for students from lower-class homes, especially those based in rural areas. '*Before the university exam, I really wanted to go to Hanoi for extra classes, but my family couldn't afford it. Therefore I didn't go. I only revised at home by myself*' (Thanh, lower-class background).

It can be argued from the qualitative evidence presented above that the timeliness and the selectiveness (type and quality of extra education) matter more than the quantity. High-quality remedial or exam-preparatory tuition, rather than the common supplementary tuition, are instrumental to the academic success of young people from higher-class backgrounds. These findings help to explain Le and Baulch's (2012) conclusion, based on a national survey of young students in Vietnam, that household wealth and parental schooling associate with students' mathematics and vocabulary test scores, but that the number of hours spent in extra classes do not.

Parental tuition

Apart from professional tuition, extra help for young people from higher-class homes can also come directly from their high-educated parents. Even though parental tuition is not purchasable by money like professional tuition, it demands the availability of parents' time ('time free from economic necessity' (Bourdieu 1986: 47)) and academic knowledge. Professional tuition and parental tuition share similar dual goals of *monitoring-guidance*. Through tutoring their children, parents not only help them to deal with difficult subjects and revise for exams, but also gain better understanding of the children's strengths and weaknesses, and monitor their school progress more effectively. The most extensive instruction, understandably, is offered by parents who are teachers themselves, as in the case of Mrs. Na (pg 175), an elementary-school teacher with a middle-level pedagogical qualification, who closely tutored her son throughout the elementary and secondary levels. Non-teacher highly educated parents are also able to assist their children with schoolwork, as the following accounts demonstrate.

'In high school, I was terrible at Chemistry, so my father sat down to study Chemistry with me all the time. He read my Chemistry textbook and taught me so that my mind would be free from a fear for that subject. My father interfered in my study a lot. To him, though, the results were not really important. The important thing was that I was not afraid of learning and able to overcome the subjects that I feared.' (Thu, higher-class background)

'My father taught me literature. Thanks to him, I developed a gift for literature. From 3rd grade, he taught me how to write narratives about a cat, a pig, or a Malabar almond tree. Before I went to school, he had already taught me a lot about handwriting. He wrote samples for me to imitate. Therefore, I always had good handwriting and neat presentation of my schoolbooks. My father had good teaching methods.' (Hiep, higher-class background)

By contrast, parental tuition, in most cases, is non-existent for young people from lower-class homes. Only one of the lower-class parents in the qualitative sample is educated pass the secondary level. The following account of a low-educated, agricultural-worker father most typically exhibits the sense of helplessness that lower-class parents express toward assisting their children's learning. '*My children's learning was mostly up to them. Me and my wife, we had no education, how could we teach them?'* (Mr. Tam, lower-class family). Furthermore, as illuminated by Mrs. Lam's account (pg 198), lower-class parents' inability to directly assist their children academically and their poor grasp of their children's school progress are closely linked. This double disadvantage, combined with a shortage of funds, explains lower-class parents' limited provision of outside-school support such as professional extra tuition. The following case of Tuan is another example besides that of Mrs. Lam's son. Tuan went from not being able to deal with his learning difficulties on his own, lacking parental monitoring and supervision, and lacking timely remedial tuition, to gradually resigning himself to his schooling deficits. He concedes: '*My parents only told me to go and study… When I got to grade 6 or 7, my parents' ability was limited, so I had to learn on my own. I had to follow the teacher in class, but I didn't do that very well. My high-school education was a complete waste'* (Tuan, lower-class background).

5.4. Educational mobility

In the previous sections, we have seen that the academic success of young people from higher-class families is very dependent on their advantageous parental resources. This section argues that the same phenomenon applies to those from lower-class families, for whom an increased or focused investment of parental resources enables educational mobility – that is, the attainment of a higher educational

level compared to their parents' and to what is normally expected for people of their class.

Quantitative results, demonstrated in Table 5.12, indicate that, among young people from working-class backgrounds, those with greater access to parental economic resources tend to achieve higher educational levels than those less economically endowed. (Analysis of young people's educational level by parental education yields many small cell counts and therefore is not presented.)

Table 5.12.

Percentages of young people's educational level by parental economic resources, those *out of education*, *from working-class background* and *living with parents*, 2010, percent by row

	Educational level				
Parental economic resources	College/University or higher	Post-secondary	Secondary or lower	Total	Unweighted base
High (9–10 assets)	22	62	16	100	141
Medium (7–8 assets)	4	46	50	100	1011
Low (0–6 assets)	1	25	74	100	1935
Total					3087

Notes:

Out of education: Young people who answered 'No' to the survey question: 'Do you currently go to school, college, university or higher?'

Living with parents: Young people who answered 'Yes' to either of the following two questions: 'Do you live with your biological mother now?' or 'Do you live with your biological father now?'

There is a highly significant association between educational level and parental economic resources: Adjusted F (3.653, 471.287)=92.457***

Interestingly, qualitative accounts reveal that young people from lower-class families who are more academically successful than their *siblings* have received greater parental investments. Mrs. Quynh's youngest son is the only one among three siblings who goes to university. He grew up in the early 2000s during a period of surging educational interests in his hometown, when more and more parents, including his mother, began to desire higher education for their children. An unskilled worker, Mrs. Quynh did not interfere when her oldest daughter stopped school at grade 6 and her second son upon finishing postsecondary school, but she insisted that her youngest son pursue university.

'*In my commune, about seven years ago, people learned badly. Within the recent seven years, it has had a reputation for learning. I think since the year when my second son finished high school people started to follow each other to go to school more; things were different in the previous period… I told my youngest son, if you go to a middle-level school you'll only become a labourer. Factory workers don't need to have a qualification, but they still can go to work. With a middle-level degree, you'll end up having just a little advantage over them, by becoming a group leader, for instance, whereas if you go to university you'll certainly have a higher chance to be something more.'* (Mrs. Quynh, lower-class family)

Being the youngest child, Mrs. Quynh's son also did not have to do as much work to help his mother earn a living as his older siblings did while in school. As his mother comments (pg 157), in contrast to his hands-on siblings, '*he went to school all day, he didn't do anything'*. By the time the youngest brother entered the postsecondary level, his older siblings had become financially independent and able to support his mother in paying for his educational expenses. The young man was endowed with helpful extra tuition, a second try at the university

entrance exam, college education in the city, and a personal computer when he requested it.

Like Mrs. Quynh's son, Dao is the youngest and the only college graduate among three siblings in her lower-class family. Compared to her older siblings, Dao received more generous parental funds. Whereas her older sister only took the university entrance exam once (Mrs. Lam's account, pg 146), Dao took it two times. Dao also benefitted from her parents' improved knowledge and experience of the educational field. Her parents were much more actively involved in her schooling than they were in her older siblings'. Most importantly, Dao received quality schooling, being the only one among the young interviewees from lower-class homes to do so. She speaks positively about the experience (Dao's account, pg 189). The opportunity to study in a selective class was introduced to Dao by her father, who worked as a guard for a postsecondary school and learned about its selective classes through school personnel. Dao got accepted to one of these classes, embarking on a pathway strewn with educational advantages.

With *capital*, lower-class parents like Mrs. Quynh and Dao's parents cultivate their children's schooling in ways that very much resemble higher-class parents' *monitoring-guidance*. Even though they are not able to provide direct academic assistance, they are able to purchase quality in-school and outside-school education for their children, facilitating their involvement in their children's schooling and, ultimately, promoting their children in the educational field. Professional quality guidance, as one method, and parental monitoring, as another, allow these parents control over unwanted influences on their children's schooling and work to ensure the educational outcomes they desire.

Nevertheless, the above-mentioned examples of differently cultivated siblings in lower-class families suggest that it is greatly challenging for lower-class parents to cultivate the schooling of all their children with similar efficiency. For the lower-class families in this study, the efficient cultivation of a child's schooling is possible via a combination of improved finances, accumulated experience in the educational field, and even lucky chances; the advent of this combination is rare. This is why, even though there are young people from lower-class families who go to college/university, fewer among them manage to do so compared to their higher-class counterparts. There is some educational mobility, as the educational system expands, but educational inequality persists in contemporary Vietnam.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has analysed class inequality in education in contemporary Vietnam. It discusses the empirical evidence provided in this study, focusing on the mediating role of college/university degrees in the reproduction of class advantages, as well as the importance of class-based capital to academic success.

College/university education can be identified as a major indicator of cultural capital in the contemporary Vietnamese society (see Lareau & Weininger 2003: 587–588). Factors include the close link between parental class and children's educational achievement, the high returns on college/university education, the increasing importance of higher education to the attainment of economically rewarding positions especially for people from less advantageous backgrounds, and the exclusivity and entitling nature of higher education among people from higher-class backgrounds. Parents of different classes vary in their ability to orchestrate and build their children's school experiences and

opportunities toward the realisation of the university goal. Lower-class children might opt for college/university, an educational option they are historically and socially unfamiliar with yet consider potentially life-changing; however, for many of them, the possibility that they can prevail over their resource shortage to actually secure places in these institutions is dim.

The chapter makes the following empirical and theoretical contributions to the current literature on Vietnam and Bourdieusian educational research. First, the chapter presents unprecedented evidence of education – as a meditator of the association between class background and class attainment – being a *reproduction channel* for class inequality in contemporary Vietnam. This phenomenon has been well-investigated in other contexts by social researchers, including Bourdieusian education researchers, but remains unexplored in Vietnam, where a centralised, exam-based system has been expected to deliver educational equality.

Second, through analysing empirical evidence of class-based discriminations in the Vietnamese educational field in conjunction with the functioning rules of the current state of the field, the discussion sheds light on some of the distinctive characteristics of the mechanisms of educational inequality in Vietnam. It addresses engagement in *household work* as one of several disadvantages which take a toll on lower-class children's schooling in Vietnam. This is a phenomenon not observed in societies in the US or the UK, where the household economy is not the dominant economy. Bourdieu (1986) declares 'time free from economic necessity' an economic capital instrumental to the accumulation process of cultural capital; for school students in the Vietnamese context such economic capital can be specified as the relief from housework/farm work.

Another context-specific finding is that the educational field in contemporary Vietnam rewards *extra-school knowledge*. Most importantly, this study highlights not the school in general, as addressed across Bourdieusian research, but the entrenched yet *non-universal sections* of the Vietnamese school system, which concern *quality schooling* (especially specialised schooling) and *additional education*. These areas, where class inequality is most salient, emerge as the primary channels through which educational inequality is actually reproduced. Students who have quality schooling and additional tuition/revision, often those from higher-class backgrounds, thrive in an exam-based system.

Third, the analysis offers an empirical interpretation of 'concerted cultivation', a notion first coined by Lareau (2003) and applied in several quantitative studies to denote a style of efficient parental involvement in children's schooling (see 3.1), in a framework of parental *monitoring-guidance*. Parental investment of advantageous economic and cultural resources underlies the mutually reinforcing parental monitoring and parental guidance. Higher-class parents have the time free from economic necessity, the means, and the ability to orchestrate their children's environments and control non-parental influences (neighbourhood, school, peers, etc.), as well as to advise and orient their children throughout various aspects of the children's schooling, including daily activities, critical transitional periods (exams) and obstacles to study.

Fourth, findings of the importance of both parental economic capital and parental cultural capital to children's educational success challenge income-centric explanations of educational inequality in the literature on Vietnam (see 2.1), as well as Bourdieusian cultural capital centred explanations (see 3.1). On the one hand, educational costs are found to be only one among several factors that create and perpetuate

educational inequality. It is not merely higher-class parents' financial investment, but also their efficient cultivation enabled by funds, free time, academic knowledge, grasp of the fields' rules, and influential connections, that facilitate their children's academic success. These findings contribute to current research on Vietnam which links poor children's low participation in higher levels of schooling predominantly to economic factors (see Fritzen *et al.* 2005, London 2007), and thus often limits policy recommendations to the problem of school fees (see Vo *et al.* 2001: 169, Vu HL 2012: 61). On the other hand, it is important to recognise that it is lower-class parents' material insufficiency, first and foremost, and not their lack of self-confidence (see Reay 1998, 2000) or academic aspirations, that contributes to the inefficient cultivation of their children's schooling.

Preface to Chapter 6 and Chapter 7

Whereas in much of Bourdieusian research class reproduction has been explained in terms of the impact of class background on educational achievement (see 3.1), this study also views class reproduction in terms of the impact of class background on occupational class attainment (in the spirit of Bourdieu *et al.* (1999) and Atkinson (2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2012, 2013) (see also 3.2)).

The next section of the study provides a general account and analysis of class influences on class attainment. Before introducing the two chapters, this preface offers the rationales for identifying class attainment as the key aspect of young people's life chances, and presents empirical evidence of class differentiations regarding young people's class attainment, and class influences on class attainment net of their education.

In this study, a young person's *life chances* are interpreted not only in terms of educational achievement, but also, and more importantly, *class attainment*. The ultimate *outcome capital* is identified as *leader-professional employment* (or highly skilled employment leading up to a leader-professional position). Leaders ('leaders in different sectors, levels and units' in government, unions, corporations, schools, and private businesses) and professionals ('technical specialists of intermediate or advanced levels in various fields') are the two most highly ranked occupations in SAVY 2010 – the survey used in this study. Correspondingly, leader-professional households are found to have the highest levels of parental economic and cultural resources (see 4.2 – Measurements). In various studies on contemporary Vietnam, leaders (including business owners) and/or professionals have been found to be overrepresented in the richest quintile (Haughton *et al.* 2010 as cited in Le MS 2010), or the most materially and educationally advantaged groups in the occupational hierarchy (Do TK 2010b).

Qualitative accounts portray striking contrasts between young leader-professionals and lower-class workers when these groups are asked about their work, living conditions, and future. For young manual and unskilled workers, physically demanding and prolonged activities consume their time, damage their health, and strain their family relationships. Yet, they struggle to make ends meet, earning an average monthly income between 1 and 2 million dong. But young lower-class workers have no other choice apart from carrying on with their current jobs. They are uncertain about work stability, and not particularly hopeful about their future prospects. Their dreams fixate on having more leisure time and a better income. Below are some of their revelations.

'Everyone has ambitions, but what is not within my hands – I don't think about it. What I want is to have a better income so that I do not have to over-work, and I can take better care of my children. Now as I have to earn money all the time, I can't pay attention to them very closely.' (Son, manual intermediate class, lower-class background)

'What do I want the most now? My husband only needs to make 2 to 3 million a month, while I'm going to the market every day and making enough money to spend for one day. I don't dream of anything else.' (Ly, working class, lower-class background)

'I had no free time from work at all. I also worked during weekends. When I worked for projects in the Central and the South, I only visited home once every six months. I loved my job very much, but now I'll have to forget about it. My health is not good now [Thanh contracted a chronic disease due to his harsh work conditions], and I can't live away from home forever. Just three more projects – five to six years each – and I'll be old. I'll have to find another job that is more stable and leisurely.' (Thanh, manual intermediate class, lower-class background)

Young leaders and professionals, on the other hand, are ambitious and assured about their advancements. Their current work conditions are not a matter of complaint; some are interested in job changes of comparable status or higher. Their monthly income ranges between 10 and 20 million on average, allowing some to aim for luxuries unthinkable to the lower classes.

'I put forward the aims for each period of my life. I'll have to finish my PhD before 35. I'll be an expert in a specific area and a good lecturer. After 40, I think I will have had enough life experiences and financial means to do a few things I like, be it doing business or something else. I think that if after ten years of working I don't have any breakthrough in my career, then I'll seek for a change, so that I won't have to bear any mental idleness. I'm never meant to do one thing forever.' (Linh, leader-professional class, higher-class background)

'In the next five years, I want to carry on making very good independent films and gain the reputation of being a film maker with great depth and reliability. I want to make those films which will affect many people. It is not really about awards – I don't care about such things. But I want my films to be watched and received very highly by a lot of people. Another thing is that my current house is a bit small so I hope we'll be able to move to a bigger house. I've been saving for it.' (Hiep, leader-professional class, higher-class background)

'In the meantime, I'm gaining more experience [in my current position], and after one year I'll become a senior specialist. One or two years after that, I'll become a group leader. In five to ten years, I probably aim for the head of office position, but at another bank, because if you keep working at one bank it will be very difficult to go up – you have to move around. I think it will take me fifteen to twenty years, considering my level, to become a director of business.' (Manh, leader-professional class, higher-class background)

The study finds that young people's class attainment is strongly influenced by their class background. Statistical evidence reveals significant class differentiations in young people's class attainment. As illustrated in Table P.1, among young people out of education, more than half from leader-professional and intermediate-class backgrounds have secured leader-professional and skilled work, compared to under one fourth (22%) from working-class backgrounds. Substantially more from the leader-professional class have attained leader-professional positions (27%), than have those from any of the lower classes.

Table P.1.

Percentages of young people's class attainment by their class background, those *out of education*, 2010, percent by row

Class background	**Current class**					
	Leader-professional class	Nonmanual intermediate class	Manual intermediate class	Working class	Total	Unweighted base
Leader-professional class	27	14	14	45	100	223
Nonmanual intermediate class	8	17	24	51	100	132
Manual intermediate class	5	7	35	53	100	343
Working class	3	4	15	78	100	3282
Total						3980

Notes:

Out of education: Young people who answered 'No' to the survey question: 'Do you currently go to school, college, university or higher?'

There is a highly significant association between current class and class background: Adjusted F (7.863, 1132.319)=45.045***

Statistics reported in Table P.1 (above) and Table P.2 (below) – which may insinuate either the rigidity or the fluidity of the Vietnamese class structure – require cautious interpretation. 78% among young people aged 14-25 from working-class backgrounds (and 80% among the same demographic who are educated below the college/university levels) are in unskilled occupations, reflecting *rigidity* in the early class trajectories of working-class young people, especially the low- and medium-educated. It can be assumed that in the older age groups there would be a no less considerable extent of reproduction within the working class, considering the substantial size of the working-class population in Vietnam, as well as research findings on China revealing the consistently high degree of self-recruitment in the bottom-end of the class structure, especially in the agricultural sector (Chen 2012, Cheng & Dai 1995).

Nearly half among young people from manual intermediate backgrounds and just above one fifth among those from working-class backgrounds have secured skilled work by the age of 25 (Table P.1). These statistics indicate *upward mobility* as a consequence of the changes in the occupational structure and industry base in Vietnam under economic reform, which have seen considerable shifts out of agriculture into industry and services – a phenomenon that has also been observed in China (Zhou & Xie 2015).

Even though there is long-range downward movement at early class attainment among young people from leader-professional backgrounds, it is important to note that *downward mobility* is most likely for the medium- and low-educated citizens among this demographic sample: 60% of the medium- and low-educated young people of leader-professional origins are doing unskilled work (Table P.2), as opposed to 67% of the high-educated who have secured leader-professional jobs. 45% of young people from leader-professional backgrounds are unskilled workers at aged 14–25 – a far lower rate compared with 78% among

those from working-class backgrounds (Table P.1). These statistics suggest that although young people of leader-professional origins are better protected than their lower-class counterparts from falling into unskilled work, many of them encounter downward mobility at labour market entrance. Further analyses reveal that, compared with the wider population of young people from the same leader-professional backgrounds, those who have been downwardly mobile into the working class are more likely to be found in the ethnic minorities (26.6% as opposed to 13.6%), in rural areas (84.3% as opposed to 63.8%), in poor parental homes (45.4% compared with 24.3%), and in the under-22 age group (51.8% as opposed to 41%), and less likely to be highly educated (3.7% compared with 24.0%).

There is insufficient evidence, however, to assess whether there is indeed a high degree of *fluidity* in the class trajectories of those of leader-professional origins in the wider population, considering that our research subjects – young people aged 14–25 – have not reached their final class destinations and that, furthermore, leader-professional workers are far less likely to be found in the youth worker group (15 to 24 years old) than in the prime-aged worker group (25 to 54 years old) (ILO 2009).

For more robust conjectures concerning the degree of equality of opportunity, Multinomial Logistic Regression statistics of the comparative chances of young people in two different origin categories to be found in one rather than another of two different destination categories (equivalent to relative mobility rates), can be useful. Numerous social mobility researchers (Breen 2004: 20; Erikson & Goldthorpe 1993: 55-6; Goldthorpe et al. 1987: 74-5, Zhou & Xie 2015) have employed relative mobility rates to provide insights into the association between backgrounds and achievements net of the overall changes in the class structure across generations, based on which the openness of the class structure can be surmised. In this study, compared

to young people aged 14-25 from working-class backgrounds, those from leader-professional backgrounds have a far better chance of attaining a leader-professional class position as opposed to a working-class position (odds=22, p<.001, 95% confidence intervals: 13.4–36.2) (Model 1 – Table 5.3). Even when demographic characteristics, education and training are controlled for, young people from leader-professional backgrounds have a significantly greater chance of entering leader-professional class as opposed to working class compared to their working-class counterparts (Model 3 – Table 5.3).

Goldthorpian mobility analyses of the patterns of mobility in different cohorts, which would inform us about the rigidity or openness of the class structure, exceed the scope of this study. There has been a consensus across previous mobility studies regarding the considerable cross-national commonality in relative mobility rates, revealing low degrees of societal openness that in many cases have remained more or less static over several decades (Cheng & Dai 1995 on China, Erikson & Goldthorpe 1992 on Europe, Paterson & Iannelli 2007 and Goldthorpe & Mills 2008 on Britain, Ishida et al. 1991 and Ishida 2001 on Japan, see also Sturgis 2015) (with the exceptions of Scandinavian countries and a few other European countries, see Breen & Jonsson 2005). Notably, research on China reveals a 50% increase in the origin-destination association in socioeconomic status from the early reform cohort to the late reform cohort, suggesting that social fluidity has significantly worsened during the transition to a market economy (Zhou & Xi 2015), which may mirror the Vietnamese case.

Qualitative accounts of young interviewees' work trajectories further reveal that those from higher-class families enjoy more desirable career starts and advancements. Young people from solidly leader-professional families (having two leader-professional parents) took up their first full-time jobs as professionals. Some had job changes or promotions to managerial positions. Among these are a university lecturer, a brand

manager, a filmmaker, a production director, and a publishing editor. Some have also adopted second jobs in the leader-professional rank as business owners or professional freelancers. Young people from less fortunate higher-class families (having one leader-professional parent) started as office workers in the nonmanual intermediate class. Some attained junior specialist posts in the lower-level leader-professional rank after having accumulated a few years' work experience. The employment entry level for young respondents from lower-class families is in the working class or intermediate classes. Among those who started in unskilled work, some eventually secured a stable skilled job. The skilled workers are involved in motorbike repair, construction, administration, or office work. Those from solidly working-class families with both parents being unskilled workers have been doing unskilled work all along, as hired labourers or own-account workers.

Yet, the reproduction of educational inequality, as discussed in the previous chapter, cannot account for all the reproduction of class inequality. In contemporary Vietnam, highly educated people are small in number and the self-employed are populous. It is estimated by ILO (2011: 11) that 50% of employed people are self-employed. Quantitative analysis in this study shows that among young people aged 14 to 25, only 13% of those in education are enrolled at college/university, and a tiny 5% of those out of education have achieved a college/university degree.

Quantitative findings confirm that class differentials in educational achievement cannot explain all of the class differentials in occupational attainment. There must be *direct class discriminations in the field of labour*, unmediated by education. Multinomial Logistic Regression results show that class background powerfully determines class attainment controlling for educational achievement. Net of education and training and of demographic characteristics, when compared to

those from working-class backgrounds young people from leader-professional and intermediate backgrounds have significantly greater chances of attaining leader-professional positions as opposed to working-class positions (see Model 3 – Table 5.3). Similar results have been found in mobility studies in the UK that measure the effect of class background versus that of education on occupational attainment (see Marshall *et al.* 1997, Savage & Egerton 1997, Iannelli & Paterson 2005, Bukodi & Goldthorpe 2009).

Quantitative findings further suggest that the young people who have a 'head start' in the field of labour are not only those who enter the field with a college/university degree, but those who are able to capitalise on their degree, or who have the means to thrive without a degree. These young people are likely to come from higher-class backgrounds. According to quantitative evidence, compared to a young person from a lower-class background, someone from a higher-class background has a better chance, not only to be college/university educated, but also, as shown below, to attain a leader-professional position with a college/university degree, or to occupy a leader-professional post without having a college/university degree. Young people from working-class backgrounds, by contrast, have a much lower chance than those from leader-professional backgrounds to secure leader-professional jobs, even if they have achieved a college/university degree. (Note that all the following analyses are carried out on the same population – young survey respondents out of education, in work, and living with parents.)

(1) Among young people who have a college/university degree, 27/44 (67%) of those from leader-professional backgrounds have secured leader-professional positions, compared to 24/65 (34%) of those from working-class backgrounds. (Counts of those from nonmanual intermediate and manual intermediate backgrounds are too low (<30) for meaningful analysis.)

(2) As demonstrated in Table P.2, among young people of educational levels below college/university, more from leader-professional backgrounds than from lower-class backgrounds have entered the leader-professional class. (Whereas the statistics presented in Table P.1 illustrate that young people's class attainment is strongly influenced by their class background, the statistics displayed in Table P.2 support Multinomial Logistic Regression results in demonstrating that class background powerfully determines class attainment net of educational achievement.)

Table P.2.

Percentages of young people's class attainment by their class background, those *out of education*, *in work, living with parents* and *without college/university degree*, 2010, percent by row						
	Class attainment					
Class background	Leader-professional class	Nonmanual intermediate class	Manual intermediate class	Working class	Total	Unweighted base
Leader-professional class	13	9	19	60	100	133
Nonmanual intermediate class	6	17	26	51	100	97
Manual intermediate class	2	7	39	52	100	267
Working class	1	3	16	80	100	2500
Total						2997

Notes:

Out of education: Young people who answered 'No' to the survey question: 'Do you currently go to school, college, university or higher?'

In work: Young people who answered 'Yes' to the survey question: 'In the last seven days, have you worked for income?'

Living with parents: Young people who answered 'Yes' to either of the following two questions: 'Do you live with your biological mother now?' or 'Do you live with your biological father now?'

There is a highly significant association between young people's class attainment and young people's class background: Adjusted F (7.542, 988.038)=22.211***

In sync with the previous quantitative findings, the trajectories of the young interviewees (evidence presented in the following chapters) propose that those from the most advantageous backgrounds need their qualifications less in achieving job attainment than those from less advantageous backgrounds. Despite all being college/university degree

holders, young people from solidly leader-professional families (both parents in the leader-professional class) take up their first full-time jobs as professionals in the leader-professional rank, whereas those from families having only one leader-professional parent enter the labour market as office workers in the nonmanual intermediate rank. No less notably, there are young people from solidly leader-professional families who secured their leader-professional posts without qualifications from the most prestigious institutions, or before they had officially graduated, or entirely independently from their degrees. By contrast, young people from less advantaged families, some of whom are graduates from top-ranking institutions, would not have been able to acquire their entry posts in the nonmanual intermediate rank without their degree qualifications in hand.

Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 explain such class influences on class attainment, both via education and via other means. They discuss how young people from higher-class backgrounds mobilise their parents' cultivation and their own – *capital conversions across* and *within* generations – to acquire *profitable scholastic capital,* and also the *non-scholastic capital* to back up their scholastic capital or to compensate for the lack thereof (see Figure P.1). Chapter 6 analyses *parents' cultivation* of young people's occupational attainment to understand how parental capital is translated into individual economic capital in the form of leader-professional employment (or skilled employment leading up to leader-professional positions). Young people from higher-class backgrounds are endowed with profitable educational degrees, influential networks, solid financial cushions, and informed parental guidance, all of which help them thrive in the field of labour. But advantaged young people's benefit from their parents' resources is not only *direct*. Chapter 7 provides an account of *self-cultivation,* linking parental cultivation and self-cultivation and discussing how young

people use their individual capital – with an emphasis on non-scholastic capital – to enter the higher classes.

Chapter 6.

Class Influences on Class Attainment – Parental Cultivation

This chapter discusses parents' cultivation of their children's occupational attainment – that is, the ways in which parents mobilise their resources to support and guide their children in navigating the field of labour. A higher-class father describes the ways he intends to help his son attain a state-sector job as follows: '*It wouldn't require a lot of money, just the right path, the right criteria, and then we'll influence in a moderate manner'* (Mr. Kiet, higher-class family). This statement is by no means unique among higher-class parents' accounts in this study, and sums up the crucially operative economic, cultural, and social capital, including financial funds ('[some] money'), knowledge of the field ('the right path, the right criteria'), and social connections ('influence'). Higher-class parents mobilise these forms of capital, often *all together*, through their monitoring-guidance strategies. Higher-class parents are effectively involved in, and controlling toward, preparing their children for careers and assisting them in job attainment, in order that they ensure the young people achieve the desired positions.

Figure 6.1 illustrates the translation of the general framework of reproduction (see Figure P.1) into empirical evidence of the reproduction of class advantages via parental cultivation.

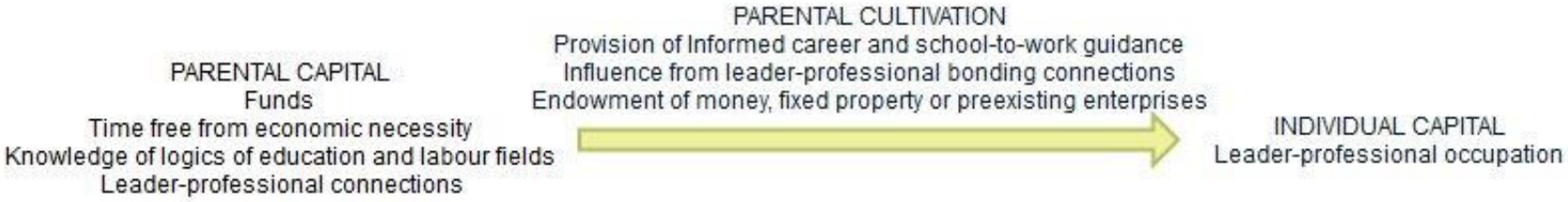


Figure 6.1. Empirical framework of the reproduction of class advantages in contemporary Vietnam – Pearental cultivation

(1) The first section examines how parents draw on the knowledge and information they have about the fields of education and labour to provide their children with career and school-to-work guidance. Parents' informed guidance is instrumental to young people's acquisition of profitable *scholastic capital* in the form of *usable and rewarding educational degrees and vocational training*, which help them secure professional or skilled work.

(2) The second section discusses a crucial form of *nonscholastic capital* possessed by young people from higher-class backgrounds and issuing from their parents' leader-professional networks: *leader-professional connections*, which back up an educational degree in the attainment of a higher-class position, particularly in cases of state employment.

(3) The third section analyses forms of *family funds* as *nonscholastic capital* that enables young people to make use of their academic degree in job attainment or to do without it, via the self-employment pathway.

6.1. The right path

This section examines the ways in which parents prepare their children for embarking on the 'right' path to skilled, rewarding employment. Qualitative accounts reveal that the higher their class background, the more likely it is that young people's pathways have been carefully planned, and their first steps on these pathways orchestrated, by their parents. The following discussion will show how, equipped with job-market understanding and experience, higher-class parents painstakingly provide their children with employability-savvy school-to-work and career guidance to ensure the youths have usable college/university degrees and informed occupational choices. Lacking

information and experience, lower-class parents struggle to help their children avoid fruitless vocational training and unrealistic college/university endeavours. The study's findings explain why young people from higher-class families most often walk a smooth path into the higher classes, whereas those from lower-class families struggle to avoid unskilled work.

Higher-class families

As shown in the interview extracts in this section, higher-class parents participating in this study devise their guidance based on a range of sources, which include the information they have about *occupational trends*, their familiarity with the *know-how in job attainment*, their grasp of their *children's capacities and tendencies*, and their calculations of the *resources* they can mobilise to help their children secure jobs.

Regarding making decisions about university majors, higher-class parents usually claim that they take into account both their children's preferences and their own. A local-leader father puts it as follows:

'*We did participate in our children's decision-making of schools and majors, but they were the ones who made the final decision. We told them the options we thought were suitable for them and what we knew about the employment prospects of a certain major, and it was up to them to select what suited their aptitudes and aspirations.'* (Mr. Lap, higher-class family)

In fact, in most cases, higher-class parents accept their child's own selection only insofar as the selection does not jeopardise the young person's attainment of fundamental goals. For Mr. Kiet, a business owner, that goal is university education. Therefore, even though he would prefer his daughter to study English, he allows her to major in Spanish, as she wishes. The researcher notes that, in Mr. Kiet's

account, his emphasis on the symbolic value over the academic value of a degree conveys his 'practical sense' (Bourdieu [1977] 2003: 73, 79) of a *code of the field of labour* in contemporary Vietnam – its *credentialism*, or an emphasis on credentials in the form of formal academic qualifications as prerequisite for job attainment (sometimes merely for credentials' sake). Mr. Kiet explains:

'*In my experience, the university major only determines, probably, your tendency of going into a certain industry, not your specific occupation. So I didn't really pay too much attention to what my children chose as their majors, as long as they went to university. Whatever they did, they must graduate from university. I might not be too enthused about the specific disciplines that they chose, but I wouldn't object.'* (Mr. Kiet, higher-class family)

It appears to be more common that, in contemporary Vietnam, higher-class parents prioritise their own preferences, rather than those of their children. One approach that parents use is to devise a thorough school-to-work plan and force their children to follow it. Another approach is to let their children make their own final decision among mutually agreed options, while persistently orienting their children toward the one option they think is best. In doing so, some parents, like Mr. Dong according to his account below, rely on their practical or theoretical knowledge of the fluctuations and the future state of the field of labour in academic qualifications (cf. Bourdieu [1984] 2009: 142; cf. also Reay & Lucey 2003: 122). Some other parents, like Mrs. Huong, whose account also appears below, draw on their practical knowledge of a specific – and often their own – job field. These parents make their decisions based entirely on their consideration of their ability to help their children navigate such field.

'In high school my older daughter, Thu, was interested in natural science, but she took social science at university. Choosing what to study mostly aims at job seeking; finding a job in Vietnam requires a whole lot of calculation. At the time, my daughter had two options – medical study or historical study, and I oriented her toward studying History like myself, because of two reasons. First, so that I can supervise her during her undergraduate degree. Second, so that her job seeking would be easier because I have the connections. I know Mr. X, who was the head of the Institute of A. When the students in Thu's class defended their dissertations, he was among the audience. I also used to collaborate with the Department of History at the University […] and therefore I know all the people there very well.' (Mrs. Huong, higher-class family)

'When I guided my oldest daughter, I supported what she liked, but I also offered a number of options for her reference. I told her, in the current society, you must remember that everything that belongs to the state will gradually be privatised. Therefore, I think you should study Law. With a degree in Law, you'll act as a referee for people, for the society in the future. All developed societies need Law graduates. First my daughter didn't listen to me. She objected harshly, saying that Law was a hard, dry subject, but I reassured her. I told her, now you go study Law, after that you put that degree at the bottom of your suitcase, someday you will need it. She finally listened to me and earned a degree in Law. Just as I said, 10 years after graduation she used it. When she just got married she worked as a salesperson and earned a monthly salary that was not enough to pay for her living, and no one asked about her Law degree. But when she applied to work for a real-estate information platform, the employers asked her if she had a Law degree. She was first accepted to a temp position, and then became an official employee after one month, and after only four, five years became the manager of a department.' (Mr. Dong, higher-class family)

In other cases, parents frame their choices around what they believe will benefit the young people's welfare. Many leader-professional parents, some of whose accounts are presented below, advise their daughters to join pedagogical courses. They consider teaching an optimal career for women: it is seen to align with women's responsibilities of mothering and caring for their family. Teaching as one of the most strongly suggested career avenues for 'middle-class' women seems to be a common phenomenon in many societies (see, for example, Gorman 2000).

'I advised my oldest daughter to become a teacher. I thought if she graduated from university in Pedagogy she would find a job that is not too tough. She would get married, have children and have a settled life.' (Mr. Lap, higher-class family)

'I told my daughter to follow Pedagogy so that she could work close to home, have a stable job, have time for her family, and be able to teach her own children.' (Mr. Giang, higher-class family)

'I encouraged my daughter to take up Pedagogy because I once majored in Pedagogy myself. I believe being a teacher suits a girl. Later on she'll be in a good position to take care of and teach her own children.' (Mrs. Vui, higher-class family)

'*I would like to see my younger daughter become a university lecturer rather than work in diplomacy because she is quite a frigid person. I'm afraid that if she goes to work at a Vietnamese embassy in a foreign country it will menace her love life and marriage.'* (Mrs. Huong, higher-class family)

Whatever their rationales, the one factor higher-class parents seem to never underestimate is the *employability* of a degree. As illustrated by the following accounts, two popular options for young interviewees from higher-class backgrounds who took up high education during the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s, under their parents' guidance, were foreign-language (especially English) and economics-related majors. It is reasonable to have opted for one of these two majors, considering available information about the field of labour at the time. The World Bank (1997) reports that English-language training yielded a rate of return on financial investment from 5% to 8% for graduates in the mid-1990s. More recent surveys show that Economics, Business, Finance, and Accounting were among the Bachelor programs in highest demand in Vietnam in the 2010s (Bui 2013).

'When my daughter entered university, I only wanted her to study English. I thought, 'if she goes for foreign languages she should choose English because it is most common'.' (Mr. Kiet, higher-class family)

'My father thought that I should get a foreign-language degree in order to have something solid to step into life with. A foreign-trade degree would be OK with him too.' (Duc, higher-class background)

'I [would have] liked to take up Painting or Journalism as university majors but my mother didn't allow me to. She told me that being a journalist is tough and requires much travelling. She was afraid that if I had a career in the arts, I'd always be on the clouds, and my job would be unstable. She wanted me to study English. At the time, she was the person who decided everything for me.' (Tien, higher-class background)

'I was examining myself to see whether my own initial interest in IT would be suitable for me and my future. I was also partially pressurised by my parents. In the end I reconsidered my decision-making and decided to change my major to Banking.' (Manh, higher-class background)

Leader-professional parents send their children to specialised classes (Mrs. Chi's account, pg 182) or private tutors (Tien's account, pg 197) to enhance their command of English, from the time of the children's early schooling. From their education and work experiences, these parents are well-informed about the importance of foreign languages in contemporary Vietnamese society. Parents who studied abroad in the socialist Eastern European block, like Tien's father, who is head of a military organisation, or Mr. Kiet, a former state expert and business owner, were themselves advantaged occupationally by foreign-language proficiency, which domestic students lacked (see Tien's and Mr. Kiet's accounts above) (see also Vu NT 1999). For those who work in the state sector, foreign language has been part of the compulsory in-service training programme since the mid-1990s (UN 2004, Poon *et al.* 2009). According to O'Connor's (1996) observations, among the generation of the parents in this study only those with foreign-language skills were able to secure jobs in the foreign-invested sector after being made redundant from or deliberately leaving the state sector.

Economic majors attract two groups of parents. The first group is business owners like Mr. Dong, who heads a family enterprise in agricultural-product exportation, and Mr. Luc, who directs a family company in porcelain manufacture. As Mr. Dong explains throughout his interview, as part of his strategy to sustain and develop his family business, he wishes to see his three children enter the fields of law, business and the military. In so doing, thinks Mr. Dong, his children will be able to contribute an ideal range of resources, power, and networks to effectively '*support and protect*' their family business (Mr. Dong, enterprise owner, higher-class family). In the end, things turn out just as the father plans. His daughter opts for Law (Mr. Dong's account, pg 227), his middle son the military and his youngest son business. Likewise Mr. Luc, Duc's father, wants Duc to major in foreign trade or business management so that Duc will be able to '*invest his expertise into developing the family company'* (Mr. Luc, enterprise owner, higher-class family) (see also Duc's account, pg 229). The second group of parents who prioritise economic majors comprise those highly attuned to the latest fluctuations in the field of labour. Mr. Giang, Manh's father, for instance, claims that he advised his son to pursue banking based on '*the kind of information which lets you know occupational trends that, as a university lecturer, I was able to approach.'* (Mr. Giang, leader, higher-class family) (see also Manh's account, pg 230).

On a positive note, their parents' informed guidance helps young people attain usable and rewarding qualifications. All young people from higher-class families in this study do well occupationally and have more or less benefitted from their university education. It is possible, though, that the four years these young people spent studying subjects imposed upon them by their parents might have hindered them in ways that this study is not able to uncover. It is not uncommon for them to recall their parents' involvement in the decision-making of their university majors

with frustration and remorse, even though some have found a way to come to terms with it. Below are the revelations of Tien, who was made to pick English over Journalism by her mother (see also Tien's account, pg 230), Linh, whose mother forced her to pursue History against her will (see also Mrs. Huong's account, pg 227), and Duc, who was strongly advised to study English by his father (see also Duc's account, pg 229).

'My mother was very strict in disciplining her children and managing her family. She used to think that her decisions were right while mine were childish. In my education as well as relationships, she offered her opinions and considered them right. For a long time, we didn't really get on. I used to think my mother belonged to another generation and so she couldn't understand me.' (Tien, higher-class background)

'Did I dare object? No way! My mother is very matriarchal. I did not dare have any opinion. But looking back, really, my own choices of business study or tourism study were only my fleeting favourites. At that time, I was not mature enough to choose an occupation for myself. Therefore, any school or major would have been the same.' (Linh, higher-class background)

'If I could do it again, I think I would have studied something else, like Journalism or Media Studies, or I would have gone to an art school to study photography. At the time, I didn't know I had the ability for arts. My father did not recognise my ability, or he did, but he didn't do anything about it, for some reason. I think if my father had really understood my ability, he would have oriented me toward something more relevant than business study or foreign languages, and now I would have had more opportunities to develop in my career.' (Duc, higher-class background)

Lower-class families

Whereas young people from higher-class backgrounds in the qualitative accounts have limited autonomy in deciding their fields of study, but are provided by their parents with informed and rewarding options to select, the situations of those from lower-class backgrounds are essentially the opposite. Lower-class parents do not have the knowledge and experience that would allow them to get involved in their children's career orientation and school-to-work transition. Young people from lower-class backgrounds are left with plenty of autonomy and little guidance in their decision-making. Mistaken decisions, wrong turns, and missed opportunities are regular obstacles on their paths to skilled, rewarding work.

The most common career advice that lower-class parents in this study give to their children is to *avoid* doing the same jobs as their parents. This is consistent with the parents' enormous desire, as we have seen, that their children escape a life of tough manual labour. Many lower-class parents tend to devalue their own work. Asked to introduce their jobs, all the agricultural workers without exception give answers along the following lines: 'I *only* work in the rice field, *not doing anything*.' As illustrated by an extract from the interview with Mrs. Quyen, agricultural workers do not seem to consider their work worthy in the eyes of other people. It also appears that they feel the same way about any extra jobs that they do besides agricultural work, irrespective of whether it is carpentry, cleaning, building, butchery, or market trading, since, unless asked by the interviewer, they do not mention these jobs at all.

Q: Can you introduce yourself?

A: I was born in 1943, and worked in the rice field.

Q: Can you elaborate?

A: When I was at my parents' home, I only worked in the rice field. I cared for my younger siblings and raised pigs and poultry. I didn't do anything at all. I didn't learn. At that time, there was no learning, only working. So I was with my younger siblings at home, not doing anything. When I was 18 years old, I got married. I lived with my husband's family and worked in the rice field.

Q: Did your husband work in the rice field too?

A: Yes, he also worked in the rice field, not doing anything.

Q: What about your own parents?

A: They also only worked in the rice field.

Q: And your siblings?

A: My brothers and sisters also only worked in the rice field, not doing anything, only working in the rice field. (Mrs. Quyen, unskilled agricultural worker, lower-class family)

Some skilled manual workers are as strongly opposed to their children replicating their occupational pathways as are the unskilled agricultural workers, as revealed by the following accounts.

'I never advised my children to do any specific job. I just wanted them to not be like me, doing low-skilled work, or they'll be poor.' (Mr. Vung, unskilled agricultural worker, lower-class family)

'Being a driver is so tough, not great at all. I stumbled upon it myself so I know. You can make 100 trips alright, then making one mistake and your life is wretched. So much stress. I've been doing it for tens of years. Now the ones who cause accidents are all young people, who didn't learn to drive properly. Just one neglectful moment and an accident happens – end of career. So I didn't allow any of my sons to go down this path.' (Mr. Thiem, truck driver, lower-class family)

Skilled manual workers in this study express greater ease than unskilled agricultural workers in envisioning that their children take up vocational training and skilled trades as they themselves have done. As stated, the priority goals for young people from lower-class families are to avoid unskilled work and to have a stable paid job (see 5.2). Quantitative findings suggest that, just as college/university education mediates the reproduction of the leader-professional class, *job training* – often *shorter* and *less formal* than vocational education (see Box 1.2) – mediates the reproduction of the intermediate classes. As demonstrated in Table 6.1, young survey respondents from nonmanual and manual intermediate backgrounds are significantly more likely than those from leader-professional or working-class backgrounds to have had job training. Moreover, significantly more young people who are currently in the intermediate classes have had job training than among the highest and lowest classes. In particular, an overwhelming 70% of young manual skilled workers have had some training.

Table 6.1.

Percentages of young people having had job training by their class backgroundand class attainment, 2010			
	Having had job training		
		Weighted percent	Unweighted base
Class background	Leader-professional class	20	882
	Nonmanual intermediate class	28	446
	Manual intermediate class	25	1056
	Working class	20	7462
Class attainment	Leader-professional class	27	235
	Nonmanual intermediate class	45	273
	Manual intermediate class	70	694
	Working class	17	5164

Notes:

There is a highly significant association between job training and class background: Adjusted F (2.791, 440.970)=6.587***

There is a highly significant association between job training and class attainment: Adjusted F (2.757, 435.583)=260.278***

As qualitative interviews expose, *relevant, usable vocational training* is something one needs in order to be able to attain skilled work. Yet, lacking a strategic, feasible job plan, while being pressured by the urgent need of paid work, young people from lower-class families in this study complete one job training after another – often *short* and *informal* – only to end up with unusable certificates and without skilled employment. Lower-class parents make tireless efforts to fund their children's vocational courses, sometimes to the point of exhausting their already constrained budgets. Nevertheless, for young people from lower-

class backgrounds, the decisions regarding the types of training are often made – by themselves, with or without parents' input – without appropriate consideration of their abilities and interests or the demands of the local job market.

Tuan, the second son in a lower-class family, obtained various informal vocational qualifications and then performed a series of unskilled jobs without using any of his trained skills. As Tuan recounts, upon graduating from high school, he obtained a three-month apprenticeship in motorbike repair and then worked for a motorbike shop for six months. The year after that, he took a short course in shoemaking and apprenticed to a locally well-known shoemaker for a few months. In the same year, he started his training in electricity repair. After working for a few months as an electrician, he joined some friends in trading and ended up losing a large sum of money smuggling Chinese-made mobile phones. Mrs. Giao, Tuan's mother, complains:

'*My older sons chose vocational courses for themselves. They just let us parents know what they wanted and we followed suit. We had to pay for everything. It's a lot of money, impossible to count. That's why I'm still poor until now. Whatever I earned, my children spent it all.'* (Mrs. Giao, lower-class family)

Tuan and his wife are currently doing unskilled jobs from home. In the first half of the year, they trade textile wastes. In the second, they grow soybeans on Tuan's parents' field, and also work as hired agricultural labourers. The couple and their two small sons are living with Tuan's parents and receiving financial support from them.

Son, the second son in a lower-class family, follows a largely similar pathway to Tuan's, except that Son has been able to open a motorbike-repair shop to put his trained skills into use. Son describes his pathway as follows:

'First I spent three years working for a soya milk company. During those years, I also spent half the time trading at the local market to earn a little more income. Then I spent nearly a year working in iron construction. After that, I went south, in late 1999. There I learned motorbike repair. And then I went back north. I went to Hanoi to work in a motorbike-repair shop for nearly a year. I went back home in 2004. In early 2005, I opened this [motorbike-repair] shop and worked here until now.' (Son, lower-class background)

Son's mother comments: '*My second son followed his friends to work here and there. When he came home from the South, he was empty-handed. He couldn't help me with anything.*' (Mrs. Phuong, lower-class background)

The case of Mrs. Lam's oldest daughter does not differ much from the cases of Tuan and Son. It can be seen clearly, though, that the young woman's missteps derived from the lack of a relatively simple piece of information. According to Mrs. Lam, her aspirational and hardworking daughter did well enough in the university entrance exam to enter college (which has the same entrance exam but a lower entrance score than university), yet missed this opportunity since no-one in their family was aware of the college option at the time. From then on, like Tuan and Son, Mrs. Lam's oldest daughter spent a lot of time, effort, and her parents' money to attain a range of skills through short courses: nursing, pharmacy, and tailoring, none of which has translated into a stable, rewarding job. Currently, the young woman has just moved to her husband's handicraft village and started learning to make traditional cone hats. Mrs. Lam mentioned and then revisited her daughter's story again and again in a lamenting tone throughout her interview.

'*My oldest daughter only needed one extra score to pass the university entrance exam. If, then, I had let her go to college, she would have gone to college. I didn't go outside to the society. I didn't have any experience. So as soon as my daughter failed the university exam, I instantly thought of other options for her. I didn't know that she could go to college or a middle-level school. I regret a lot for her. Right then someone suggested to us that she could go to some school, nursing or something, and she went to that school for a year, got a certificate, and in the end did nothing with it. And then she got some pharmaceutical training, but she couldn't find any job with it, and I let her get some tailoring training. My daughter regrets it a lot. She told me: I wish I had gone to a middle-level school and then I could go to college or something. I made such a mistake wasting three, four years getting useless certificates while ending up having no qualifications at all. All I have is some silly certificates.'* (Mrs. Lam, lower-class family)

Conversely, Dao, Mrs. Lam's youngest daughter, benefitted a great deal from having this helpful information. Mrs. Lam learned valuable lessons from the failure of her oldest daughter, and drew upon them to assist her youngest daughter in decision-making. The first lesson is that *formal* academic qualification is important to the attainment of a stable job. The second is that there are alternative options to university beyond the postsecondary level. As indicated in Dao's account (pg 144), her parents advised her to pursue college or middle-level education when she failed the university entrance exam. Dao decided to go to college, becoming the first and only person in her family to have higher education, and also, with her college degree, to secure skilled, stable work: an administrative position at a foreign-invested enterprise. As opposed to her elder sister, Dao was able to move upward thanks to her parents' greater investment in her education (pg 204), better-quality

schooling (pg 191), and, importantly, more informed parental guidance in her educational decision-making.

It is interesting to note that Dao is the only one among the young interviewees from lower-class backgrounds who received informed guidance in making decisions regarding higher-education majors. Dao's elder sister, who was doing odd jobs for a private company, advised Dao to take up accounting upon learning how highly the accountants at her workplace were paid. Dao recalls:

'*My elder sister, who was working at Company X, was the one who guided me toward Accounting study. She said that, firstly, with an Accounting degree one can easily find a job, and secondly, a lot of companies are looking for Accounting graduates, so studying Accounting would give me an advantage. When I took the university entrance exam, I opted for Accounting.'* (Dao, lower-class background)

It seems more common, though, that young people from lower-class backgrounds do not receive the kind of guidance that Dao did. According to the following accounts, lower-class parents fully support and encourage their children to pursue high education, yet are completely uninvolved in their children's decisions regarding majors. The parents attribute this dissociation to their own lack of knowledge.

'I was retired. I couldn't get involved in my children's matters. I didn't know what they liked. So the only thing I could do was to pay for them to follow their schooling from start to finish. I didn't know anything else.' (Mr. Thiem, lower-class family)	*'My children made their own decisions about university. They took the entrance exams of whichever schools they liked. It was all up to what they liked. We weren't able to force them. I most wanted my son to take up medical study, but had to accept that I didn't have the capability to orient him.'* (Mr. Tam, lower-class family)	*'My children bought the guideline book by the Ministry of Education and selected the schools they liked from the book. I gave them money for the university entrance exams. In general, the children made the decisions themselves, while their father and I were responsible for finding the money for them. Their father took them to the city for the exams. How could we know what to select for them? I told my children that they should go for what suits their capacity: if they are not very good, they should go for schools with low entrance scores, and if they are, they can go for those with high entrance scores. It was up to them to decide.'* (Mrs. Lam, lower-class family)

Lower-class children's autonomy in decision-making allows them to make decisions based on their personal preferences and interests, but these could lead to unrealistic and ill-planned selection. In picking university majors, some young people from lower-class families emphasise what they believe to be their innate 'gift', without taking into account their ability to succeed in the university entrance exam or their

prospect of finding suitable jobs after the university courses end. Both Thanh and Tuan applied to highly prestigious schools – the University of Architecture and the University of Theatre and Cinema – based purely on the belief that they are naturally good at the respective fields. It appears that their rationale was misguided by the idea that success rests completely upon natural ability, which hints that the young men had internalised, and fallen victim to, the universal rule of *meritocracy*. This belief stands in contrast to that of people from higher-class families who, as we have seen in this chapter, adopt a credentialisation-oriented, employability-focused approach to educational decision-making.

'My parents gave me the complete right to decide the field of study for myself. I went for Architecture because I liked it. I had the gift for it. I used to draw things all the time. It was my dream to get into the University of Architecture.' (Thanh, lower-class background)

'I have an acting ability. Sometimes when I watched the movies, there were scenes that I felt the actors could not act as well as I would. So I took the exam of the University of Theatre and Cinema… My parents were easy going. We children could select any school because my parents did not have any expertise themselves.' (Tuan, lower-class family)

Knowledge of logics of the fields of education and labour is a crucial parental cultural capital not measurable by parental education. Even though it is reasonable to assume that the two forms of parental cultural capital – knowledge of rules, and parental education – correlate positively with each other, the former plays a distinctive and comparatively more important role in determining children's class attainment. This helps explain the quantitative result showing that parental education has no significant impact on children's class

attainment when demographic characteristics and parental economic resources are factored in (see Model 4, Table 5.3). If parental education is crucial to children's achievement of an academic degree (see Chapter 5), parents' informed guidance in career and school-to-work transitions is critical to the acquirement of an academic degree that is usable and profitable in the field of labour. Thus, knowledge of logics of fields is translated to currencies at stake in the fields – a process of intergenerational conversion of parental cultural capital into children's cultural capital that is facilitated by other parental capital such as social capital (valuable information acquired through social networks). The transmission of knowledge of rules needs to be examined alongside the processes of parental education usually emphasised in Bourdieusian research (see 3.1), in order to gain a better understanding of the cultural dimensions of the reproduction of class advantage.

6.2. Influences

Dao, 23, the youngest daughter in a lower-class family, is a college graduate. Upon graduating from college, she has been working as a routine office worker for a foreign-invested company. Dao sees herself as occupying the same position for years to come. Hoa, 22, the youngest daughter in a higher-class family, also graduated from college. She interned for a state firm in her final year at college. Upon graduation she entered the same firm as an administrator. Recently, she passed the civil service examination to become a junior expert. Why is it that Dao and Hoa have different occupational pathways, despite the fact that they have similar qualifications (not to mention similarities in terms of gender and age)?

The young women's interview accounts expose that class-based parental connections play a major role in their futures. Dao looked for and

secured her current job by herself, without any help from her parents, an agricultural worker and a guard.

'*My parents are farmers, so they don't have connections with people who can offer jobs. I had to rely on myself.'* (Dao, lower-class background)

Hoa, however, would not have attained her internship at the state firm, let alone had a smooth transition to her permanent professional position, had it not been for backing from the head of the firm, who is a commune-level leader and a close acquaintance of her father (see also Hoa's father, Mr. Lap's, account, pg 248).

'*My father knew the head of the firm. At first, as we [students at Hoa's college] were required to look for internship positions ourselves, I was given a position at the firm.'* (Hoa, higher-class background)

This section examines the processes and mechanisms through which higher-class parents mobilise their social capital to help their children capitalise on their educational degree in job attainment in the state sector (see Box 6.1 for information on the *desirability* of state employment in contemporary Vietnam).

Nepotism in contemporary Vietnam

The vital significance of social connections in job attainment is almost *common sense* to the Vietnamese people, and is a popular topic in recent social research on Vietnam. Quantitative analysis reveals that young survey respondents are most likely to select 'by the help of family and friends' as a source which can be used to find jobs (the second most popular options being 'employment service centre' and 'enterprise'). Connection-based appointment – that is, nepotism – in the state sector has received much attention in the media and the academic literature (see, for example, Hausman 2009, Gainsborough 2010, CECODES *et al.*

2011). The consensus across the existing literature is that nepotism is the 'informal rule' (Gainsborough's term) that governs job appointment within the state sector.

Box 6.1. State employment in contemporary Vietnam

It can be argued that state employment in contemporary Vietnam is *desirable* based on the following information:

(1) State positions are small in number. According to official statistics, between 1999 and 2010 state employees accounted for around 10% of the labour force aged 15 years and over (GSO 2011).

(2) The number of highly skilled positions in the state sector is high and on the rise. Data from Vietnam Household Living Standard Surveys 1993–2006 show that a growing majority of state employees worked in government, education, and health services: 51% in 1993, 62% in 2006 (Imbert 2011). As of 2010, state sector remained the dominant provider of educational and health services (GSO 2011). It can be assumed that a majority of leaders and professionals work in the state sector (governmental institutions, state-run enterprises, and Communist Party institutions), or that the leader-professional class and state-employed population greatly overlap.

(3) Financial returns on state employment are high and increasing. Whereas in 1993 state employees had the same average hourly earnings as nonstate workers, in 2006 state employees earned 40% more per hour than nonstate workers (Imbert 2011). As of the 2000s, the *per capita* incomes of households containing at least one state-employee member were substantially higher than those of nonstate households in both urban and rural areas (Coxhead & Phan 2013).

(4) In several studies, researchers locate state workers at the top of the occupational hierarchy (see, for example, Tuong Lai 1993, Kim 2004, Do TK 2010b).

(5) State employment is highly esteemed by interviewees in this study – especially the senior generation, regardless of class position – for its stability, prospects for advancement, low pressure, social benefits, and generous leisure time. Many researchers have made similar observations about public attitudes toward state employment in contemporary Vietnam (see Nguyen 2003, Trinh 2005, King *et al.* 2008).

Consistent with the literature, qualitative evidence in this study indicates that young people's labour-field entrance, especially when it concerns the state sector, is heavily dependent on their parents' social capital. A combination of theoretical guidance and qualitative evidence helps shed light on a few issues which remain under-investigated in the existing literature and will be explored in this section.

(1) *Who possesses social capital?* Previous researchers observe that the senior generation of state employees has been able to transfer its advantages to its children (see Nguyen 2002, Turner & Nguyen 2005, King *et al.* 2008), by using networks to help children secure jobs in the state sector (see Coxhead & Phan 2013). Qualitative accounts in this study clarify that parental occupation class – rather than parental economic sector – is consistent with the extent to which parental networks can generate occupational benefits for children. Hence, it is not state employees, but *leaders and professionals* – some of whom work in the state sector, others in non-state sectors – whose networks yield most profitable social resources.

(2) *How does social capital work?* Whereas previous studies highlight monetary bribery and direct influence as two major channels via which social connections generate private gains (Nguyen KH *et al.* 2006, Hausman 2009, Gainsborough 2010, Hayton 2010, CECODES *et al.* 2011), qualitative evidence in this study portrays *a nuanced combination of credentials, information, and influence*. Higher education is indispensable but not sufficient in helping one gain access to the state sector. In order to be able to navigate the state sector in a successful fashion, one needs valued information and influence, which pre-existing networks bring about.

Leader-professional parents are most able to help their children attain state employment through mobilising their *leader-professional bonding capital*, here understood as 'strong ties to persons of similar social standing', following Dinh *et al.*'s (2012) interpretation of Putnam's (2000) concept of bonding social capital. They use this form of capital to take advantage of the nepotistic job appointment in the Vietnamese state sector. Qualitative analysis shows that the use of bonding connections concerning family members, close friends, close colleagues, and close acquaintances for job and career purposes is predominant across all classes. This observation is consistent with previous research findings showing that, in contemporary Vietnamese society, the traditional agrarian and Confucian patterns of trust, as apparent in narrow circles of close connections, remain influential (see Dalton 2002, Turner & Nguyen 2005). This helps affirm that leader-professional parents are not atypical in their emphasis on close networks. What is different about leader-professional parents is that, compared to lower-class parents, they possess a large number of leader-professional connections in their immediate familial, friendship, and occupational networks. A popular Vietnamese idiom, '*con ông cháu cha*' (the

equivalent of 'born with a silver spoon in one's mouth'), best applies to the children of leader-professional parents – the beneficiaries of leader-professional connections.

As illustrated in the following examples, the connections of leader-professional parents, especially those with office holders or people responsible for allocating jobs, generate the social capital that facilitates their children's access to state-sector positions. Below are the accounts of Mr. Kiet, a former state expert and enterprise owner, Mr. Luc, a national-level ceramic artisan and enterprise owner, Mr. Lap, a commune-level leader, and Mrs. Huong, head of a state-owned historic site.

'Now, we know that my son has the preference of working in the state sector, right. So I told him: Do you like to be a lecturer at your university? Do you like to work for Ministry X? If he likes to work in the state sector I think it's good, but if he's not able to enter this sector and works in other sectors instead, such as the foreign or joint-venture companies, provided that he has a good income, it's alright too. What I'm trying to say is, I give consent to my son's own tendency and wish. If he tells me to help him get a job in Ministry X, I will find a way so that he will be able to realise his wish. I have a lot of experience. I know people, and I have observed the state sector for a long time. I know the ways to do it.' (Mr. Kiet, non-state enterprise owner, higher-class family)

'So my son was working in the media field. I'm friends with the head of Ministry C, who told me that he would help my son get into any position that he liked.' (Mr. Luc, non-state enterprise owner, higher-class family)

'As soon as my youngest daughter graduated from college, I advised her to apply to either the local Department H, or the Branch Office E, especially the Branch Office because it was newly established at the time, so it would be easier to get a place, and an acquaintance of mine worked there so I could tell him to support my daughter's job application.' (Mr. Lap, state-sector commune-level leader, higher-class family)

Mrs. Huong, in particular, has a proven record of taking extensive advantage of her networks to help her daughters and also her husband and her son-in-law secure good posts in the state sector. Her older daughter, a Social Science major, attained a competitive position at a national institute with the support of its head – someone of Mrs. Huong's close acquaintance (Mrs. Huong's account, pg 227). Furthermore, the daughter completed a PhD under the supervision of a prominent social scientist who is another friend of Mrs. Huong's. Mrs. Huong procured her son-in-law a specialist post at a state-owned firm with help from her close friend of 40 years who was the wife of the head of the firm. It took one week in total for her son-in-law to submit his CV and get appointed, which, in Mrs. Huong's words, '*other people say would have cost a lot of money, but we didn't have to pay for anything*' (Mrs. Huong, state-sector leader, higher-class family). Likewise, she employed her professional connections to assist her husband, a former technician, in obtaining jobs in the cultural sector, during the years leading up to his retirement when he was no longer able to work as a technician due to his deteriorating health. For the future career of her younger daughter who is currently a university student, Mrs. Huong has laid out a range of potentially helpful connections.

'I have a few connections that I can use. If my daughter cannot get a teaching position at her university [where she currently studies], I will ask for her a position in a department at Ministry F. Now the future is in our hands. If we make a good effort, we'll get her into a good place; if not, we'll find another way.' (Mrs. Huong, state-sector leader, higher-class family)

Notably, the phrase Mrs. Huong uses in her above account – '*ask for*' ('*xin*') – is part of a term that has been used routinely in the media to address the nepotistic mechanism of job distribution in the state sector – the *'ask-and-give mechanism'* ('*cơ chế xin-cho*'). Many interviewees,

regardless of their class positions, mention the same phrase, which reflects a widespread perception of the existence of the ask-and-give mechanism of state-job appointment. For instance, Mrs. Lam, an agricultural worker, claims the following: '*Even if we are in a dream we dare not think that we will be able to ask for a state job'* (Mrs. Lam, lower-class family). Mrs. Chi, a state-sector professional, states: '*To be honest, I most wanted to ask for my daughter a state position'* (Mrs. Chi, higher-class family).

Mechanisms of nepotism

How does the ask-and-give mechanism work? According to the existing literature, monetary bribery is an undeniable phenomenon in the state sector. In surveys conducted by transparency watchdogs between 2011 and 2013 across the country, more than half the respondents admitted the need to pay bribes for state employment (CECODES *et al.* 2014). Further, bribery has been one of the common illegitimate sources of complementary income of state officials (Gainsborough *et al.* 2009: 22), in the context where their formal salaries cannot fully cover their living expenses (Nguyen KH *et al.* 2006).

Interestingly, even though the interviewees in this study frequently acknowledge monetary bribery, none of them admits ever having actually used money to purchase positions. Monetary bribery is mentioned in terms of hearsay or speculation. Those who have succeeded in using their connections to help their children secure a state post assume that other people, not having the connections that they do, would have had to pay a lot of money for the same post (Mrs. Huong's account, pg 249, and Mrs. Quynh's and Mrs. Giao's accounts, pg 259). Those who claim that they are not able to help their children enter the state sector seem to believe that all it takes to attain a state position is a large amount of money, which they do not have. Mrs. Quyen, an

unskilled agricultural worker, affirms: '*You must have money to ask for a job with the state*' (Mrs. Quyen, lower-class family). Likewise, Mrs. Yen, a commune-level leader, asserts: '*We like to think that those who pass the civil service exam get the job; but, in fact, it is offered to those with money or with a mediator'* (Mrs. Yen, higher-class family). Those who have not yet been involved in their children's attainment of a state position, but are planning to be, express their willingness to spend a considerable sum of money if needed. Mr. Phuc, a professional, declares:

'We need to consider the case that our children cannot meet our expectations, and we'll have to find a place for them to stand. We'll need to find out what the market wants and be prepared to meet that, for example, asking for a job may cost money. We often criticise bribery, but sometimes, in order to get what we want, to realise our aim, we'll need to consider doing so. I don't like it, but if necessary, I'll do it without hesitation, as long as the job gets done.' (Mr. Phuc, higher-class family)

There is qualitative evidence of nepotistic *non-monetary* avenues to the state sector. Arguably, money is normally involved in cases in which those who 'ask' and those who 'give' connect not directly with each other but via intermediaries. This study looks into cases in which the asker (parent) connects *directly* with the giver (leader-professional in parent's bonding network), and where the currency of exchange is not necessarily instant cash.

First, having a parent who is a state official can be the single criterion required for securing a post in a state firm where there are posts reserved exclusively for the children of current officials. Mrs. Chi works in such a firm.

'*As soon as my daughter graduated from university, I told her to give me her CV so that I could submit it to my firm. Where I work, there is a*

department that prioritises only the children of employees.' (Mrs. Chi, state-sector professional, higher-class family)

Departments like Mrs. Chi's are satirically referred to by the journalist Nguyen G (2005) as 'centralised kindergartens' ('*nhà tre trung ương*'). Their existence is probably one of the main causes for overstaffing in the state sector (number of current staff exceeding the state-assigned quota), a phenomenon acknowledged but never explained by state media (see, for example, Tuoi Tre 2013, Thanh Nien 2014).

It can be speculated that people who have closer connections with current state officials – *the insiders* – are more advantaged in job attainment in the state sector than those who do not have such connections, net of credentials. In this sense, the most advantaged are the children of the statesmen and stateswomen; next come the relatives, friends, and acquaintances. As well-connected as Mrs. Huong is (Mrs. Huong's account, pg 249), she remains unsure about her ability to help her daughter, a third-year student at University X, secure lectureship at the same university. The reason, as Mrs. Huong explains, is that lectureships at University X are normally earmarked only for children of its current lecturers.

'My daughter wants to become a lecturer at her current university, so she's been making a lot of effort in learning and social activities. But the recruitment quota for each year is only two to three staff. Meanwhile, in my daughter's class there are children of current teaching staff, and they are good students too. It is often these family members – a son, even a daughter-in-law – who are recruited to the department.' (Mrs. Huong, state-sector leader, higher-class family)

Likewise, Hoa, who has already secured a junior-expert position at a state firm (thanks to the patronage of the firm's head who is a friend of her father) (Hoa's account, pg 244), is not very optimistic about her

prospects of advancement to managerial positions. Drawing on hearsay and personal observation, Hoa believes that the immediate relatives of her bosses will have a much higher chance than she will to become managers.

'*In the state sector, it is often only the big fish that get the big posts. Even in my department, there are such cases. Certainly if the current managers are able to arrange positions for their children or relatives, they will do so. For example, currently the head of our department is the younger brother-in-law of the deputy head of the office. There are many things that are difficult to say. Of course those people will be more advantaged than me.'* (Hoa, higher-class background)

Nepotism in the state sector does not always work through direct influence as in the abovementioned scenarios. Admission to the state sector is formally merit-based and exam-based (Gainsborough 2006). For most people, if not all, a state position at a government office, agency, or school must be acquired through the civil service examination (Thanh Nien News 2014a). Mr. Kiet, a former expert in the state sector, puts it aptly:

'*Usually, people have to take exams to get into the ministries. I'm not talking about the children of high-ranked officials who all of a sudden have their names listed on the payroll and long-term contracts. Most people, if they want to get a place, have to take the civil service exam. So, you certainly have to take the exam. If someone says they can get a place without taking the exam, only by paying lot of money, it doesn't sound right, I wouldn't believe them.'* (Mr. Kiet, former state expert, current enterprise owner, higher-class family)

Just like the university entrance exam, the standardised civil service exam aims to ensure universality and equality (Poon *et al.* 2009). But influence can be wielded effectively through this ostensibly meritocratic

avenue. Interviewees mention several methods by which people with the right connections can ensure their success in the civil service exam.

First of all, via the insiders, especially the recruiters, the hopefuls can obtain confidential information about the recruitment quota and the eligibility criteria. State job openings and descriptions are seldom publicised, as Hausman (2009) observes, let alone the supplementary information about their processes. Mrs. Huong believes that her daughter, a French major at university, would have a good chance of passing the civil service exam of a state department, not simply because Mrs. Huong is connected to an influential authority in the department, but also because she knows French language skills such as her daughter's are sought after.

'*A younger sister of one of my close friends is the deputy head of the department. She let me know that a lot of people take the English exam to the department every year, but very few take the French exam, and my daughter can take the French exam.'* (Mrs. Huong, state-sector leader, higher-class family)

Mr. Giang, another state-sector leader, obtained recruitment information from a high-stakes source – someone involved in staff quota management for local state firms including Centre X – to assist his daughter's job application to Centre X.

'*My friend worked at the district Department of Staff Organisation. He let me know that Centre X was short of staff so that we could send my daughter's application there. We prepared a lot of applications to send to many places, but we relied on our connection to focus on the application to the one place that most needed staff.'* (Mr. Giang, state-sector leader, higher-class family)

The second way one can aim to succeed in the exam is to know the exam questions and answers ahead of time. If the standardised, textbook-based university entrance exam rewards those who are well-rehearsed, so does the civil service exam, which has been known to emphasise rote memorisation (such as that of legal documents) rather than creativity (see Poon *et al.* 2009). Recently, the state media in Vietnam has exposed, for the first time, an incident that happened in the civil service exam whereby exam questions were being leaked to exam takers who had a close relation to the current leaders of a particular ministry (see Thanh Nien News 2014b). Many interviewees in this study are not unfamiliar with this case and strategy. Mr. Kiet, a former state expert, highlights *pre-access to exam questions through exam revision classes* as the key tactic throughout the whole process in which he has drawn on his connections to help his brother-in-law attain an officer post in the military.

'*If you want to enter the state sector through the exam pathway, I know how to do it. I asked for my brother-in-law, as soon as he graduated from university, a position in a military office in Hanoi, without spending any money. First, we look for information on their recruitment process. Now, if you want to take an exam, you must know the date and location of the exam. You must also know about the subjects of the exam. So, there will be revision classes for those subjects, and the exam questions may be leaked there. If people I know want to help me, it's easier for them to help at this step.'* (Mr. Kiet, non-state enterprise owner, higher-class family)

Third, cheating during the civil service exam is another possibility. Khanh is a contract employee at a district-level state office. He attained this post with the patronage from his aunt who is the deputy head of the office. Khanh was planning to take the civil service exam to become an official employee, and had gathered information about exam tricks

from previous exam takers, which he discusses in the account below. It can be deduced from the interview with Khanh that one needs not only patronage but also the funds for bribes in order to be able to cheat in the civil service exam.

Q: What will the civil service examination be like? Are you sure you will pass?

A: I don't know, but many people say there must be money.

Q: Who are they, the current employees?

A: The people who used to take the exam.

Q: The ones who passed?

A: Those who used to attend the same revision classes for the exam that I will be taking. The civil service examination is really difficult – if standardised, it would be very difficult to pass. But once you take it, you'll see clearly that it's like a child's game. The inspectors at the department are very responsible, but the invigilators of the exam are not.

Q: Yes?

A: The invigilators will just ignore some candidates. They allow these candidates to freely copy.

Q: Can you explain?

A: Copy from the materials. You see, there'll be one month to revise three thick books on law. How can one manage?

Q: So how will you manage?

A: That I don't know yet. I'll have to get my university correspondence degree first. Then I'll see if there's any door [chance] to run [bribe] into the inner round. (Khanh, lower-class background)

As Khanh remarks, he will not take the civil service exam before he has received his university correspondence degree. It appears that, in most cases, only those who have the required credentials are eligible to take

the civil service exam and thereby gain access to jobs in the state sector. No matter how influential one's connections are, one has to be qualified on paper in the first place. In the Vietnamese state sector, a college/university degree is an essential criterion for a junior-expert position, while a master's degree for a principal-expert position, and a PhD for a senior-expert position (Hausman as cited in Wysocki 2009).

Mrs. Huong, a leader in the state sector, highlights that she can only help her daughter achieve a university lectureship as long as the young woman achieves *'a distinction and not a merit'* for her university degree (Mrs. Huong, higher-class family). Mrs. Huong's daughter is, in fact, not only obtaining excellent grades but also actively involved in school activities – acting as deputy secretary of the student union and deputy president of the French-Vietnamese society, among other roles – in order to realise her goal.

When it comes to job attainment in the state sector, the qualitative evidence in this study suggests that connections act as essential support to credentials rather than compensation for a lack of credentials. Since people with credentials *and* connections win the jobs, their use of connections to advantage themselves may be self-justified in one way or another. The interviewees who have used or are planning to use their connections to help their children enter the state sector find the practice '*fair*', without being concerned as to whether or not they exploit the corrupt system for private gains and make job attainment unfair for those who have credentials but not connections. In their view, only those who use *money* to purchase positions are contributing to reinforcing the unfairness of the system. Mrs. Huong refers to these people as '*opportunistic*':

'*Good, capable, well-behaved people are not guaranteed to be successful while opportunistic ones advance quickly. It tires people out.*' (Mrs. Huong, state-sector leader, higher-class family)

Mr. Kiet makes a distinction between those who '*run for it*' (bribe) and those like himself who do not bribe but only use their connections – who only '*make it fair for their children*':

'*I believe that if other people run for it, I will be able to run for it. If people do not run for it, but things are fair, I will also make it fair for my children, and I will not try to run at any price.*' (Mr. Kiet, former state expert, higher-class family)

Once again, we are reminded of the notion that meritocracy, as the universal rule, disguises and legitimises social favouritism – the discriminating rule. Rephrasing Bourdieu, Sullivan (2002: 146–147) aptly puts it thus: 'Educational credentials may not be necessary to secure privileges at all, but only to legitimate them.'

Last but not least, for young people from lower-class families, the occupational networks of their higher-class relatives in their extended family can generate the social capital that their parents' occupational networks cannot. Their 'bonding-link' social capital – defined by Dinh *et al.* (2012) as 'strong ties to persons of higher social standing' – provides people from the lower classes with the patronage to move upward. In this study, there are two such cases. Mrs. Quynh's second son and Mrs. Giao's youngest son were helped by their office-holder relatives to attain, respectively, a lieutenant post in the military and routine office work at a state firm. As reflected in the working-class mothers' accounts, the patronage that their children received was based on kinship loyalty and responsibility. Their cases call to mind the Vietnamese idiom '*một người làm quan cả họ được nhờ*' ('one mandarin can be relied on by the whole clan').

'After he failed the university exam my son stayed at home and worked in the rice field for a year. But I wanted him to work in the military. I didn't want to see him working in the field. Then it was our family fortune that the commune called him out to join the military. I took the chance to ask for him a lieutenant post. There was a military leader who was our relative. I'm very poor. I don't have any money. So I asked for his help. There was someone who offered him 60 million for the same post but he did not receive their money.' (Mrs. Quynh, unskilled worker, lower-class family)

'There was an uncle who helped my son. He was the head of the town People's Committee. His aunt was the deputy head of the district office. She also helped him. People from various places have zigzag connections, so in the end they have to help each other. They knew our family was poor, so they didn't expect anything from us, only some humble gifts. They could have gotten 50 or 70 million from others, but they helped us out of affection. This is a matter of long-term human relationship. We are their relatives. Our relationships will last long.' (Mrs. Giao, unskilled worker, lower-class family)

Researchers on Vietnam have stressed the importance of social connections in job attainment and career building in a society where nepotism has been a social norm especially within the state economic sector (see Turner & Nguyen 2005, Gainsborough 2010, Coxhead & Phan 2013, CECODES *et al.* 2014). How the 'ask-and-give' mechanism underlying admission to the state sector works, however, is not always as straightforward and self-evident (for example, through monetary bribery) as analysed in previous research (see Nguyen KH *et al.* 2006, Hausman 2009, Gainsborough 2010, Hayton 2010, CECODES *et al.* 2011). This study has examined the non-monetary nepotistic

mechanism underlying job attainment in the state sector, which concerns the combined effect of formal academic credentials, social connections, and inside information.

Two things must be noted. First, academic credentials mediate and legitimise the influences of social connections on job attainment. Young people who have access to their parents' bonding leader-professional networks are the most advantaged in capitalising on their educational degrees to attain state positions, or to convert their cultural capital into economic capital. Second, even though job attainment through bonding-linking social capital is an important mechanism by which to promote upward mobility at the individual and family levels, and helps a number of people from lower-class backgrounds move up, it is damaging at a societal level, contributing to reinforcing nepotism and inequality.

Access to state jobs has always been discriminating. In the socialist era, state jobs were allocated based on education as an explicit criterion, but educational opportunities were only available to people who had political credentials, or proven loyalty to the Communist Party. Those who did not have the right political background because of their families' past conflicts with the Party were denied educational opportunities at higher levels, and their lack of qualifications legitimised their exclusion from state employment. Even though political screening has been eradicated in the reform era, the logics of the state field have now evolved to ensure that state positions are still safeguarded for those with affiliation with the state. State connections have become a prerequisite for access to state employment, and this prerequisite is not only implicit but also effectively glossed over by the explicit criterion – educational credentials. What has survived the reform is the power of the state. As it did under the socialist system, the state now rewards most highly those with proven commitment to it. In

this way, the state sector is 'reproduced' and the power of the state is strengthened.

6.3. Funds

Social researchers have long argued that social mobility is possible not only through the education avenue but also through the direct transmission of family-embedded economic resources, especially among self-employed and entrepreneurial occupations and for children of wealthy families (see, for example, Bourdieu 1977: 507, Yamaguchi 1983, Hout 1984: 1385–1386, Goldthorpe 2007b: 174). In Vietnam in the reform era, this possibility has become a reality. In the previous socialist era, the government's egalitarian policies were in place. In principle, the coupon system, free education, and restriction on private trade aimed at redistributing wealth, equalising life chances, and limiting the distinction between rich and poor families in their capability of transmitting resources to their offspring (see Taylor 2004: 6). Since 1986, Vietnam has undergone a major shift from a centrally planned to market-oriented economy marked by decollectivisation, the elimination of the coupon system, and the legalisation of private economic sectors. The multisectoral market economy opens up *private business* as an alternative avenue (to wage employment) for advancement (Nee 1996: 943) or, as researchers note for the specific case of Vietnam, legitimise and destigmatise it (see Taylor 2004, Turner & Nguyen 2005).

Box 6.2. Self-employment in contemporary Vietnam

Since the dawn of the reform in the 1980s, the concept and practice of self-employment have been introduced (Turner & Nguyen 2005). The Enterprise Law, in effect from 2000, has helped promote the development of private businesses by institutionalising the freedom of all individuals to do business in areas not prohibited by law, and removing administrative obstacles such as complex licensing procedures. As a result, from the 1991–1999 period to the 2000–2004 period, the number of registered private enterprises nearly quadrupled (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam).

The growth of private businesses has also been facilitated by the new attitude toward private ownership and individual trade that the state has adopted since the reform. Throughout the history of Vietnam, private ownership was stigmatised and individual trade oppressed. In the Confucian pre-colonial society, wealth acquisition through commerce was prohibited and traders ranked lowest in the social hierarchy of prestige (Pham 1999: 8). During wartime, private ownership was regarded as a threat to the ethic of sacrifice to the collective (Taylor 2004: 12). Individual trade continued to be discriminated against in the socialist society for being associated with the 'bourgeoisie class' and promoting the evils of capitalism (Tuong Lai 1999). There has been a radical change in the state discourse in the reform era (Turner & Nguyen 2005). The state slogan of 'Prosperous people, strong nation, equal, democratic, civilised society' ('*Dân giàu, nước mạnh, xã hội công bằng, dân chủ, văn minh*'), a staple of propaganda billboards across the country, demonstrates how individual wealth is valued under market economy (Taylor 2004).

Who has been able to use private business as a mobility avenue in the reform era? Even though all individuals are allowed by law to establish private businesses (Vietnam National Assembly 2005), it can easily be argued that people from more advantaged families, and who have greater access to private funds, are in a better position to set up their own businesses than those from less advantaged families. Tran MMC (2014) points out that better-off households are advantaged by formal financial institutions with regard to credit allocation. Surveys conducted during the 1990s and 2000s show that small enterprises and traders mainly relied on funds from their intimate networks of family and friends and not bank loans (Turner & Nguyen 2005).

This section examines how pre-existing family funds facilitate young people's entry into the higher classes, independent from scholastic capital. According to Multinomial Logistic Regression results, controlling for class background, demographic characteristics, education, training, parental education, and parental upbringing, the chance of entering the leader-professional class, as opposed to the working class, of a young person having high parental economic resources is significantly higher than that of someone having low parental economic resources (see Model 4 – Table 5.3).

Drawn mainly from qualitative evidence of this study, two key findings will be explored in the current section.

(1) *Money, fixed property* and *existing enterprises* are important forms of parental economic capital, enabling young people who have access to family funds to enter the leader-professional class by founding or taking over *enterprises* (companies), or to at least avoid unskilled, unstable work by opening *businesses* (shops or market stalls) (see Box 6.3 for the distinction between 'enterprise' and 'business'). It is noted that children of

entrepreneurs benefit from their parents' guidance in their business endeavours as well as from family funds.

(2) Family funds can help young people thrive without a formal degree, or to capitalise on their (educated or trained) skills in the field of labour via the business pathway.

Box 6.3. Enterprise vs. business

This study adopts the following definitions of 'business' and 'enterprise' from the 2005 Enterprise Law.

- '*Business* means the continuous conduct of one, several or all of the stages of the investment process, from production to sale of products or provision of services in the market for profits.' (Vietnamese National Assembly 2005)
- '*Enterprise* means an economic organisation having its own name, having assets and a stable transaction office, and having business registration in accordance with law for the purpose of conducting business operations.' (Vietnamese National Assembly 2005). Micro-enterprises are those with fewer than 10 employees, small enterprises have 10 to 49 employees, medium-sized enterprises have 50 to 299 employees, and large enterprises have over 300 employees (Vietnamese National Assembly 2005).

In qualitative analysis, an enterprise owner (or business leader) is considered a member of the leader-professional class, whereas a business owner a member of either the intermediate class (if involved in skilled work) or the working class (if involved in unskilled work). The qualitative sample of this study includes only owners of small enterprises.

Lower-class families

The stories of Ly and Ha, two young women from solidly working-class backgrounds, demonstrate that for young unskilled workers from poor homes with no formal degrees or trained skills, opening a shop or market stall promises more stable work and higher income, yet remains a distant dream. Ly and Ha, who are the oldest daughters in their families, both quit school by the elementary level and started working for income at around age 10. They both came to settle for market work. Ly is a small fruit vendor at her local central market – X, known as one of the biggest wholesale markets of China-imported goods in the country, whereas Ha is a salesperson for clothing merchants at Y – one of the largest markets in Hanoi. With years of experience of working in busy marketplaces, the young women have accrued confident command of their respective trades. Ha wishes to run her own shop and Ly her own market stall, but both are pessimistic about their ability to realise their wish due to lack of funds. Below are their stories in their own words.

'I was in grade 5 when I quit school for good. First I kind of just went out to the high street close to my house where people were preparing peanuts for sale, and was hired to sort out peanuts. When I was 14, I went to the highland to babysit my aunt's new-born. When I was 16, I told my mum to buy vegetables, tomatoes, onions, and other stuff from home and send it to the highland for me to sell in the market. When I got fed up with that market, I

'I became a housemaid after I quit school in grade 6. After a while, I went to this Market Y to work in shops until now. I mainly work for other people, selling clothes... I want to have my own shop, selling maternity and infant clothing, because it is never out of fashion. Because I

moved to another one, still selling tomatoes and vegetables. I stayed there until I was 23, when I came back home. Since then, I have been trading mainly fruits at Market X. It's nothing difficult. I don't know, but maybe I have some knack for trading… I want to have my own stall at the market, but I don't have any funds. Now if you want to open a stall in Market X, you must have hundreds of millions to pay the rent and buy the stock. I don't have that. I can only earn a daily living. My husband also only earns 2 to 3 million a month. The banks only give loans to the big traders who already have shops, not me – I've never done any big trading, nor did anyone in my family.' (Ly, lower-class background)

have worked as a seller, I know all the sources of goods for this market, especially the cheaper sources. Infant stuff sells very quickly; maternity stuff also sells very quickly. It's based on the market. If you ask people in Market Y, they will tell you what sells most quickly… But it's impossible now for me to have my own shop. I have tried to save up funds, but it's nothing much.' (Ha, lower-class background)

Setting up a shop is also a preferred option for some young people in the qualitative sample who have trained skills, including those who are dissatisfied with their current wage jobs and those who have not been able to secure stable, rewarding wage employment due to their lack of formal training. The following examples suggest that whether or not a young person is able to put his/her skills into use through the business avenue depends very much on access to family funds, regardless of family class or type of training.

Thanh, a vocational graduate from a lower-class family, is a skilled manual worker who no longer finds wage employment a suitable option. Thanh has been working for a construction company where, at some

point, he was assigned a supervisory role. As Thanh spells out (pg 210), he once enjoyed his work, but is now forced to contemplate a change of career under compounded pressures. His duties at construction sites require him to work far away from home for months on end, and leave behind his ageing parents, whom, as their only son, Thanh has a responsibility to care for, as well as his wife and four small children under the age of 5. Thanh is no longer fit to carry out hard physical labour due to a chronic disease he contracted from working under harsh conditions (air pollution, poor hygiene, and lack of nutrition). Finally, as his mother reveals, Thanh's salary has been slow in arriving because his company has been having financial difficulties.

His best option for more suitable and rewarding work, as Thanh sees it, is to open a shop selling construction materials, the products he is familiar with and knowledgeable about. Unfortunately, he has been struggling to find funds to kick-start his plan. Thanh admits: '*I really want to trade iron, steel because these are the things I already know. Now if I work anywhere, earning a salary like before, I won't be able to help my parents, my wife and my children's schooling. Only by doing business will I earn enough income. Currently, though, I don't have funds. I'm making a project proposal to borrow 1 billion from the bank, but I'm waiting for my parents' permission to use our house for mortgage*' (Thanh, lower-class background). Thanh's father is strongly against the idea of securing a bank loan against their family home: '*To trade materials like iron, we need a large amount of funds. In order to start, we'll have to spend too much money, and we don't have money. How could we do it? Now if we borrow from the government, it's too complicated. We have to ask for the licence and put up our house and also pay the interest. I fear that we'll become even poorer, not richer. I'd prefer Thanh to look for lighter work that doesn't need much funding.*' (Mr. Tam, lower-class family).

Unlike Thanh's case, Tuan and Son, sons in lower-class families, have not been formally trained but have only had various short, informal apprenticeships. The young men have not been to find stable paid jobs (see Tuan's and Son's detailed pathways, pg 237–238). Both Tuan and Son were trained in motorbike repair, which is unsurprisingly a popular vocational training, especially for men, in a country where the motorbike is the dominant means of transport (according to SAVY 2010 data, 83% of Vietnamese are living in households that own at least one motorbike). Due to their differing access to family funds, whereas Son has been able to open a motorbike-repair shop, which allows him to utilise his trained skill and gives him a monthly income of 4 million dong (making him the young lower-class worker with the highest income in the qualitative sample), Tuan has been stuck with unskilled work which brings him an income of 1 to 2 million per month.

'Every time I took up a vocational training, I wanted to have a shop, where there is an accumulation of funds and goods. When I took up the training of motorbike repair, my teacher suggested that we open our own shop. I asked my parents for investment, but at that time my family economy was tight. I didn't have the funds, so I gave up the idea. Even if I want to do it now, the finance of my family is not strong enough to supply funds for me. My parents said that as they are getting old now, they cannot take risks.' (Tuan, lower-class background)

'For my motorbike-repair shop, my aunt lent me the money. My parents provided the location. Everything else me and my wife did on our own.' (Son, lower-class background)

Tuan's mother, Mrs. Giao, reveals that their family encountered significant financial constraints at the time Tuan needed the funds to set up a motorbike-repair shop, since a large amount of their savings had gone into bailing Tuan's older brother out of prison for a drug-related crime. By contrast, for his motorbike-repair shop, Son not only received a loan from his aunt but was also able to use for free the ground floor of his parents' three-storey house on a main road. (According to Son's mother, Mrs. Phuong, she and her husband built the house where Son's shop is located with the compensation they received from the local authority for farmland repossession.)

Higher-class families

Qualitative evidence posits that establishing a new *enterprise* or taking over an existing one at a young age is an exclusive privilege of people from higher-class families. Like Son in the above example, Thu, daughter of a solidly leader-professional family, kick-started her entrepreneurial venture with a clothing shop on the ground floor of her parents' house. But unlike Son, who has been running the business at the same level for several years now, Thu has transformed her humble first shop into a registered enterprise only within a couple of years. When Thu began, the business was only her side project, for she was still employed as an editor at a publishing house. A few months later, her home-run shop turned into a two-floor fashion boutique on a busy high street, by combining the profits from her first shop with a loan from her grandmother. At this point, Thu quit her editor position to become a full-time entrepreneur. A year later again, she had registered her business as a limited liability company specialised in fashion and had over ten employees working under her management. Thu's father, Mr. Kiet, owner of an enterprise specialised in computer products,

offered advice and financial support to help Thu mobilise the funds for her business expansion.

'*I told Thu, if you want to do big business, the professional way to do it is to borrow money from the bank. You have to think about a bank loan. If you keep borrowing money from people in the family, first, you're not professional, and second, it shows you are not yet able to endure the real pressure of business – that is, to deal with the possibility that your funds will be withdrawn. If you borrow from the banks, I will support you in [covering the] interest rate. If the interest rate that the bank gives you is too high, I will cover that for you. Take it that you are borrowing from the bank with a zero interest rate. That's how I helped her.'* (Mr. Kiet, higher-class family)

Thu's university degree must have contributed to her credibility as an entrepreneur from the bank's point of view, and hence facilitated her successful loan proposal. But it is obvious, from looking at Thu's whole entrepreneurial pathway, that her access to funds – from using her parents' house as a first business location, to receiving loans from her grandmother and father – is more important than her academic credentials to her entry into the leader-professional class as an enterprise owner.

Apart from family funds, informed guidance from entrepreneurial parents facilitates the business endeavours of young people from higher-class families. Mr. Kiet not only advised Thu to do business the 'professional' way, but also resolutely motivated Thu to aspire for a 'big business'. Thu reveals that, during the time she was working as an editor, '*my dad asked me so many questions – why do you work with books for so long, why are you working as an editor, why is your salary so low, where is the energy you used to have when you were at university, where is your working capacity? […] He asked me so many questions not*

on a single occasion but continuously. Time to time he would say, what is the matter with Thu now? He couldn't understand why I seemed to be so sluggish. He kept telling me, why don't you go work for some company with a high salary and learn from its business system, and then create for yourself a big business that's worth some hundred million?' (Thu, higher-class background).

For those who are the successors to existing family enterprises, an academic degree can be even more redundant to their class attainment than in the above case of Thu, for these enterprise heirs inherit their leader-professional status directly from their enterprise-owning parents. Mr. Dong's youngest son has been chosen to be the eventual inheritor of his family enterprise, a commercially successful company in agricultural-product sales and exportation. For the time being, the young man assists his parents in running the company, while also managing a side family business – a guesthouse and karaoke bar. Notably, like Thu in the previous example, Mr. Dong's youngest son inherits from his parents not only the physical assets but also the know-how and connections of his family businesses. As Mr. Dong sums up: '*I have been introducing my son to the products that we trade, and to our good customers – the Chinese. I let him know the loyal customers, or those who are willing to buy the products that sell fast at a slightly higher price. I take him everywhere to connect to people and at the same time to guide him. We already have our close customers, so all we need is to follow our business rules. Our business must be clean, and it must be righteous. Never do what is bad for our countrymen. Trade fairly. Never buy in excess, never sell short*' (Mr. Dong, higher-class family).

Duc is another enterprise successor. Duc's parents are Mr. Luc and Mrs. Vui, who co-own a registered company in porcelain production, sales and exportation. Their enterprise is one of the most commercially successful, especially in respect to its international ties, of all the

enterprises of the same kind in Bat Trang, a renowned traditional porcelain and pottery village located in the suburban outskirts of Hanoi. In his interview, Mr. Luc describes their family as '*rich*' and openly estimates the total value of their assets, including the company, several estates, and a vast collection of antiques and bonsais, in terms of tens of billions. As the only son, Duc is expected to replace his father as company director and inherit *all* these assets. Mr. Luc reveals: '*In reality, everything that I created will eventually belong to Duc. When he comes home, I will transfer all the power to him, right then, right here'* (Mr. Luc, higher-class family). Knowing that Duc has a passion for photography, Mr. Luc does not hesitate to offer him the funds to set up his studio, with only the condition that the young man agrees to take over the family business gradually. Mr. Luc claims: '*If Duc wants to have a photography studio or anything, I will fully support him. I'm willing to trade one of the properties that we have for him to do so'* (Mr. Luc, higher-class family).

In this chapter, evidence has been analysed in view of the ways in which young people draw on their parental resources to thrive in different sectors of the field of labour in contemporary Vietnam. Knowledge of the rules of the fields of education and labour helps facilitate the achievement of rewarding academic qualifications. Leader-professional bonding networks allow access to state employment through the nepotistic mechanism of job appointment in the state sector, discriminating against those who are academically qualified but excluded from these networks. Direct transmission of family-embedded economic resources via the business avenue further reaffirms the contention that class advantages enable capital returns on educational as well as non-educational routes to high-class positions. Young people who have greater access to family funds – most often from higher-class backgrounds – are in a better position to take advantage of the

alternative avenue for advancement that is private business, as opened up by the market-oriented reform economy.

Chapter 7.

Class Influences on Class Attainment – Self-Cultivation

Whereas Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 have looked exclusively at parental cultivation, this chapter investigates young people's self-cultivation, attempting to shed light on the full process of social reproduction as illustrated by the guiding framework (see Figure P.1). The empirical evidence provided in this study suggests that young people from higher-class backgrounds are able to succeed in the Vietnamese field of labour not only due to their access to parental capital (see Chapter 6) and/or to (scholastic) individual capital translated directly from parental capital (see Chapter 5), but also due to their access to *(nonscholastic) individual capital* as translated directly from their personal and parental capital. This chapter examines the processes by which young people acquire and benefit from their individual capital. It examines the processes of *parental transmission of capital* and of *young people's activation of capital*. The main theoretical assumptions underpinning this analysis have been drawn from Bourdieu's 'The Forms of Capital' (1986) (without a delimitation to 'cultural' capital as denoted in the following paragraph).

> [T]he precondition for the fast, easy accumulation of every kind of useful cultural capital, starts at the outset, without delay, without wasted time, only for the offspring of families endowed with strong cultural capital; in this case, the accumulation period covers the whole period of socialization. (Bourdieu 1986: 49)

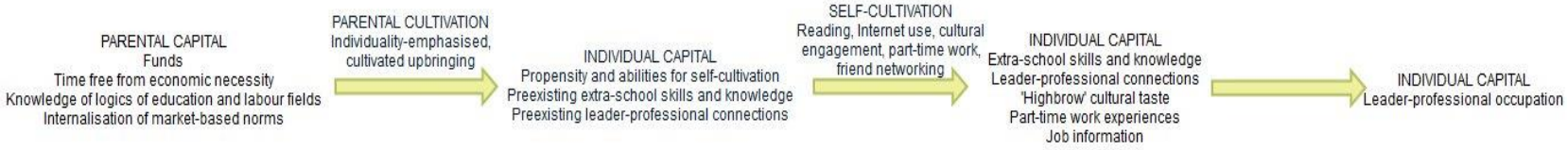


Figure 7.1. Empirical framework of the reproduction of class advantages in contemporary Vietnam – Self-cultivation

The analysis attempts to link the capital accumulation that takes place in the family to the capital accumulation young people achieve by themselves. It is proposed that, for young people from higher-class backgrounds, and especially from solidly leader-professional backgrounds, a reproduction process applies as illustrated in Figure 7.1. The availability of *parents' advantageous capital* during someone's childhood links to an *individuality-emphasised and cultivated upbringing*, which nurtures the *propensity and abilities for self-cultivation* (this last observation echoes Swartz's (1997: 76) Bourdieusian interpretation of 'cultivated dispositions'). Self-cultivating dispositions, in combination with *pre-existing skills, knowledge, and networks*, facilitate *self-cultivating practices* that in turn generate *individual capital* beneficial to the attainment of higher-class positions. In contrast, as observed in this study in relation to several aspects of self-cultivating practice, self-cultivation largely eludes young people from lower-class backgrounds. Disadvantaged young people may seek to improve themselves, but lack both past and present access to advantageous resources that would appropriately lead them to engage in 'self-cultivation'.

Box 7.1. Self-cultivation

In this study, self-cultivation is understood as *practice* in a Bourdieusian sense. Self-cultivation is delimited to practices which are:

(1) guided by habitus and structured by resources – that is, requiring both pre-existing dispositions and resources (throughout childhood) and current dispositions and resources (in young adulthood)
(2) profit-oriented – that is, oriented toward accumulation of resources
(3) capital-generated – that is, capable of yielding resources usable in efforts toward class attainment

The group discussed most in this chapter – the so-called 'self-cultivators' – is a small and highly homogeneous group of qualitative interviewees who are young (20s and 30s), mainly urban-based, university-educated *leaders* and *professionals* from *solidly leader-professional families* in which both parents are in the leader-professional class. Even though this group would represent a tiny portion of the wider population, its members' experiences, which reflect the multidimensionality, concentration, and exclusivity of class advantage in the upper class echelons in contemporary Vietnam, deserve attention. Analyses draw also from the experiences of young, university-educated interviewees in *skilled nonmanual* or *professional* positions who are from higher-class families in which only one parent is in the leader-professional class. Although this latter group engages in cultural and social activities, they face challenges to embark on profitable self-cultivating practices as the former group does, due to their less privileged background and upbringing.

The following sections trace parents' early, family-based cultivation of children's self-development to examine how it gives rise to children's propensity and abilities for self-cultivation. The discussion then moves to young people's specific self-cultivating practices – reading, Internet use, cultural engagement, part-time work, and friend networking – and the ways in which these practices generate resources which can be used in job attainment and career advancement.

7.1. Propensity for self-cultivation

It can be established from qualitative evidence that the virtues valued by parents are imprinted in their children via childrearing practices. This section examines the researcher's observation, from this primary evidence, that higher-class parents' individuality-emphasised, resource-

demanding upbringing nurtures children's *propensity for self-cultivation*. These examinations are set against observations regarding lower-class parents' obedience-emphasised, resource-deprived childrearing practices.

(1) The first part of the section compares the childrearing practices of leader-professional parents and lower-class parents, regarding valued virtues, attitudes to children and childhood, and communication styles employed between parents and children. The comparisons illustrate the notion that leader-professional parents are more likely to emphasise individuality and lower-class parents to emphasise obedience.

(2) The second of the section part links class differentiations in childrearing practices to cultural influences and the availability of parental resources. It is suggested that lower-class parents' emphasis on obedience is shaped and reinforced by: the Confucius moralities of the traditional Vietnamese society, risks of offence associated with financial deprivation, and children's indispensable share in the household's income-generated work. Leader-professional parents' embracing of individuality is induced and promoted by new norms introduced by a market-oriented economy, financial sufficiency, and children's autonomy from household duties.

(3) The third part of the section displays the autonomy, sense of individuality, and propensity for self-cultivation displayed by young people from leader-professional backgrounds. These qualities and abilities have been nurtured throughout their individuality-emphasised and resource-heavy upbringings.

Class-specified patterns of childrearing practices

The qualitative analysis undertaken in this study suggests that higher-class parents emphasise *individuality*, while lower-class parents stress *obedience*. This observation concurs with that in Kohn's (1959) classic study on the relationship between parental occupation and parental values. Pearlin and Kohn's (1966: 469) findings of middle-class parents' esteem for 'self-control' and working-class parents' emphasis on 'conformity' have been much repeated in social-psychological research across several cultural contexts such as Taiwan, France, the UK, Ireland, West Germany, and the US (Kohn 1997: xxviii). Kohn and his colleagues and successors explain parental values in relation to parental occupation, establishing links between the degree of self-direction in work and the valuation of children's self-control. This study, however, frames parents' values in a Bourdieusian sense as their habitus and capital holdings, determined by their class. The values upheld by parents are scrutinised not in the context of their specific occupations at certain points in time, but of their trajectories, dispositions, and access to resources.

Analysis of qualitative accounts in this study consistently reveals that emphases on individuality and obedience are embedded in class-specified parental values and practices, most notably in two aspects of children's upbringing: morality and communication. When asked by the researcher about the virtues they desire for their children, or about what they are most proud of in their children, leader-professional parents show a clear preference for virtues within the spectrum of *selfhood* with answers like 'independence', 'self-confidence', 'self-sufficiency', 'fearlessness', and 'self-direction'. Manual and unskilled worker parents, on the other hand, tend to prioritise virtues within the spectrum of *conformity*, including 'obedience', 'courteousness', and 'respectfulness'. Even though the most distinct division regarding

preferred virtues is found between urban/town leader-professional parents and rural working-class parents, class position appears to be a stronger divisive factor than household residence.

'The things that are important to me are stable work and obedient children. In general, if a family has those things, it is a happy family. I believe that if parents can raise obedient children, they'll have nothing to worry about.' (Mrs. Lam, working class, lower-class family, rural)

'When my children were small, I always encouraged them to learn. As they grow up, I always encourage their independence – absolute independence.' (Mr. Luc, leader-professional class, higher-class family, town)

'I'm proud that in my family, when grandparents and parents talk, the children listen. The children know the order in the family. In other families, they have to say harsh words, shout, but in my family, the children just obey closely.' (Mrs. Quyen, working class, lower-class family, rural)

'Generally saying, I want my children to be self-sufficient. I only need to guide them and they would do things by themselves.' (Mrs. Vui, leader-professional class, higher-class family, town)

Unlike their lower-class counterparts, leader-professional parents devote a lot of effort in their interviews to building the image of their children as distinctive individuals. As exemplified in the following accounts, when asked to describe their children leader-professional parents depict each child as an individual with a unique personality, orientation, and aptitudes, whereas intermediate- and working-class parents emphasise generic features of goodness and obedience. In addition, the lower-class parents do not discuss their children's abilities

unless prompted, while leader-professional parents take the initiative to elaborate on their children's competencies.

'About their personalities, my two children seem to be different. My daughter is very active and creative. She has an innate tendency toward business, and she has a lot of ideas. I often tell her that she has an innate tendency toward what I call ceremony, which means that she prefers to clap hands and initiate things, over the process in which an idea is nurtured until it is realised. When she hasn't seen the results of her first idea she has thought of a second idea. She takes after me in her activeness and creativity, she is daring and at times adventurous. However, she doesn't have the tendency toward academia. She can go deeper in doing business, event planning and things like that, but she won't follow the pathway of studying and improving her academic level. By contrast, my son is rather a steady person. He can go far in his academic pathway. He hasn't graduated from university yet, but he will certainly do a Masters and then a PhD. He isn't the adventurous type to do business. He is timid. He is a person who only spends what he earns. He will always have the tendency to save up. He won't dare invest his money in doing business. [My daughter] will never like to work in the state sector, but [my son] may have the tendency to work in the state sector for the sake of stability. He can become an officer, going to the office in the morning and coming home in the afternoon, earning a certain stable salary and following that very route to advance. Whereas my daughter has good natural scientific thought just like her mother, my son has good social scientific thought just like me. Therefore, each of them chose a different pathway to follow.' (Mr. Kiet, leader-professional class, higher-class family, urban)

'About my son, he is in general an obedient child, a good child.' (Mr. Tam, manual intermediate class, lower-class family, rural)

'About my children, they are very obedient. One good thing is that the three of them always call each other with respect. The younger brothers always call their older sister 'sister', never only by her name. The youngest brother calls his older brother 'brother', never only by his name.' (Mrs. Quynh, working class, lower-class family, town)

Class differentiations concerning parental values manifest also in the communication styles employed between parents and children. Even though there are exceptional cases, class-specified patterns in family pedagogical customs are found to be consistent in this study. Lower-class parents seem to expect complete submission from their children, viewing children's 'talking back' as unacceptable. Because they find words ineffective means to reinforce children's obedience, some lower-class parents call for corporal punishment, as demonstrated in their following accounts. Higher-class parents expect their children to listen to and follow their directions, yet also deliberately promote their children's right to express opinions. Higher-class parents claim they favour reasoning over corporal punishment as a means to achieve mutual agreement between themselves and their children.

'As parents, we have to listen to the things our children say. In our family, we talked to our children in the most gentle, persuasive, heartfelt way possible. I tried to not reject my daughters' opinions too bluntly. If I did, they would never have confided in me. If parents are not sensitive and reject their children's opinions and force them to follow their thoughts, not taking into account their children's thoughts, that is a weakness of those parents. I did differently. I oriented my children, but I respected them. If our opinions clashed, sometimes I told them, 'OK, let us stop here today, this problem cannot be solved in a day, you go give it more thought, I'll also give it more thought myself; when we're done, we'll discuss it further'. However, there were times that we

'When I was at home, if my parents said something right, I would listen; if my parents said something wrong, I didn't dare backtalk. When I disobeyed a little and my parents scolded or cursed me, I'd sit still until I was tired of sitting still. One day me and my brother did something wrong. Our father made us kneel in the middle of the front yard for an hour. And then, only when we knew we were wrong and apologised to our father, we were allowed to stand up.' (Ly, lower-class background, town)

had to use the right of parents. When my children were too stubborn, we told them, 'your life is yours, but as the people who gave birth to you, we have the responsibility over your whole life, so your decisions need to take into account, partially, our opinions'. We parents sometimes needed to be firm.' (Mrs. Mai, leader-professional class, higher-class family, urban)

'From when my children were 1 to 6 years old, I never beat them, only talked to them. But when they started school, I used a stick if necessary. I used a stick but I only used it once, and I put that stick at the corner of the house as a warning. I didn't beat them too much. The most important thing was to teach them by words at any time anywhere.' (Mr. Dong, leader-professional class, higher-class family, town)

'Our children are obedient, but not in a mechanical manner. If they feel that what we say is unreasonable or unfeasible they will argue against it, and then we need to analyse things clearly for them. I think everyone in the family always respects and listens to one another. Each of us expresses their manner of listening differently. One will nod his head in agreement, another won't nod his head, but still express his opinions.' (Mrs. Chi, leader-professional class, higher-class family, urban)

'When I told my children off, they often got cross with me, so we didn't really talk. Only my wife talked to them. When they were small, I beat them without mercy, since I had to work very hard to provide for them. But after that, they were obedient – they'd listen.' (Mr. Vung, working class, lower-class family, rural)

'I used to beat my son frequently. I beat him several times every day. When he was in 1st grade, he got beaten every day. I would beat him endlessly when he disobeyed. But from secondary school, I didn't beat him anymore because he would obey as soon as I told him off.' (Mrs. Luyen, working class, lower-class family, rural)

'The good thing is that my children never argue with us. Whether parents are right or wrong, the children will keep it in their stomach. My family has such good order – no dishonesty, no arguments. Whatever parents say, children keep silent. They may have been angry but they still listen to us and don't argue.' (Mrs. Quyen, working class, lower-class family, rural)

Influences on childrearing practices

Lower-class parents' use of corporal punishment is observed to be often linked with let-downs and aggravation in parent–children communication rather than lack of parental affection. Parents' self-perceived lack of control, framed by their resource-deprived conditions, imposes a counterbalanced emphasis on children's complete obedience – mutually reinforcing a lack of open communication and discussion, and eventually prompting corporal punishment. The analysis finds that parental values and practices are primarily embedded in socioeconomic conditions.

Further analysis of qualitative evidence reaffirms the link between parental values and parental class. In a Bourdieusian sense, the values parents uphold are seen as rooted in and reinforced by their dispositions, trajectories, and access to resources. It can be observed that lower-class parents' emphasis on children's obedience is reinforced by Confucian cultural influences, the family's lack of resources, and family living arrangements that encourage mutual dependence. Leader-professional parents' emphasis on children's individuality is reinforced by the influences of market-economy values, their family's material sufficiency, and family living arrangements that facilitate autonomy.

From the evidence presented in the interviews, there seem to be class differentiations regarding the embodiment of societal cultural and class subcultural values. Along with the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented economy, Vietnamese society may have become a more differentiated society. Echoing Bourdieu, it seems that, in the wider population of contemporary Vietnam, deeply embedded and perpetual norms continue to exist, and have of course existed *before* the introduction of the market economy; they now coexist, however, with

new norms that have emerged *during* the reign of the market economy and are applied to a smaller portion of the Vietnamese population.

Lower-class families, especially those in non-urban areas, remain strongly influenced by universal norms – in particular, by Confucian ideals of *communality* and *filial piety*. Regarding communality, lower-class parents express great concern about the ways their children are perceived by others and about the possibility of 'losing face' over having disobedient children. This expression accords with Them's (1997) assertion that the subordination of individuals to the community, and an emphasis on living in harmony with the community, are distinctive features of the Vietnamese populace (see Carlsson *et al.* 2006). In the following accounts, lower-class parents speak of obedience in terms of conformity to moral principles such as respectfulness and courteousness, and of aspiring to acceptance from their community.

'I teach my children that when they meet the seniors they must fold arms courteously and greet them properly. I am proud that, although my children are not as successful as other people's children, they are obedient. When we go outside, many people have to praise them – probably nine out of ten people. My children are not talented, but you can go ask the villagers about Mrs. Lam's children, everybody will praise that they are obedient.' (Mrs. Lam, working class, lower-class family, rural)

'A few times, when I went to the pagoda with my friends, my youngest son came along. People would say, what a nice son you have. He speaks courteously; he knows the right things. As the old people say, fishes without salt are rotten: children who are not listening to parents are corrupted. If children don't obey parents, they are done with, parents are sore, and the neighbours will laugh at us.' (Mrs. Phuong, working class, lower-class family, town)

Only lower-class parents talk about children's obedience in terms of 'filial piety', meaning, consistent with writings on Vietnamese culture, the demonstration of gratitude toward parents and of behaviours that serve parents (see Dalton *et al.* 2001, Rydstrom 2006: 333). For lower-class parents, filial piety is the most esteemed expression of obedience. The interviewees in this study expect to receive assistance in household work from their young children, and financial support from their adult children. Clearly, the fact that parents and children in lower-class families co-contribute to earn the family's livelihoods and are therefore dependent on one another (see also the discussion on household work, pg 158–169) may promote the lack of emphasis on of individuality.

'*The most important thing children should know is that when they get home, if they see that there is something their parents haven't finished, they should lend a hand. If they have time, they should help parents.'* (Mr. Quoc, manual intermediate class, lower-class family, rural)	*'If one wants to change his life and to be well-off so that his parents can rely on him, one must go to school. Frankly, one must be educated in order to be pious – that is the most important thing.'* (Mrs. Giao, working class, lower-class family, rural)	*'I only wish my son will have an income that is enough to feed himself; if he has spare money, he would send it to me. That's all. After he spends for himself, he would send me the rest of it.'* (Mrs. Luyen, working class, lower-class family, rural)

Even though they remain influenced by some of the Confucian values, evidence points to the fact that higher-class families, especially those in urban areas, have come to adapt via exposure to individualistic values brought about by economic reform (see also the discussion on self-

employment, pg 262). Leader-professional parents in this study present themselves as most appreciative of values such as independence, freedom, economic individualism, self-support, and self-centredness, which, as argued by many researchers on Vietnam, have emerged under the new market economy (see Marr & Rosen 1998, Dang *et al.* 2005, Pham & Pham 2005). Throughout their interviews, leader-professional parents discuss proudly and comfortably their self-belief and 'individual' ways of life. Asked about their 'beliefs', many leader-professional fathers provide identical answers along the lines of Mr. Phuc's. Likewise, leader-professional mothers highlight their self-confidence.

'*I believe in myself and my ability.*' (Mr. Phuc, leader-professional, higher-class family, urban)	'*Let me tell you, once we have accumulated our real-life resources, we can live confidently, not fearing anything.*' (Mrs. Mai, leader-professional, higher-class family, urban)	'*I believe as long as you have self-will, as long as you are determined to do something, you can do it.*' (Mrs. Vui, leader-professional, higher-class family, town)

Unlike their lower-class counterparts, leader-professional parents express wishes that their children lead a life *independent* from theirs, in the sense that children are not explicitly expected to perform pious duties, especially in terms of providing for parents in old age. Also unique to higher-class families, even though children are not completely free to decide which activities to take part in, they have a great deal of autonomy in their daily life in the sense that they do not share work with their parents and have time to be occupied in personal and self-directed activities (see also 5.3 – Basic learning conditions).

'*I told my children: Remember, your father and I are both state military officers. When we're retired, we'll have our retirement benefits. You won't have to feed us because we'll be able to feed ourselves. If you care for me, I'll appreciate it. And I thank you. I won't need your money.'* (Mrs. Mai, leader-professional, higher-class family, urban)

There are parents who, taking much pride in their work, vow to keep working for as long as they can.

'*I officially retired four years ago, but I have been busy doing research and participating in social activities since then, so I feel comfortable. I'm active and love to work, not because I aim to earn money; at my age, I have saved enough for myself to rest. But the desire to work – the feeling that you're still needed for a certain job to be done – drives me.'* (Mrs. Huong, leader-professional, higher-class family, urban)

While lower-class parents assert that their children's display of obedience makes them proud, leader-professional parents stress the importance of individuality. Family reputation, not only in the immediate surroundings but also in the wider context, is important to leader-professional parents, justifying their tendency to frame children's morality by qualities of independence and ambition rather than courteousness and compliance.

'I want my children to be able to, firstly, maintain the morals and the order of the family, and secondly, to rise above other people, because if they don't rise above other people they only end up being ordinary citizens and cannot do bigger things. I want my children to be able to, firstly, bring honour to the family, and secondly, to bring honour to the country and the society.' (Mr. Lap, leader-professional class, higher-class family, town)

'I will be most proud if my daughters will be able to prove themselves. I only hope that, being women, they will at least earn their own living, not having to depend on others. I really want my daughters to be themselves and able to rely on themselves.' (Mr. Phuc, leader-professional class, higher-class family, urban)

As well as cultural influences and their own dispositions, it seems that parents' values are also shaped by their class-differentiated access to resources. This can be seen most clearly in the differing ways in which leader-professional parents and lower-class parents interpret 'honesty' – a virtue that all parents value highly. Kohn's (1959) claim (echoed by Gillies (2005), among others) that parents prioritise values that are difficult to achieve, yet crucial to a child's future, offers an insightful explanation, because what is difficult, what is achievable, and what is crucial vary greatly across classes. Lower-class parents' emphasis on conformity is grounded in the fear that children will violate social and legal rules due to the vital difficulties of their material deprivation. In the following accounts, two working-class mothers instinctively relate 'honesty' to *no stealing*.

'I tell my children that when they go out, they must be well-behaved, not stealing anything from other houses. When they are home, they must be honest, not taking anything from their father, mother, grandfather, grandmother. They must leave things right where they have been put. One good thing is that my children have that discipline. A jar of sugar that was put on the ancestral altar stayed the same after several months. Money that was put in a place stayed there. In our family, no children are dishonest. They only eat what they are fed. I used to buy and sell a lot of things, but the children weren't allowed to take anything, even if the goods had become spoilt.' (Mrs. Quyen, working-class, lower-class family, rural)

'When the children visit other houses, they are not allowed to take things from there. When they were small, I told them that although we were poor, we must not let anyone look down on us, not taking things from other people's houses or they'd beat us and look down on us. People'd look down on the children and then look down on us parents.' (Mrs. Lam, working-class, lower-class family, rural)

Leader-professional parents, who bring up their children with sufficient means in safe and protected environments, discuss 'honesty' in terms of *telling the truth*.

'In my family, the unwritten rule is that everyone must be honest. Both adults and children will be forgiven for any mistakes that they make as long as they are honest about it.' (Mrs. Huong, leader-professional, higher-class family, urban)

When it comes to parents' values, class position is arguably the most important but not the single determinator. Family residence also plays a prominent role. Qualitative interviews demonstrate that compared to rural higher-class parents, urban higher-class parents underscore

individuality more intensely and are less emphatic about courteousness. The distinction between an obedience-emphasised and an individuality-emphasised upbringing is observed to be strongest between urban higher-class and rural lower-class parents. It can be postulated that more urbanised, higher-class families are more likely to adopt and practise individualistic values.

Propensity for self-cultivation

It appears that an individuality-focused upbringing nurtures higher-class children's autonomy, sense of individuality, and propensity for self-cultivation. Throughout their interviews, young people from solidly leader-professional backgrounds exude self-belief, self-confidence, and a commitment to self-cultivation. These concepts are absent from the narratives of their lower-class counterparts. Higher-class youths' unflinching assertion of individuality is epitomised by the following statement:

'I like to do everything by myself. I believe in myself the most.' (Dung, solidly leader-professional background)

In their accounts, young people from leader-professional families discuss their self-assessment, awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses, and self-motivation in educating and improving themselves.

'I examine myself carefully through experiences. I have come to understand what I like, what I want, what I enjoy doing, my weaknesses – so that I can overcome them, and how I should deal with difficulties.' (Dung, solidly leader-professional background)

'What I like best about myself is that I am the person who can improve myself as time goes by. I feel that, in recent years, I have grown a lot. But I have not become more grown-up by accident. It is just by chance that this year I have become wiser or more committed to my work than the year before. Everything happens because I write about my experiences. I note down what I've done, what I've known, what I've thought about it all, and what I've found out about how things should be or shouldn't be. I have the capability of self-betterment. In order to do so, I am very strict with myself. Sometimes I don't really want to do something, but I force myself to do it.' (Thu, solidly leader-professional background)

'When I saw someone who has discipline in managing their time and their life, I wanted to be like them, because my weakness used to be self-discipline. At university, I began to be more aware of the life skills that I lacked. At that time, there were a few incidents. There was schoolwork I was not able to complete. Or I promised to do something for someone and forgot about it. So I became aware that being self-disciplined is very important and started to train myself in this respect.' (Hiep, solidly leader-professional background)

7.2. Ability to self-cultivate

This section discusses the qualitative observation that young people from higher-class backgrounds – in particular, solidly leader-professional backgrounds – have not just the propensity but also the capabilities for self-cultivation, which they have acquired throughout their upbringing due to their parents' cultivation of their self-development. The discussion draws on qualitative evidence to examine the following assumptions:

(1) Drawing upon their stocks of economic and cultural resources (financial funds, knowledge and command of rules), leader-professional parents equip their children with competitive and profitable know-how and skills, both directly through parental guidance and indirectly through professional guidance. This process starts in early childhood and continues well into adulthood.

(2) Even though not all of these techniques and skills directly benefit young people's occupational achievements, they become the foundation for young people's 'schemes of perception and appreciation' – a component of their habitus (Bourdieu [1979] 2009: 468). Young people's readiness for and confidence in learning and ways of learning – rooted in parental cultivation – broadly and subtly enable their self-cultivation.

Learning readiness and confidence

There is evidence, drawn from qualitative analysis in this study, that young people from higher-class families embody *readiness and confidence in learning*, thanks in part to having high-educated, leader-professional parents as role models. As demonstrated in the accounts

below, less educated, lower-class parents attribute their own and their children's modest educational and social achievements to their 'limited abilities', displaying resignation to what they see as inevitable failures resulting from their 'ignorance', 'weak-learner gene', and 'minds like ours'.

'*With minds like ours, we can only do small things. Now there are many people with a different mind. We don't have such a kind of mind and we have to accept it. Therefore, there are rich people and poor people. Not everyone is the same.'* (Mr. Tam, postsecondary level, manual intermediate class, lower-class family)

'*My daughter was ignorant so she left school. She knew it herself so she can't blame me. She learned so badly that she became fed up with school and so she quit. Honestly, this daughter of mine, she was just as ignorant as me.'* (Mrs. Quynh, secondary level, working class, lower-class family)

'It seems like our family has a weak-learner gene that makes our children unable to study at a high level.' (Mrs. Lam, secondary level, working class, lower-class family)

'My children only have limited abilities, so they can't really go far.' (Mr. Bien, secondary level, nonmanual intermediate class, lower-class family)

By contrast, high-educated, leader-professional parents portray themselves and are described by their children as eager and confident learners. Leader-professional parents stress the power of learning and express pride in their ability to absorb knowledge.

'I always tell my children that nothing is difficult. With our foundational knowledge, we can learn from our friends, from the Internet, from anywhere and be able to do anything. I think that once somebody has the knowledge, takes pain to learn and has an aim, she will never fail in whatever she does.' (Mrs. Chi, university, leader-professional, higher-class family)

'When I was small, I enjoyed reading books and learning. I know about the great benefits that learning can bring to a person. Without learning, one cannot explain, reason, or know anything about the world and the society.' (Mr. Lap, middle-level, leader-professional, higher-class family)

In particular, Mr. Khoi, a university-educated enterprise owner, is praised by his daughter for his fearlessness in catching up with latest knowledge and his ability to teach himself.

'My father is highly attuned to current times. When Internet appeared, he learned about Internet. He learned how to chat. When he saw me chatting, he would sit behind me watching. My father doesn't belong to the type of parents who have a mobile phone without knowing how to send a text. My father knows everything – sending a text, writing an email, using Google Translate, googling, using Wikipedia. He is never taken aback by anything. Even if something is so 'young', he will learn it without fearing. He always learns new things.' (Thu, higher-class background)

The embodiment of readiness and confidence for learning starts in the family at an early age. Leader-professional parents strategically provide their children with opportunities to learn, commencing as early as infancy. As shown in the following contrasting accounts, whereas lower-class parents only emphasise the physical domain of their children's

early development, higher-class parents stress the importance of the non-physical domains – the social-emotional and the linguistic-cognitive. Thus, lower-class parents focus on their *caring* role toward their small children without mentioning their guiding role, and higher-class parents highlight their *guiding* role in their children's primary formative period over and above their caring duties.

'*Since my children were small, although both my husband and I were busy, anytime we were free we took the children out to places so that they could learn new things… Many parents rarely shared things with their children. I could be busy all day and very tired at night, but when I took my children to bed, I always asked them to talk to me. And then they would tell me about so many things.'* (Mrs. Mai, middle-level, leader-professional class, higher-class family)

'I've guided my children from the smallest, most elementary things since they started being aware of their surroundings. Parents should care about every single thing their children pay attention to.' (Mrs. Huong, Ph.D., leader-professional class, higher-class family)

'From when the children were born as babies at the breast until they were 15 years old, things were really easy. We only had to feed them food when they're hungry and water when they're thirsty, and give them new clothes when their old ones are torn. But from the ages of 16 to 20, when they step into adulthood, it is very difficult to shape a person.' (Mrs. Quynh, secondary level, working class, lower-class family)

'Bringing up children is like holding on to a time bomb. It's very scary. Only when the children were small, we could sleep tight. We did not have to worry about anything. But when they grow up, we don't know what they'll turn into.' (Mrs. Giao, secondary level, working class, lower-class family)

'*When the children were born, we took great care of them, from sickness to each period of their growth. We knew when their teeth were coming out, when they were ill, and we treated those right away.*

'Ever since my children were small, I wanted them to develop in a complete sort of way. I wanted them to interact widely with many people. I wanted them to be active and to live their childhood to the fullest. I wanted to orient my children toward knowing a little about everything, so that when they entered the life outside they would not be looked down upon by anyone.' (Mrs. Chi, university leader-professional class, higher-class family)

Another thing was to feed them. Small children change their appetite each month. This month they eat porridge, but the next month they prefer rice. Some parents keep feeding their children porridge when they don't like it anymore. I made meat floss and all kind of quality food for my children… When they grew up, we taught them morals and took them to school.' (Mr. Quoc, secondary level manual intermediate class, lower-class family)

There are young people from leader-professional families who, as adults, continue to receive parents' guidance and support in acquiring outside-school knowledge and skills. For example, Tien's father has taught her about Western wine since she was in high school to help her prepare for future business meetings. Tien's mother paid for her expensive photo-editing course even though it was not relevant to her field of study (foreign languages) or work (garment retail industry). Duc and Dung were advised by their fathers to obtain car driving licences, which they obtained but have yet to make use of since they still ride motorbikes like the majority of the Vietnamese urban population. Duc explains:

'*After I graduated from university, my father suggested that I could get a car driving licence. So I have had a driving licence for four, five years but never used it. My father thought that being able to drive a car would make me more dynamic.'* (Duc, solidly leader-professional background)

For Thu, her father plays a key role in assisting her in a diverse range of learning endeavours – travelling, public speaking, and real estate among others. Thu recounts:

'*When I was 21, I began to travel, and my first trip was self-funded. I also paid for the second trip I took around the country. But my dad showed me how to travel cheaply… I used to attend a class in public speech. My dad told me about this new centre of social learning and asked if I would be interested in joining its classes, and I picked public speech… My dad has never talked to me about real estate in a systematic way. He initiated a discussion on real estate with me, and I bought books on the topic to read without telling him, so that one day I'd be able to really carry out a discussion on it with him.'* (Thu, leader-professional background)

Ways of learning

Qualitative evidence posits that young people from urban, highly advantageous leader-professional homes internalise *ways of learning* throughout their upbringing that help them acquire new knowledge and skills effectively. For them, things are to be properly learned, preferably under professional guidance.

As children, the most socially and financially privileged young people in this study took part in *organised extracurricular activities*: fee-paying activities instructed by professionals, which were carefully orchestrated and intensively invested in by their parents. Some examples of these organised extracurricular activities, taught in classes at cultural houses

or in private lessons at home, are ballet, guitar, chess, swimming, flower arrangement, embroidery, cooking, drawing, and martial arts. Leader-professional parents registered their children for extracurricular classes, looked for instructors, paid the class fees and bought the required equipment and instruments. Furthermore, parents made time commitments to take their children to extracurricular classes and to join in activities that required parental involvement, such as competitions and stage presentations. By contrast the extracurricular activities, if any, that children from rural, lower-class homes took part in were based on voluntary attendance, free of direct costs, and not guided by professionals.

Below, we learn about the non-organised activities that Hoa, daughter of a leader-professional father and working-class mother in a rural family, took part in, through Hoa's own account. We also learn about the organised activities of Tien, daughter in an urban, solidly leader-professional family, as recalled by Mrs. Mai (Tien's mother).

Q: When you were small, did you participate in extracurricular activities such as swimming or playing organ and so on?

A: No, no, in the countryside there were no such activities when I was small. People here had more outdated thinking than people in the city. There was no such thing as to let small children go to a singing or an organ class.

Q: You told me that you liked singing?

'Since my children were in 2nd or 3rd grade, I took them to martial arts classes, music classes, drawing classes. My older daughter [Tien] was oriented toward drawing and martial arts. My younger daughter was oriented toward drawing and music. We've got to understand our children's fortes and promote them so that the children keep developing their strengths. When

A: I did. The first day I was in my 1st grade, I was bold. When the teacher told us to sing I volunteered to sing in front of the class. In elementary school, I danced and sang a lot. I took part in many activities since I was small. At high school and in college, I took part in a lot of activities. For example, I sang in school programs to celebrate 20 November [Vietnamese Teacher's Day] or World Environment Day 5 June.' (Nhung, mixed leader-professional background, rural)

Tien was in secondary school, I paid attention to developing her domestic skills. Fortunately, we were acquainted with Mrs. H, an artificial-flower maker. Her family has three generations of flower-making; they were famous artisans. Her mother was friends with my mother. So I sent my daughter there to learn flower-making. After that, I took her to cooking classes, sewing classes, embroidery classes, flower arrangement classes.' (Mrs. Mai, solidly leader-professional family, urban)

While non-organised childhood activities seem to provoke as many fond memories in the young interviewees as do organised childhood activities, only organised extracurricular activities show evidence of helping young people acquire the skills of working to high standards and navigating institutions. Tien's mother claims: '*Now our family is very proud of Tien. She does everything quickly. She arranges flowers beautifully and creatively'* (Mrs. Mai, leader-professional family, urban). Interestingly, one of Tien's current side jobs is to arrange flowers for weddings. Besides, Tien writes for the cookery column of a lifestyle magazine. The case of Dung resonates with Tien's in the sense that Dung's participation in chess clubs and competitions at ward and city levels throughout childhood might be seen to have familiarised him with competitive institutional situations. As a university student, Dung entered himself into an English-speaking contest: in his words, *'to*

assess myself and for fun' (Dung, solidly leader-professional background, urban). He performed with confidence and won a prize.

Based on qualitative interviews with leader-professional families, it can be observed that parents' cultivated upbringing brings about enduring benefits for their offspring. Organised extracurricular activities, professional guidance, and parental guidance entitle these young people to being well-rounded individuals. The outside-school activities inculcate and reinforce a readiness to learn, and orient the participants toward high-standard acquisition of skills and knowledge. Empirical evidence, examined in the next section, further supports these observations of the ways in which young people cultivate themselves as young adults.

7.3. Practices of self-cultivation

The following sub-sections explore a range of self-cultivating practices employed by young people from higher-class backgrounds, especially those from solidly leader-professional backgrounds. They include *reading, Internet use, 'highbrow' cultural engagement, part-time work*, and *friend networking*. These practices are enabled and enriched by young people's propensity and capabilities for self-cultivation. They utilise pre-existing skills, knowledge and networks, and access to financial means and parental guidance. Through self-cultivation, higher-class young people acquire and nurture a wide range of skills, connections, work experiences, and lifestyle characteristics, which facilitate their occupational attainment no less importantly than do their academic credentials.

The statistical evidence that helps provide the background for the analyses in this section is that young survey respondents' individual cultural and social resources as indicated by their favourite leisure

activities (see 4.2 – Measurements) significantly affect their class attainment, controlling for their class background, demographic characteristics, education and training, and parental resources. Compared to someone with a low level of individual cultural and social resources (showing interest in doing zero to four cultural and social activities in leisure time respectively), someone with high level (showing interest in seven to eight activities) has a significantly higher chance of securing a leader-professional job, as opposed to a working-class job (see Model 5 – Table 5.3).

Reading

This section presents empirical evidence of two aspects of reading as a self-cultivating practice which distinguish children of leader-professional parents from children of lower-class parents in this study. First, it looks at the *transmission* of an interest in reading in higher-class families, which existing Bourdieusian education studies – those measuring cultural capital by reading behaviour – often only assume but do not provide evidence for (see, for example, de Graaf 1986, Crooks 1997, de Graaf *et al.* 2000, Sullivan 2001, Marks 2009). Second, drawing from qualitative accounts, the analysis reveals some of the academic and non-academic benefits that reading brings about (more evidently for young people from higher-class families), which concern school performance, extra-school learning, social networking, and occupational attainment.

Class-specified patterns of reading interest

Quantitative analysis reports significant differences along class lines regarding young people's reading habits. As demonstrated in Table 7.1, reading books is more likely to be confirmed as a favourite activity in leisure time by young survey respondents from higher-class backgrounds than by those from lower-class backgrounds – the population under inquiry being young people out of education (for whom reading is supposedly non-compulsory by virtue of not being in education) and in work (who supposedly do not have as much leisure time as those not in work).

Table 7.1.

Percentages of young people who like reading books in leisure time by class background, those *out of education* and *in work*, 2010

	Like reading books in leisure time	
Class background	Weighted percent	Unweighted base
Leader-professional class	86	230
Nonmanual intermediate class	78	135
Manual intermediate class	71	349
Working class	66	3295
Total	68	4009

Notes:
Young people who like reading books in leisure time: Young people who answered 'Yes' to the survey question: 'What do you like to do in your free time: Reading books'
Out of education: Young people who answered 'No' to the survey question: 'Do you currently go to school, college, university or higher?'
In work: Young people who answered 'Yes' to the survey question: 'In the last seven days, have you worked for income?'
There is a highly significant association between interest in reading books for leisure and class background: Adjusted F (2.651, 368.538)=11.441***

Qualitative accounts reveal more salient class differentiations – especially those between young people from urban, solidly leader-professional families and those from rural, lower-class families – regarding both the *transmission* of reading in the family and the *direct benefits* from reading. Indeed, a much larger gap in reading interest than shown in the above Table is found between two particular groups of young people in the survey sample (which essentially mirror the two groups in the qualitative sample): 97% among those from urban, solidly leader-professional backgrounds (sample size=87) are leisure readers as compared to 57% among low-educated, unskilled workers from rural, working-class backgrounds (sample size=1704).

Family transmission of reading interest

As illustrated in the following accounts, there is evidence in this study that children of leader-professional parents inherit their enthusiastic reading practices through family upbringing. Only leader-professional parents express a sense of pride in their family's 'reading culture', recalling buying books for their young children and deliberately nurturing an enjoyment of reading them. In some families, grandparents as well as parents set a good example of regular reading for the younger family members to follow.

'Reading is very beneficial to children's vocabulary and knowledge. Since my children started learning how to read and write, I bought them a lot of books. I bought them non-fiction books, novels, scientific books, books about the animal world, books about scientists, historical books, books about national heroes. Also, my daughters learned from both their paternal grandfather, who was a journalist, and maternal grandfather, who was a historian.' (Mrs. Mai, middle-level education, leader-professional class)

'My mother-in-law is now over 80 years old but she still reads newspapers all the time. The reading culture in my family is rich. I'm now middle-aged. My eyes have weakened so I tend to read on the Internet more, but my husband and my mother-in-law haven't given up their habit of reading newspapers. They spend a lot of money on daily newspapers. My children read a lot of books. At first, I thought they took after me, but they probably also took after their father and paternal grandmother. When I was small, I read a lot myself. If my parents didn't allow me to read, I would hide myself under a blanket to read. My children are the same.' (Mrs. Chi, university, leader-professional class)

'When I was small, I enjoyed reading books and learning myself. I know about the great benefits that learning can bring to a person, without which, one cannot explain, reason, or know anything about the world and the society. Therefore I encourage my children to do the same.' (Mr. Lap, middle-level education, leader-professional class)

Even though quite a lot of young people from lower-class backgrounds report enjoyment of leisure reading (see Table 7.1), qualitative interviews reveal that their senior family members seldom read except for occasional newspapers, and that they lack access to non-school books. Unlike in developed countries, school and public libraries in Vietnam are rare and underdeveloped, particularly in rural areas. As of 2011 there was approximately one library per district in Vietnam compared to a 13:1 ratio in the UK (Dinh KN 2011, Flood 2012). Commentators note the poor services and outreach of public libraries in Vietnam, which explains the exclusion of the disadvantaged populations (see Dinh KN 2011). Besides the scarcity of libraries, the fact that young people from lower-class families lack leisure time for self-enrichment activities due to their household duties and economic activities (see 5.3 – Basic learning conditions) is also to blame for their lesser engagement in reading.

Benefits of reading

A family environment in which reading is valued shapes children's interest, which they carry through to adulthood and benefit from in several ways. This study's evidence, consistent with statistical findings from previous Bourdieusian studies, supports the conclusion that book reading enhances young people's *academic performance* (see 4.1 – Cultural agent studies). One evidential example is the case of Tien, who attributes her achievements in Literature at school to her competent reading, which she claims has been nurtured by her mother's provision of books (see also the above account of Mrs. Mai – Tien's mother).

'*Ever since I was small, my mother bought me a lot of books. I read contemporary books and old books as well. In the past, when most people were poor, my mother already bought me the books of Rainbow Publishing House – the beautifully printed ones. I think it was a very*

good thing to do and it had many positive sides to it. When I became a Literature-specialised student, I had already had a certain basis to be a good student thanks to my reading habits. I once attained a city-level award in high-school Literature.' (Tien, solidly leader-professional background)

Probing further into the interviews, reading is identified as key to *deeper, more serious extra-school learning*, *social connections*, and even *career opportunities* for young people from higher-class backgrounds. Tien believes her self-confidence in social networking is founded in the knowledge she acquires from books.

'*As I first stepped into [adult] life, I had acquired a certain amount of knowledge and cultural resources which I was able use to talk to many people. There were certain social connections of mine that were nurtured thanks to what I read and knew.'* (Tien, solidly leader-professional background)

Thu, the eldest daughter of Mrs. Tuyet (whose account has been shown in this section), claims that her mother *'is the person who reads a lot, and guided me into reading a wide range of books'*. In the following passage, Thu recounts having routinely commenced every learning endeavour by reading:

'I read almost every day. I read a lot of different kinds of books – novels, self-help, autobiographies, business. I always have questions. Recently, it puzzles me why some people are able to buy houses with such low salaries. How long would it take them to save enough money? Or why can some people who do not have a lot of money be involved in the real estate business? But then I read a lot of books, and I've learned that nobody takes money out of their savings to do business. They all have to borrow from the banks. Right now, I want to learn about real estate. I have read about this topic for a long time, but from this year I will learn

about it in a serious way – not just reading about it.' (Thu, solidly leader-professional background)

Interestingly, Thu's passion for reading in general and foreign literature in particular takes part in shaping her career and even helps her secure a desired job.

'*I like books by [Haruki] Murakami the most. I read and knew a lot about Murakami. I once came across in a newspaper an article about the discussions through letter-writing of several English translators of Murakami's works. I liked that article a lot. So I wrote on my blog that I wished I could have the opportunity to have a close look at Murakami's transcripts and translate his works into Vietnamese. I wished someday I could become a translator.*'

Thu's blog post was read by the head of a publishing company, who offered her a job as a translator. Thu accepted and worked in editorial for two years following her university graduation. Although Thu resigned from her editor position after two years, feeling unsuited to its sedentary nature, she remains captivated by it, as reflected in the following statement:

'I couldn't have worked as an editor forever because I knew it didn't really suit my personality just sitting in one place day after day. But I loved the reading aspect of it. I enjoyed correcting words and the company of my colleagues who also love reading and care greatly about their profession.' (Thu, solidly leader-professional background)

Internet use

This section focuses on class differentiations in patterns of Internet use. It presents empirical evidence of the benefits that young people from higher-class families gain from their efficient Internet use. In fact, their

use of the Internet may be regarded as a form of capital in terms of self-learning, social networking, and job attainment. It examines the extent of intrageographical-class distinctions among young people from higher-class backgrounds regarding each of the aspects of Internet use whose benefits have been observed.

Class-specified patterns of Internet use

Quantitative analysis of SAVY 2010 data reveals significant class disparities in young people's familiarity with the Internet, interest in using the Internet, Internet access and extent of Internet use.

As shown in Table 7.2, young people with working-class backgrounds tend to be least familiar of the entire young sample with the Internet. Approximately half young people with a working-class background *have never used the Internet* compared to about one fifth among those from higher-class backgrounds. Those with a working-class background report the lowest *interest in using Internet for leisure*. Also, young people from lower-class households are significantly less likely than those from higher-class households to *have a computer at home* and *have access to Internet at home*. In Do TK's (2010b) study, which employs data from the Vietnam Household Living Standard Surveys 2002–2008, ownership of computer and access to Internet are found to be the most important indicators (besides household expenditure) for the hierarchical classification of the population. According to Attewell (2001: 252), whereas the gap between 'information haves' and 'information have-nots' has nearly disappeared in developed countries such as the US since the beginning of the twenty-first century, it has remained stark in Vietnam over ten years into the new century.

Table 7.2.

Percentages of young people's Internet familiarity and interest and computer/Internet home access by class background, 2010								
Class background	**Having never used the Internet**		**Interest in using Internet for leisure**		**Have a computer at home**		**Have access to Internet at home**	
	Weighted percent	Unweighted base	Weighted percent	Unweighted base	Weighted percent	Unweighted base	Weighted percent	Unweighted base
Leader-professional class	16	882	71	882	56	804	33	806
Nonmanual intermediate class	18	446	68	446	44	400	30	400
Manual intermediate class	22	1056	62	1056	32	965	16	965
Working class	47	7464	37	7464	13	6352	5	6351
Total	40	9848	45	9848	21	8521	10	8522

Notes:

Analyses for computer/Internet home access are carried out on young people living with parents.

Living with parents: Young people who answered 'Yes' to either of the two following questions: 'Do you live with your biological mother now?' or 'Do you live with your biological father now?'

There is a highly significant association between Internet familiarity and class background: Adjusted F (2.717, 429.321)=117.316***

There is a highly significant association between Internet interest and class background: Adjusted F (2.705, 427.419)=138.524***

There is a highly significant association between home access to computer and class background: Adjusted F (2.709, 414.485)=237.631***

There is a highly significant association between home access to Internet and class background: Adjusted F (2.871, 439.188)=201.259***

There are additional class differentiations in terms of the extent of Internet use. Table 7.3 shows that while there are no substantial gaps between young survey respondents from different class backgrounds regarding using Internet for 'chat' and entertainment purposes such as 'playing games' and 'music', those from higher-class backgrounds are significantly more likely to *share and create information on the Internet* through 'email', 'finding information', 'blogging', and 'uploading'.

Table 7.3.

Percentages of young people's Internet usage activities by class background, 2010								
	Internet usage activities							
Class background	Chat	Playing games	Music***	Email***	Finding information ***	Blogging***	Uploading ***	Unweighted base
Leader-professional class	75	67	91	62	92	33	28	711
Nonmanual intermediate class	79	74	95	56	93	33	28	355
Manual intermediate class	79	75	91	52	85	25	19	825
Working class	76	69	87	40	83	17	14	3782
Total								5673

Notes:
Association between Internet usage activity and class background: *p<=.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, p>.05 (non-significant)

Efficient Internet use as 'capital'

Bourdieusian researchers have investigated Internet use as a 'cultural resource' (see Emmison & Frow 1998, DiMaggio & Hargittai 2001, Hargittai 2002, Mattei 2010), however there lacks investigations into the impact of Internet use on educational and occupational achievements along class lines. Qualitative evidence in this study suggests that whereas access to the Internet can be seen as a resource, it is efficient Internet use that constitutes *capital*. It appears that Internet use is more likely to yield capital for young people from higher-class backgrounds. For these young people, especially those who have unlimited access to the Internet at home and good English skills, the Internet serves as an indispensable platform for *self-cultivation*, *social networking*, and *job seeking*.

Thu and Dung, who were introduced by their father to the Internet in secondary school (in the latter half of the 1990s, the dawn of Internet use in Vietnam), are adept at using the Internet as a learning resource. Apart from being a prolific blog user and an active member of various web forums, Thu has acquired and nurtured many useful online skills. Below, Thu speaks of her photography skills, which help her prepare efficient imaging and marketing for her fashion business.

'A milestone that is very important to me happened in 2007, when I started to learn about photography. Taking photographs and using Photoshop were the first things that I learned myself. At that time, I was so addicted to photography that I often spent five, seven, twelve hours in a day browsing photos on the Internet, and I took a lot of photos with my camera. I learned about photography ideas from various forums and blogs. I think that many things I have achieved so far are thanks to the time I spent on learning about photography, because my aesthetic capacity was significantly improved. When I first started my fashion

business, I sold my clothes on the Internet. I told [my business partner] that the most important thing for an online seller is to have beautiful photos of the products. The more beautiful and flattering the photos are, the more people trust in the quality of the products. If you don't actually have a shop, nobody's going to pay you 500, 600 thousand for a dress; therefore, you must invest in photos. Before that, I had taken wedding photos for my friends. I had done a lot of photo shoots which I invested ideas in, and prepared specific accessories for, so I was used to doing it. We also set up a proper website for our clothing brand.' (Thu, solidly leader-professional background)

For Dung, Internet is also the first choice as a learning resource. For instance, Dung won the third place award in an English-speaking contest for university students in Hanoi, speaking on the topic of social networks, for which speech he claims he was 'inspired' by a talk about the same topic he watched on Ted.com (a website of 'riveting talks by remarkable people, free to the world' (Ted.com)).

'*I think it was my confidence that helped me win a prize in the English speaking contest. My speaking ability was just average. But my ideas were always different. The way I talked was also different because I watched a lot of TED talks and was greatly influenced by them. I was particularly inspired by this presentation that I watched on TED on Facebook, so I came up with a topic called 'How social networks enhance your relationship'. The audience seemed to enjoy my talk.'* (Dung, solidly leader-professional background)

In terms of using the Internet for social networking, there is a clear division between equivalently tertiary-educated young interviewees from non-rural, solidly leader-professional backgrounds and those from rural, lower-class backgrounds. Before the boom of Facebook in Vietnam in the last few years, various smaller-scale Vietnamese networking sites

have flourished and attracted early Internet users – people from advantaged families like Thu and Dung. For instance, Thu, Tien and Hiep were members of TTVN, the largest online community for Vietnamese people throughout the latter half of 1990s and early 2000s, and made friends with other members of the community through what they called 'offline' meetings. All young people from solidly leader-professional families in this study were members of Yahoo!360, which was the first blogging network available in Vietnam and operated between 2005 and 2007.

In Duc's case, the connections he establishes through online networking are instrumental to his career. A self-proclaimed '*film fanatic*', Duc was an active member of a film forum at university. As he sees it, '*the network of the film forum formed a base from which other connections of mine have been developed*'. In fact, the film-forum network encouraged Duc to start his career in media in Ho Chi Minh City (the economic centre of south Vietnam). '*Thanks to the film forum, I made friends with people who were based in Ho Chi Minh city. I had the feeling that Ho Chi Minh city would be a good environment for me to set up my career because of these connections*' (Duc, solidly leader-professional background). Besides, through the Yahoo!360 blogging community, Duc got to know several people who would become his bosses and colleagues in the media field.

Internet is also an invaluable channel through which young people can find and secure jobs. A previous example showed how Thu attained a translator position when her blog posts caught the attention of a publishing house (Thu's account, pg 308). Likewise, Tien's Facebook posts about her homemade culinary dishes helped her connect to magazine editors who offered her freelance editorial positions. At the time of interview, even though she is on maternity leave from her official job as a business manager, Tien still earns more than 10 million

per month editing a cookery column for a magazine (more than twice the highest monthly income of a lower-class young worker in the qualitative sample). In Dung's case, he successfully recruited part-time English-language tutees through online advertisements during his final years at university.

College/university-educated young people from rural, higher-class families (with one leader-professional parent and one lower-class parent) also make use of the Internet to obtain useful job information. Due to the rapid development of Vietnamese sites and networks during the 2000s (VnExpress and Dantri, the two e-newspapers with the largest audiences in Vietnam, had their first runs in 2001 and 2005 respectively), English proficiency and/or a foreign-oriented disposition have no longer been essential attributes to accessing online news and information. In the following account, Long, fresh out of university, provides detailed information about his prospective field of work – banking – that he has gathered from websites such as Dantri and VietnamNews.

'*I'd like to work for a bigger bank like X because it offers a high salary and bonus. All this information that I'm telling you now can be found on the Internet. I know that, for example, the bonus for Tet [lunar new year] holiday depends on the bank branch, and at certain branches employees can get bonuses the equivalent of a whole year of salary! If it is a basic salary, the bonus can come up to 30 million, and if it is a business salary, the bonus can reach twelve months multiplied by 8 million. Advancement for many bankers is by seniority, or when a new transaction branch is opened one can apply for a higher position there than one's current position.'* (Long, higher-class background)

Manh, a banking graduate, was looking for jobs when he came across an online advertisement for a temporary placement at a small investment

bank. Manh applied for the position, was accepted, and within a year became an official employee. Among the channels for self-cultivation being discussed in this section, Internet stands out as the only potential equaliser, helping to somewhat reduce the gap between those from more advantageous families and those from less advantageous families in accessing information. The evidence provided in this study (of 2010 and the generation growing up in the early Internet era in Vietnam) does *not* suggest, however, that Internet has a fully equalising impact that can seriously undermine the existing opportunity structure, since the young people who benefit from it tend, almost exclusively, to be highly educated and from higher-class backgrounds. Even college/university educated young interviewees who hail from less advantageous backgrounds report limited Internet use (mainly they read news and chat). It is possible that the class-specified patterns regarding Internet resources (access) and Internet capital (efficient use) have changed since the interviews were conducted; further research is necessary considering the growth of Internet use in Vietnam in recent years. The number of Internet users in Vietnam has increased by over 10 percentage points between 2010 and 2014 (Internet Live Stats).

Highbrow cultural engagement

This section examines the individual, resource-demanding, and profit-generated consumption of Western and westernised cultural products. It is an area of self-cultivation that draws out salient differentiations between young interviewees from non-rural, solidly leader-professional families and all other young people, including those equivalently college/university-educated. First, the section analyses a range of class-specified patterns of cultural engagement concerning cultural goods and lifestyle characteristics, and links these patterns to young people's upbringing and access to resources. Second, it scrutinises ways in which

the most advantaged young people use cultural consumption not only for self-enrichment but also for the mutually reinforcing affirmation of their status and their membership in status groups.

Class-specified patterns of cultural engagement

Quantitative analyses of leisure interests in this study demonstrate that young people from higher-class backgrounds are significantly more likely to express a liking for listening to music and going out for movies/concerts in their free time, but the class gaps regarding these leisure interests are not large. About 90% of survey respondents like listening to music for leisure across different classes, with a 7 percentage-point gap between those from the lowest class and those from the highest class. One fourth of young people from manual and working-class backgrounds report an enjoyment in going out for movies/music in their leisure time, compared to one third of those from nonmanual and leader-professional backgrounds.

Qualitative evidence reveals that class differentiations are more salient in the *types* of cultural products that young people consume than the cultural activities per se. Only young people from non-rural, solidly leader-professional families report engagement in what can be called, for analytical purposes, *highbrow culture*. In this study it is suggested that, for the young population of contemporary Vietnam, what is meant by *highbrow taste* is a *burgeoning* taste for *Western and westernised cultural goods*, rather than a taste for the culture of a well-established dominant class as conceptualised by Bourdieu ([1979] 2009) in relation to the French context and adopted by Bourdieusian researchers to interpret the concept of cultural capital (see 3.1). These goods are popular cultural products and consumer-lifestyle characteristics marked by distinctive Western influences in the realms of music, film, cuisine, and so on. They are either imported from Western countries or

domestically produced. A taste for the West does not necessarily imply agreement with Western social norms, ethical values, or political orientations. The study's rationales for such context-specific operationalisation of cultural capital are as follows.

(1) A taste for Western and westernised cultural goods is displayed exclusively by young interviewees from the most advantaged families, especially those in the urban areas.

(2) Even though it is largely an acquired rather than an ascribed taste, since the young interviewees belong to the first-ever generation of an open-door Vietnam, a taste for Western and westernised cultural goods can be traced back to earlier socialisation in the family. Substantial family and individual resources are essential to the development of such 'highbrow' taste.

(3) There is evidence that a taste for Western and westernised cultural goods is convertible to social and economic capital.

Only young interviewees from non-rural, solidly leader-professional families assert their taste and that of like-minded people as being fine as opposed to popular. Duc, who is producer for a fashion magazine and whose father is a national-level ceramic artisan, claims the following:

'*The most important thing I inherited from my father, which I think came naturally, is an eye for beauty. My father has very fine taste.*' (Duc, solidly leader-professional background, town)

A similar air of self-distinction is manifested in the way Tien talks about her attendance at contemporary dance performances.

'I enjoy contemporary dance. This form of art has been supported by the French and British people in Vietnam, who want to bring diversity to

our country's cultural scene. But since our living standard is not high enough, and people are not able to approach it, not many people enjoy contemporary dance. Obstacles come even from the dancers themselves. Not everyone really gets the depth of the art. The real contemporary dancers do not please the masses.' (Tien, solidly leader-professional background, urban)

Their consumption of a wide range of cultural products brings non-rural young people from solidly leader-professional families together, and at the same time sets them apart from even lower-class contemporaries who have one leader-professional parent. While the more advantaged urbanites consume *foreign contemporary* music, literature, film, cuisine, fashion, and beauty, and frequently visit theatres, exhibitions, musical concerts, and cultural events, the less advantaged rural residents do not. Notably, there are young interviewees from non-rural, solidly leader-professional families who, since childhood, have been familiar with the cultural products and events that they have continued to enjoy into adulthood; some have parents who are just as voracious cultural consumers.

Consider, for example, the consumption of music and film. People with rural and less advantaged backgrounds, such as Hoa and Long, have only recently begun to listen to the foreign music to which their more advantaged counterparts were exposed during teenage years. They cite among their favourites artists such as The Backstreet Boys, The Beatles, Guns & Roses, Bon Jovi, and The Carpenters. Urbanites from solidly leader-professional families, such as Duc, talk about their 'latest' favourites, showing a preference for more contemporary, 'indie' music, and citing artists like Lykee Li and Jason Mraz. Similar class distinctions can be found in film preferences. Only the advantaged urbanites express their liking for art-house movies, such as *Black Swan*, which is mentioned by Thu, and *I Am Love* and *Closer*, mentioned by Duc.

Young urbanites from solidly leader-professional families also visit cultural places and events that might be seen as disenfranchising to those from rural, less advantaged backgrounds. Hiep, a Graphic Design major, claims the following: '*I take pains to go to a lot of museums and attend every single cultural event organised in Hanoi.'* As a child, Hiep often accompanied his father, a university lecturer and painter, to different places he visited. Hiep recalls: '*When I was small, my father often brought me along to take photos with him. When he travelled or went on trips, he always took me with him. He explained about what we saw to me with great care'* (Hiep, solidly leader-professional background, urban). Thu is as prolific in art consumption as Hiep, even though she does not major in Art. She goes to live music concerts regularly, and is willing to spend large sums of money for high-profile concerts like *Con Đường Âm Nhạc* (My Musical Pathway). Thu also visits the cinema every week to watch newly released films – sometimes with her parents, who were keen cinema and exhibition attenders in their youth. Exceptionally, yet worthy of mention, Duc and Tien, who work in the media field, go to events like fashion shows and opening ceremonies of foreign commercial brands – events which only have become known to the Vietnamese general public in recent years through the booming Internet news channels and social networks.

For the most privileged urbanites in this study, their whole *lifestyle* is westernised. In realms such as food, clothing, and beauty, class differentiations are even more manifest than in the consumption of music and movies. Take food, for example. Only urbanites from solidly leader-professional backgrounds express an enjoyment of international cuisines like French, Spanish, and Japanese food. Apart from eating out, some in this demographic cook foreign dishes and pastries for their families on a regular basis. Evidence resonates somewhat with Bourdieu's ([1984] 2009: 13) argument that early learning leaves the

most distinctive trace 'in the way clothes, furniture and food are bought'. The following account by Tien (whose father was a high-ranking military pilot) dwells on her extensive exposure to foreign products as a child, and goes some way toward explaining her sense of entitlement and ease toward these products as an adult.

'*In the past, my parents never let me crave for anything. I still remember that in 1995, when America began to open doors with Vietnam, people were selling hideous balloons from the south – animal-shaped ones which we could only play with for a day or so. They were far from the America-imported Mickey Mouse balloons – the bigger, heli-air kind which would last for ten days and were very expensive – that my parents bought for me. Or, other people at that time would never have eaten cherries, kiwis, or American plums, which my father brought home for me.'* (Tien, solidly leader-professional background, urban)

Qualitative analysis predictably finds that the starkest differentiations concerning patterns of cultural engagement are between young urbanites from solidly leader-professional backgrounds and young rural residents from lower-class backgrounds (in particular, low-educated and self-employed unskilled workers). Young people from rural, lower-class families do not present themselves as keen readers, music listeners, or cinema goers. Among them, those who are better-educated or employed in skilled occupations do take part in a range of cultural and sporting activities in schools or workplaces, but these are mainly group rather than individual activities. Both self-employed unskilled workers, Ly who quit school at grade 5 has never participated in any sort of cultural activities, yet Tu, a postsecondary graduate, took part in high school cultural shows. Group sporting activities are common for less advantaged young people. Thanh was a member of his company's football team. Khanh used to play football, volleyball and table tennis in high school. Dao, the only interviewee from a lower-class family who has

a college degree, engages actively in extracurricular activities as compared to people from the same background: Dao participates in sports days, football matches, and music/fashion shows both at college and in her workplace.

Quantitative results support the qualitative observation regarding the most distinct contrast in cultural engagement being between these two socially polarised groups of young people. As displayed in Table 7.4, young people from urban, solidly leader-professional families manifest much greater interest in a greater range of leisure-time cultural activities than less educated, working-class young people from town or rural working-class families. Particularly large class-residence gaps can be seen in cost-based activities, especially those more accessible in urban than rural areas, like using the Internet, participating in sports/entertainment clubs and going to recreational centres.

Table 7.4.

Percentages of young people's interest in involving in cultural activities for leisure, 2010		
Leisure activities	Young people from urban, solidly leader-professional backgrounds	Low-educated, working-class young people from rural/town, working-class backgrounds
Using Internet	91	12
Participating in sports/entertainment clubs	44	9
Going to recreation centres	44	11
Listening to music	100	85
Going out for movie/music	37	25
Watching TV	97	95
Unweighted base	87	1704

For the young rural residents from lower-class backgrounds who left school early and are self-employed unskilled workers, shortage of time and funds, and lack of access to and familiarity with cultural activities, all contribute to their cultural dispossession. Below are two examples.

'*Years ago, when I earned a bit of money, I dreamt of a radio-cassette player. But when I gave the money to my mother to keep, she insisted that she did not allow me to buy it.'* (Son, lower-class background, rural)

'*I have a lot of free time, but I don't know what to do with it, I mainly sleep and eat... Books and newspapers I rarely read, I used to read Family Happiness magazine, but I don't now… Sometimes I take a look at Today TV, but normally I don't watch a lot of TV.'* (Ha, lower-class background, rural)

Benefits of highbrow cultural engagement

Young people from solidly leader-professional background are not only voracious cultural consumers, but they also make strategic use of their cultural engagement for self-cultivation. This is especially relevant for people who work in the arts, who purposefully seek to *enrich their repertoires* through their cultural consumption. Duc, a producer for fashion editorials, routinely draws inspirations and ideas for photo shoots from movies. In Hiep's case, his cultural engagement plays a major role in initiating his filmmaking career.

'*It was during the time I was working in graphic design that I began to enjoy watching advertising campaigns which feature cultural elements. Gradually, I became more interested in motion graphics than static graphics. Besides, I started paying attention to documentary films thanks to having watched the reality documentary films at the Centre of French Culture, which was opened when I was in my final years at*

university and provided a lot of cultural programs. From the early days of watching those documentaries, I thought to myself that, one day, I would be able to make films like them. Even only as a hobby, one day, I would hold a film camera and make films like those I was watching.' (Hiep, solidly leader-professional background, urban)

For the most privileged young people in the qualitative sample, their cultural consumption is an avenue by which to *assert their social status*. They show themselves off by wearing branded clothes and perfume or displaying photos of their trips to foreign countries on their Facebook pages. Previous studies on the consumption behaviours of the 'middle class' in Vietnam have pointed out that young, urban, educated professionals convey their status through their consumption of expensive designer-label goods (see, for example, Elfick 2011, Nguyen-Marshall *et al.* 2011). In our sample, Dung deliberately uses perfume to aesthetically craft and display his self-image.

'*I like to learn about and browse perfume on the Internet. I think taking care of your appearance means you respect others. Also, you create for yourself a character. Men who are knowledgeable about fashion are rare, which makes me enjoy learning about fashion even more. I always take pleasure in the idea that I'm someone who knows a lot and is well-informed.'* (Dung, solidly leader-professional background, urban)

Through cultural engagement, young urbanites from solidly leader-professional families nurture their relationships with congenial company. It can be observed that, by belonging to their taste-based groups, young people acquire the seal of being culturally competent, which is mutually recognised and approved by other group members. In Duc's case, his refined taste and knowledge of art-house movies help him quickly bond with colleagues working in the media field, with whom Duc routinely joins in enjoying 'home movie nights'. In Thu's

case, her closest friend and business partner was her classmate at university, and shares the same '*taste*' as hers.

'She and I are not only business friends. We've been business friends only since last year. But we are literary and artistic friends. We have the same taste in books and films. We do everything together. We attended piano classes together, we travelled together. We shared many good memories back in university time.' (Thu, higher-class background, urban)

Thu frequently 'hangs out' with her former publishing-house colleagues at music concerts, cinemas, and other cultural venues. Thu is socially close to these people – whom she describes as 'eccentric' – because they have roughly the same level of cultural knowledge as she does. '*They are so knowledgeable. We never only comfort and console each other with general affection. We always rely on our knowledge or what we read to encourage each other.'* (Thu, higher-class background, urban)

For young people like Duc and Thu, taste-based group membership reinforces an aspiration for cultivating cultural tastes (see Bourdieu [1984] 2009: 105). Young people's 'cultivated dispositions' are not only inherited in the family but also nurtured through self-cultivating practices. Previous studies on the young Vietnamese 'middle class', as mentioned earlier, do not properly consider these mutually reinforcing cultural–interpersonal aspects of cultural consumption – the *inter-conversion of cultural capital and social capital*.

Part-time work

This section looks exclusively at young people's part-time work experiences during their time as college/university students. It sheds light on the rationales underlying leader-professional parents' support of their children's part-time work. This support is rooted in the parents' knowledge of and confidence in dealing with the field of labour, and delivered via a parenting strategy of monitoring-guidance. The section analyses the parental and individual resources that young interviewees from solidly leader-professional backgrounds have at their disposal, and which enable them to secure highly skilled or professional part-time positions while still attending college/university, with a focus on networks and extra-school skills. It goes on to examine the economic, cultural, and social benefits generated by young people's part-time work experiences, over and above the obvious improvement of their curriculum vitae.

As reported in Table 7.5, among young people who are currently enrolled at college/university, more from leader-professional backgrounds work in (supposedly part-time) leader-professional positions than from lower-class backgrounds. Because of the small bases, these statistics should be interpreted with caution.

Table 7.5.

Percentages of young people's current class positions by their class background, those *at college/university*, 2010, percent by row						
	Class attainment					
Class background	Leader-professional class	Nonmanual intermediate class	Manual intermediate class	Working class	Total	Unweighted base
Leader-professional class	41	20	8	31	100	55
Nonmanual intermediate class	14	34	15	38	100	31
Manual intermediate class	11	14	12	62	100	30
Working class	12	14	4	71	100	140
Total						256

Notes:

At college/university: Young people who answered 'College/university' to the survey question: 'What grade are you in now?'

There is a highly significant association between current class and class background: Adjusted F (8.060, 862.382)=4.088***

Parental resources

Qualitative evidence illuminates the link between class background and part-time work. First, there are unexpected class differentiations in university students' decisions to take up work. Contrary to the presumption that university students from less advantaged homes work part-time to earn money to help their parents partially fund their education, those in the qualitative sample were discouraged by their parents from engaging in paid work. The parents' accounts suggest that

financially tight families want their children to focus completely on their studies without being distracted by non-academic endeavours, in order that the children make the most of the large sum of money invested in their college/university education. Mrs. Luyen, a single mother and cleaner, explains why she did not encourage her college-student son to work part-time:

'I rather encouraged my son to take pains to study and to make much effort in studying, because that is the main thing.' (Mrs. Luyen, lower-class family)

Mrs. Yen, a commune-level leader whose husband is an unskilled agricultural-worker, had to borrow from the government's student loan scheme to support her two sons at university. Yet, when her older son started working as a part-time tutor to support himself, Mrs. Yen disapproved.

'*I told my son, if you work and your school performance goes down for that reason, it's such a shame. I'll rather borrow more money for you.'* (Mrs. Yen, higher-class family)

The observation that university students from solidly leader-professional backgrounds enjoy their parents' backing to pursue part-time work may not indicate the norm in the wider population, but deserves examination. According to the interviewees in the qualitative sample, there are reasons why well-resourced, leader-professional parents encourage and support their children to work part-time. First, supportive parents value the long-term benefits that suitable part-time positions can potentially yield for their children. Mrs. Mai, for example, was happy for her daughter to work as a part-time salesperson and design consultant for a silk-clothing shop (that caters to foreign tourists visiting the ancient quarters of Hanoi), perceiving the position as a

great opportunity for well-rounded development and for practicing English.

'*I thought the job would be useful for my daughter. Her English skills would be improved, because learning English through direct interaction with foreign customers for ten minutes equals learning English in the classroom with Vietnamese teachers for several months. Besides, she could learn a great deal from working with silk. Her aesthetics, which had been nurtured from a young age, would be even further developed. Understanding the characteristics of each type of silk would add to her knowledge.'* (Mrs. Mai, solidly leader-professional family)

It can be assumed that parents who are themselves employers must be particularly aware of the benefits of part-time work to job attainment. According to a World Bank (1997) report on mid-1990s Vietnam, college/university students who worked part-time while studying found full-time jobs earlier upon graduation than those who did not.

Second, leader-professional parents appear assured of their children's ability to obtain college/university degrees even if the young people have to juggle their time between study and part-time work. '*I asked my daughter to promise me that her part-time work would not affect her study, and she did. So I told her, OK, I let you take the job because I want you to go outside to interact with people'* (Mrs. Mai, solidly leader-professional family). Some parents are relaxed toward their children's work commitments while at college/university because they are confident in *their* ability to help their children secure good jobs without having the best degrees (see the account of Mr. Kiet, who endorsed both his children's part-time work, pg 330).

Third, consistent with their overall monitoring-guidance strategy, supporting their children in taking up part-time jobs can be a way for leader-professional parents to control their children; this can be as

much of a driver as providing the youngsters with a platform for self-development. During his last two years at university, Duc was introduced by a close friend of his enterprise-owner father to a job as a personal assistant to an American film researcher. Duc did not actively seek this part-time job opportunity, but the opportunity was brought to him. As recounted by Mr. Kiet, it was through his provision of support that he was able to guide his children toward participating only in potentially beneficial activities, and to ensure that he was in control of any possible risks resulting from his children's work commitments.

'*I was paying some sort of controlling attention to what my daughter was doing, so that I would be able to support her when she had obstacles. The thing is that my daughter tended to do many things at the same time. She was often more able to start a new project than to follow one project from the beginning to the end. I needed to stop her from engaging in too many extracurricular activities, to spare myself unnecessary worries, and spare her foreseeable difficulties.'* (Mr. Kiet, solidly leader-professional family)

Some leader-professional parents in the qualitative sample not only supported their children but also provided them with practical help in securing highly skilled or professional part-time positions. Being proficient on the Internet, Mr. Kiet was able to help his son Dung, who worked as a private English language tutor during his final year at university, find tutees. Among Dung's tutees were three employees of an automobile salon, who learned about his tutoring service from one of the advertising websites. Dung reveals:

'*My father has a software program that helps spread ads on shopping websites and popular advertising websites. I composed a smashing CV and then gave it to him to put on the web. Sometimes our online ads were effective.'* (Dung, solidly leader-professional background)

Individual resources

Young interviewees from leader-professional backgrounds attained good part-time posts via their parents' networks and skills, and also their own pre-existing networks and extra skills – in particular (yet not limited to) English proficiency and computer skills. By the time young people from lower-class backgrounds start learning these extra-school skills – often at university – those from leader-professional backgrounds have already secured the skills and been able to put them into use. For example, Tien was accepted into the sales position at a Hanoi silk shop whose customers are foreign tourists thanks to her satisfactory English skills, which she learned in extra lessons in early high school (Tien's account, pg 197). The usefulness of English skills is obvious in the cases of Thu and Dung, who worked as part-time English tutors. Young people's software skills can be profitable too when it comes to part-time work. Hiep's command of Photoshop earned him a part-time position for a photography firm. Tien's sewing and embroidery skills, which she acquired from a young age through extracurricular courses (Mrs. Mai's account, pg 300), helped get her involved in the design aspect of the silk shop she worked for.

The role of young people's own personal networks in facilitating their attainment of highly skilled or professional part-time work cannot be overlooked. For instance, while Duc's father's connection helped him obtain a part-time job, Duc's own connections helped him sustain his position through satisfactory job performance.

'*My part-time work as an assistant for an American professor who was doing research on Vietnamese cinema was an important milestone for me. I collaborated with the professor since I was still at university. For three years, she came to Vietnam frequently to watch all the Vietnamese films, meet the directors, actors and actresses and interview them. And I*

was her assistant – her main point of contact. At the time, I was a member of an Internet forum on cinema called Movie's Boom. The website community helped me a great deal in my work. Members of the forum were very close to each other.' (Duc, solidly leader-professional background)

Benefits of part-time work

The interview accounts show that for young people from solidly leader-professional families, quality part-time work brought about several economic, cultural, and social benefits. Job experience is highly valued by employers in contemporary Vietnam. According to Nguyen NA *et al.*'s (2015: 48) analysis of The Labour Demand Enterprise Survey 2012–2013, nearly 70% of enterprises in Vietnam report job experience as the most important criterion in recruiting employees, whether for professional or production positions. The labour market rewards 'extra-university experiences' and 'non-cognitive skills' acquired through apprenticeship and part-time work experience, as has been widely noted by social researchers and policy makers across more developed labour markets such as the US and the UK (see, for example, Lehman 2009, Crawford *et al.* 2011).

Interviewees in this study speak of their part-time work experience as *indirectly* benefiting their job attainment through skill enhancement and network expansion. Through early professional exposure, higher-class young people had opportunities to put what they studied into practice, and to enhance their preexisting skills and acquire new ones. Hiep, a Graphic Design major, worked as a part-time graphic designer for a number of companies from the time of his third year at university. With the money he earned from his part-time positions, and partial financial support from his mother, Hiep was able to buy himself a

motorbike. By Hiep's account he gained valuable experiences, knowledge and work ethics from his part-time jobs.

'I first started working for a Vietnamese company whose director was someone who did arts very well, very progressively. He was influenced by foreign styles a lot. From then on, I started being aware of the contemporary graphic mentality. But then I thought if I continued to work for Vietnamese companies only, it would be difficult to develop myself, so I applied to several foreign companies. At first I worked for a Korean company – partly in graphic design, partly in film. It was a really tough job. I often had to work from 12pm to 2am. But that period was like a transitional period for me. I got to learn the professional work ethics of foreign people.' (Hiep, solidly leader-professional background)

Through such part-time positions, young people from leader-professional backgrounds expand their personal networks. While at university, Thu used to work part-time for a youth television channel. She prepared the scripts for, directed, and trained participants for the programs together with other six members of her team.

'It was a strong team. My teammates were excellent people – intelligent and energetic. I got on well with them. I made a few friends whom I was really close to and still am until now.' (Thu, solidly leader-professional background)

In Duc's case, being the intermediary between an American researcher and Vietnamese cultural authorities and artists during his part-time job as a research assistant helped him build up a network in the media field that is helpful for his current responsibilities in media production. '*I collected a lot of contacts during the time I worked as the professor's assistant. When I needed to secure a location for a photo shoot, for instance, I immediately knew whom to turn to.*' (Duc, solidly leader-professional background)

Friend networking

This section examines the validity and implications of the following observation: intimate social networks of close friends significantly facilitate job attainment and career advancement for young people from higher-class families who look for jobs outside the state sector. Regarding jobs inside the state sector, as previously analysed, access is rather contingent on parents' social networks (see 6.2 – Influences). This section analyses privileged young people's building of profitable networks from childhood to adulthood. Parents' resourceful cultivation plays an indispensable role in this process, orchestrating the youngsters' networking and inculcating in them the logic of networking. The analysis then presents the occupational benefits reaped by these young people from their individual networks in terms of job information, connections, and opportunities.

Class-specified patterns of friend networks

The quantitative findings of this study suggest that young people from higher-class backgrounds are significantly more likely than those from lower-class backgrounds to 'have a group of friends to keep company', but the class gap is minor, as shown in Table 7.6.

Table 7.6.

Percentages of young people having friend group membership by class background, 2010		
	Having a group of friends to keep company	
Class background	Weighted percent	Unweighted base
Leader-professional class	89	882
Nonmanual intermediate class	86	446
Manual intermediate class	88	1056
Working class	84	7464
Total	85	9848
Notes: There is a significant association between interest in reading books for leisure and class background: Adjusted F (2.551, 403.014)=4.397, p<.01		

The qualitative evidence in this study exposes class differentiations in the quality and *profitability* of young people's friend networks. The higher one's class background, the more likely it is that one has higher-class connections in one's intimate network that can be mobilised for social advancement.

First, it can be deduced from the relevant interview accounts that throughout childhood and adolescence young people mainly associate with peers of the same background, from the same neighbourhoods and schools. This observation is supported by a new study by Rolleston and Krutikova (2014), which provides unprecedented statistical evidence of a positive association in Vietnam between (grade 5) students' backgrounds and their peers' backgrounds. The authors find that disadvantaged Vietnamese students are likely to have low-achieving and disadvantaged peers.

It is indeed the case for the lower-class young people in the qualitative research in this study that their close peers also come from lower-class families. Thanh and Son, who have lower-class parents and went to village schools throughout their general education, describe the background of their 'good friends' – that is, people around whom they feel most comfortable and with whom they share and discuss their difficulties – as follows:

'Their family background is very similar to mine. All my friends originate from agriculture, therefore we like each other a lot.' (Thanh, lower-class background)	'*Most often I share my problems with my friends. They are in the same circumstances as me, and they come from the same families as I do, so it's easy for us to share with each other. They're all my close friends from childhood – those who went to school with me, tended buffalos and cut grass with me.'* (Son, lower-class background)

In their interviews, parents of lower-class families express their concerns about negative external influences on their children, especially from 'uneducated' peers in neighbourhoods. An example is the pessimistic view of Mrs. Giao, an unskilled worker, of her family's surrounding environment:

'*Ten out of ten families that I visit look good from the outside, but inside there're always problems. There are many families where the children would say they go to school in the morning and come home at night, but in fact they skip classes to wander around and the parents have no idea about it. Now even young children court each other, having girlfriends, boyfriends. Here in my village, people are not fond of learning.'* (Mrs. Giao, lower-class family)

Despite their acute awareness of potentially harmful influences on their children's schooling, lower-class parents like Mrs. Giao convey a sense of powerlessness toward disassociating their children from those influences, as the next two extracts illustrate.

'*Even if the children are obedient and educated, they can still be lured by their friends in a minute. The society teaches them more than their parents or their teachers.'* (Mr. Thiem, lower-class family)

'*My children were friends with educated children, but there were some uneducated children, who spoke bad language. Although my son didn't agree to it, his friends kept visiting him and so he neglected studying. He couldn't concentrate, and it affected his study.*' (Mrs. Quynh, lower-class family)

By contrast, young people from higher-class backgrounds grew up among many privileged peers, whom they met in *higher-class environments* such as quality schools (see also 5.2 – Quality schooling), extracurricular clubs (see also 7.2), and affluent neighbourhoods. Thu's description of her friends is typical of these young people:

'*My friends' living conditions are mostly similar to mine. Generally speaking, compared to me, my friends come from similar families with similar finance and similar conditions for learning – our parents provide similar conditions for us.'* (Thu, higher-class background)

Higher-class parents' cultivation of their children's schooling and self-development is vital in building a solid base for the youngsters' social networks. Higher-class parents in this study not only orchestrated the environments in which their children moved about (see, especially, 5.2 – Quality schooling), but also closely monitored their children's socialising with others, in order to prevent negative peer influences.

'Sometimes my daughter insisted that a certain friend of hers was good. When I looked at a child, I knew right away if he was good or not. So I told my daughter that, yes, your friend is quite good, but he has certain traits that are not so good, so you should avoid him, and find a good person to be friends with.' (Mrs. Mai, higher-class family)

'I told my children to be selective in making friends. When my children's friends came to our house, I asked them about their parents. After that, I would tell my children with whom they should be friends and from whom they should keep a distance. Those who didn't have an awareness for learning – I would tell my children not to be close to them, but only to maintain a normal acquaintance.' (Mr. Dong, higher-class family)

'All of my children's friends are also studious. My children don't associate with people who only hang around or who don't do anything. This is what's most fortunate for our family.' (Mr. Lap, higher-class family)

Higher-class parents' orchestration and monitoring of their children's peer connections certainly pay off. The following extract from the interview with Manh, a university-educated banker who attended a selective class in high school, reveals the uniformity in his former classmates' educational and occupational achievements. The interview with Tu, a postsecondary-educated unskilled worker who had regular schooling, corroborates that regular-schoolers are not as highly achieved as selective schoolers, and that those who achieve at a level of university study and skilled nonmanual work come from higher-class backgrounds than those who do not.

Q: Did many among your high-school classmates go to university?

A: There were 56 people in my selective class and two thirds of them entered university.

Q: Did they go to universities in Hanoi like you did?

A: Most of them went to universities in Hanoi. Others went to universities in other cities.

Q: Are many of them currently working in Hanoi?

A: Yes, about 30.

Q: What do they do?

A: Their jobs are diverse. There are people working in engineering, construction, medical, finance, etc. Overall, many are working in the economic sector.

Q: Are they professionals?

A: Yes, professionals, marketing executives, and so on.

Q: 'Is anybody working in banking like you?

A: Yes. Four of them. (Manh, higher-class background)

Q: Did many of your high-school classmates go to university?

A: Very few. Most of them went to work straight away.

Q: So who went to university?

A: Mostly girls, a couple of boys.

Q: Do you know what they're doing now?

A: Someone is an accountant, another a public servant at the commune.

Q: And what did their parents do?

A: Some were teachers, some were policemen. (Tuan, lower-class background)

Interview accounts show how young adults from higher-class backgrounds selectively socialise with those who share their worldviews, lifestyles, and aspirations, while disassociating from those who do not. Irrespective of whether or not these privileged young people intentionally pick their peers based on educational level or social status, they often develop bonds exclusively with their academic and social

equals. Unsurprisingly, the closest friends of young adults from higher-class families, whom they learn from and look up to, are highly educated and involved in highly skilled or professional occupations just like themselves. Thu, who selects among her high-school classmates a few to keep in close contact with, has thought about her selection criteria:

'*They must have the tendency toward learning and working. I can't stand people who live floatingly, disruptively, who have no discipline toward themselves.'* (Thu, higher-class background)

Duc also surrounds himself with people of the same 'taste' as his, in particular his closest friend:

'She is the creative director of the magazine I work for. She is the person who has influenced me a lot, not only in my work, but also in my worldviews. Her job achievements affect me in a way I may not know myself. I admire what she does and her aesthetics.' (Duc, higher-class background)

Young adults from lower-class backgrounds also tend to end up in a circle of friends who hold equivalent positions to theirs in the fields of education and labour. Whereas the accounts of higher-class young people deliver the impression that their peer selection is essentially disposition-based and culturally oriented, the influence of economic factors on friending emerges more clearly from the accounts of the lower class. The case of Tuan is most revealing. Tuan used to have friends he describes as *'socially above'* himself, but gave up those relationships: *'I didn't have as much money as they did. I wasn't able to catch up with them, so I withdrew myself'* (Tuan, lower-class background). At the time of interviewing, Tuan is closest to his *'buddies'* in his birth village, most of whom are involved in semi-skilled and unskilled work such as carpentry and construction work like Tuan and his wife.

Regardless of whether interviewees portray their peer relationships in an economic or non-economic light, their friend networking is best understood as *practice* in a Bourdieusian sense – that is, rooted in class-based dispositions and resources. People are oriented and practically adapted to committing practices thinkable and reasonable in the contexts of their past and present conditions. This helps us better understand why people tend to stay and socialise within their class networks.

Benefits of higher-class friend networks

Whereas results from Multinomial Logistic Regression show that *having a group of friends to keep company* does not significantly influence class attainment (see Model 5 – Table 5.3), qualitative evidence indicates that *having higher-class friends* benefits young people from higher-class families tremendously in occupational terms. It can be observed that even though their parents seem most able to help them attain desirable positions (see 6.2 – Influences), these young people rely mainly on their own social connections to secure leader-professional positions in the non-state sectors (see Box II.1). In the following accounts, two leader-professional parents claim their children turned down the opportunities the parents sought out for them *within* the state sector to pursue those *outside* the state sector.

'My daughter refused to take the place I arranged for her at my firm. She told me that she would never be like me – working as an officer. She told me that she doesn't like to work in the state sector. I want her to be exactly like me, but she is kind of rebellious – she doesn't want to be like me.' (Mrs. Chi, higher-class family)

'My son is strange. I have a very wide social network and very influential connections… but he refused to receive any such favour.' (Mr. Luc, higher-class family)

Highly educated and professional friends provided young people from higher-class backgrounds in the qualitative sample with valuable *job information*, *connections to employers,* and *job opportunities*. Linh first knew about the availability of a university lectureship – which she has successfully taken up – from her friend, who was working at the university.

'*My friend is a lecturer, who told me that his university was recruiting lecturers for two newly established departments that are relevant to my expertise, so I sent my CV there.'* (Linh, higher-class background)

Duc, an English major at university who rejected his father's help (see Mr. Luc's account above), attained his first jobs in the media field without a relevant university qualification or previous experiences in the field, thanks to his friends' introductions.

'When I first came here to Ho Chi Minh City, a friend introduced me to work for an advertising company at a production house. I worked as a production assistant. I did that job for half a year, and then another friend introduced me to work as an editor at a digital television company. At that time, I didn't have any experience. I only had some experience in media production and advertising, but I was lucky at the interview or something so I got that job. I worked there for a year and a half, and during that time I learned a lot. From a person who didn't know anything about media, I had a profession. That was the most realistic training place for me.' (Duc, higher-class background)

Similarly to Thu and Duc, Hiep has made extensive use of his network to find jobs and secure projects. Hiep obtained his first full-time job as a graphic designer for a company in Hanoi through the introduction of, as he says, *'a close friend who knew the director of the company'* (Hiep, higher-class background). Apart from earning a steady income from his current position as a supervisor of filmmaking interns for an NGO, Hiep

earns about the same amount of money making documentaries for several other NGOs. Every two or three months, Hiep completes a project and is immediately commissioned to do a new one, through recommendations from his acquaintances and friends. *'My wife and I are friends with many people who work for NGOs like us.'* (Hiep, higher-class background)

Notably, the study's young people from higher-class families do not refute that one of the things they expect from the friendships they cultivate is potential private gain. In her interview, Thu confides that her well-cultivated friendship circle will make her more successful in business than her father.

'*My father is very sharp, but actually he hasn't got many big fortunes. It is because he is not the sociable type, therefore he didn't have collaborations with friends and things like that. He always did business on his own. He has many great traits that I think should have enabled him to do really big business, but he is not super successful. Me? I'll be different. I prefer a more enriching, exciting life, having a lot of friends.'* (Thu, higher-class background)

Similarly, Linh's account is revealing of the opportunistic goals of young people's network cultivation:

'*Even when I no longer work in field X, I will surely maintain my relationship with my colleagues. You see, we'll still help each other out in other matters. In life, social relationships intertwine. Who knows, one day, my former colleagues may be able to help me work out other matters that do not relate to our expertise.'* (Linh, higher-class background)

After all, Vietnamese young people from higher-class backgrounds grow up in a society in which connections (*quan hệ*) are a major facilitator of opportunities, especially for people of their class (see 6.2. Influences).

For their parents, who lived through the socialist era, interpersonal connections were crucial to survival, especially connections to people distributing the scarce state-subsidised commodities and services (see Vu NT 2005). Therefore, young people come via their parents to internalise an essential code, which can be best illustrated by the well-known Vietnamese proverb '*giàu vì bạn, sang vì vợ*' ('man owes wealth to his friends and prestige to his wife'). Mrs. Mai, a professional, is among those who deliberately taught their children such code.

'*I taught my children to have affection for their fellow human beings, so that they have a good heart, not only thinking about themselves. When my children had ten pieces to eat I told them not to eat all of them, but to bring them to share with their friends. That is friendship. From friendships come connections. We are rich because of our friends.'* (Mrs. Mai, higher-class family)

Conclusion to Chapter 6 and Chapter 7

In Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, analyses of the use of an educational degree in the field of labour illuminate the multiple mechanisms through which education in particular, and cultural capital in general, mediate the association between class background and class attainment. Education mediates class inequality through rewarding the outside-school learning that higher-class parents are more able than lower-class parents to provide for their children (as also considered in the previous chapter, see 5.3), and through legitimising the use of class advantages (leader-professional connections) in job attainment, especially in the state sector. Further, self-cultivating practices rooted in class conditions (book reading, efficient Internet use, highbrow cultural engagement, highly skilled part-time work, and friend networking) help produce different types of non-scholastic cultural capital, which can be seen as non-educational mediating channels of

class inequality. Examination of self-cultivating practices in addition to analysis of education provides a better research understanding of the cultural dimensions of class reproduction.

The processes through which class inequality perpetuates via the field of labour have been the focus of the last two chapters. As a reproduction site, the contemporary Vietnamese field of labour rewards class advantage in the forms of college/university education, knowledge of rules, and extra-school merits and skills. Apart from universally rewarding standard education and formally trained skills, different sectors of the field of labour are dominated by different sets of criteria. State-affiliated connections are vital to securing posts in the state sector, in which leader-professional positions are concentrated, and extra-school skills and experiences are vital to actors' ability to obtain advantageous positions in the private sector. Regarding self-employment, particularly business ownership and entrepreneurship, access to family funds serves to discriminate, giving the 'haves' an advantage over the 'have-nots'.

Young people from higher-class backgrounds are endowed with profitable educational degrees, information, networks, and funds, all of which help them thrive in the field of labour. Under the guidance of well-informed parents, they achieve educational degrees that are in demand and valued, in conjunction and alignment with the state of the field of labour at their entry. Their parents' leader-professional connections give them a leading edge in competing for positions. Their access to family funds enables them to attain skilled work or leader-professional positions through the business avenue, with or without formal degrees.

Parental capital is a prerequisite for young people's activation and accumulation of profitable resources through self-cultivating practices.

The discussion taps into the Bourdieusian literature on the relationship between class and parental upbringing and contributes empirical evidence of the link between parental upbringing and young people's achievements. It catalogues the ways in which young people cultivate themselves as adults, about which previous researchers, in their investigations into families of small children, often assume without offering specific evidence (see 3.1 – Cultural class process). Young people's activation of capital – rooted in parental transmission of capital – is crucial to the attainment of higher-class positions. Analysis of two linked processes – parental cultivation and young people's self-cultivation – sheds light on the nuanced translation of parental capital into individual capital and makes a contribution to a fuller explanation of class reproduction. It captures both the internalisation of objective structures into the subjective experiences of agents during socialisation within the family (propensity and capability for self-cultivation), and the externalisation of these dispositions into self-cultivating practices.

Lareau (2003) argues that a cultivated upbringing instils in young children a 'sense of entitlement', and this study highlights Vietnamese young people's propensity for self-cultivation, their readiness and confidence for learning, and their internalised ways of learning. But self-cultivation is not only governed by dispositions rooted in upbringing, as emphasised by Atkinson's (2012) study. Among the resources instrumental to advantaged young people's self-cultivating practices are English proficiency, computer proficiency, grasp of the logics of social networking, and networks of peers of similar backgrounds and achievements. Young people have internalised and secured these dispositions and resources through their parents' cultivation of their self-development and school life.

Self-cultivation is conditioned in both the past and the present. In this study, self-cultivation has been conceptualised as a class-specified

practice that is capital-oriented, enabled by immediate resources as well as pre-existing ones, and capable of generating profits. Self-cultivation has been analysed as an essential mechanism of the reproduction of class advantage, mediating the long-term and continuous impact on young people's achievements of their parents' upbringing practices and transmission of resources. This mechanism has not been adequately investigated in previous Bourdieusian research.

Conclusion

In existing research, inequalities in present-day Vietnam have not been adequately described, let alone explained, along the lines of income, economic sector, gender, residence, or ethnicity. By the time this study commenced in 2010 (that is, 25 years into the country's transition from a socialist state-regulated economy to a capitalist market-driven economy), two generations that experienced the post-reform opportunity structure had been formed. It had become not only relevant but also urgent to scrutinise the inequalities that had emerged among young people of the first post-reform generation, who were leaving school and joining the labour market, from an intergenerational perspective. This study suggests that class background is a major source of social inequality in contemporary Vietnam and a meaningful alternative to the existing principles of social division. Guided by Bourdieu's framework, quantitative and qualitative analyses discuss the processes through which class background influences young people's life chances, and thus the study makes a number of empirical, methodological, and theoretical contributions.

Main findings

Much of the evidence provided in this study supports the view that the class structure in contemporary Vietnam is relatively rigid and in the process of consolidating. The prospect of attaining skilled jobs, especially those located at the top, diminishes as we go down the class ladder, with a vast majority of young people from working-class backgrounds ending up in unskilled occupations. In line with research findings on China, much of social mobility in post-reform Vietnam can be explained by industry restructuring, while the link between class background and class attainment has tightened.

The study has analysed the patterns and mechanisms of class inequalities regarding access to usable resources, educational chances, and occupational opportunities in contemporary Vietnamese society. Despite the fact that there is some upward mobility from the working classes to the higher classes, owing to the increasing availability of skilled work and non-agricultural work in the economic reform, this research suggests that rewarding opportunities in education and employment – as scarce as they are – are distributed unequally between classes. Among the young people of the first post-reform generation, those from higher-class backgrounds have better chances than their lower-class counterparts to achieve college/university education and highly skilled or leader-professional jobs. Parental capital – notably, in its economic, cultural, and social variations – is the indispensable prerequisite for young people's achievements. Class advantages are transmitted *directly* from higher-class parents to their children through parents' early-starting, efficient, and sustained cultivations of children's self-development, schooling, and work (*intergenerational* capital conversion), as well as *indirectly* through young people's activation and accumulation of individual resources (*intragenerational* capital conversion).

Capital conversion accords with rules in the fields of education and labour. In contemporary Vietnam, meritocratic principles underlie centralised, exam-based admission procedures to college/university and the state sector; however, these explicit barriers facilitate not level-playing fields but favourable conditions in which class inequalities may persist through implicit class-based discrimination.

The Vietnamese educational system, despite helping to equalise students' achievement at the level of the standardised national curriculum (Woodhead *et al.* 2013), is a major mediator of the perpetuation of class inequalities. With its classroom-focused (as

opposed to individual-focused) approach and centralised curriculum, the Vietnamese school rewards extra-school knowledge available through its entrenched, yet discriminating, subdivisions: quality schooling and additional tuition. Better-resourced and higher-class parents – but not necessarily the most culturally possessed ones – are in a stronger position to provide their children with these extra educational privileges. This finding challenges Bourdieu's proposition that school applies arbitrary criteria in favour of students equipped with scholastic codes traceable emphatically to their *cultured* upbringing; the proposition has also been disputed in several other contexts (see Bourdieu 1976: 86, 110–114, 117, [1979] 2009: 23, 26, 122, Bourdieu & Passeron [1977] 2000, and a review by Tzanakis 2011: 83).

The one restrictive educational barrier that has been singled out for critical examination in the research is the national university entrance examination. Despite the fact that the university exam imposes transparent and standardised evaluative criteria, and is seen by some as an equaliser (on lack of discussion on the university exam in Vietnam, see instead Larson's (2011) endorsement of the equivalent *gaokao* in China), its emphasis on rote memorisation and rigid marking unavoidably favours students who are better-schooled and well-revised. By serving as one of the ultimate goals of quality schooling and additional tuition, the current Vietnamese university examination unwittingly justifies, if not intensifies, the discriminating aspects of the educational system.

What little equalisation is accomplished through the educational system is further undermined in the field of labour. Empirical evidence in this study reveals that, while openly esteeming formal academic degree-holders, the field of labour in contemporary Vietnam rewards class advantages – among them extra-school merits, state-affiliated net-works, financial funds, and knowledge of rules. People without these

class advantages are disenfranchised both from the rewarding positions that have survived reform (state employment), as well as from those opened up under the multisectoral, market-oriented system (private business and entrepreneurship).

In particular, nepotism in the state sector has become a social norm in contemporary Vietnam – that is, arguably more blatantly than it has in countries like the UK. This research posits that investigation into state-sector nepotism must redirect its current focus on state employees (see Nguyen 2002, Turner & Nguyen 2005, King *et al.* 2008, Coxhead & Phan 2013) to the leaders and professionals (keeping in mind that the two groups greatly overlap). It is parental class, rather than parental economic sector, that determines the extent to which parents' networks can yield employment benefits for their children. It is important to scrutinise not only *monetary* channels of nepotism such as bribery, which are often highlighted in previous studies and commentaries on the Vietnamese state sector (see Nguyen KH *et al.* 2006, Hausman 2009, Gainsborough 2010, Hayton 2010, CECODES *et al.* 2011), but also *non-monetary* channels of nepotism concerning the use of network-based information to gain advantage in the civil service examination.

It is observed in this study that, in regard to state job appointment, connections act as crucial support for, yet do not replace, indispensable educational credentials. Even though the civil service examination is standardised and supposedly merit-based, there are several ways in which it rewards exclusive, network-generated information. It is this noninstitutionalised form of cultural capital that holds the key to state employment, for which institutionalised cultural capital – the formal educational degree – is a prerequisite. If, as researchers studying Western contexts have increasingly claimed, it is cultural capital in embodied form – mannerisms such as sense of ease, accent, or familiarity with legitimate culture – that gives one a lead in securing

elite jobs (see Bourdieu 1977: 506, [1979] 2009: 91–92, Goldthorpe 2012, Ashley *et al.* 2015), then when it comes to the Vietnamese state sector, we must talk about a different, yet no less hidden, form of cultural capital – one that is specifically and only convertible from parental social capital.

Because people of higher-class origins are usually formally qualified for positions further up the class ladder, their use of class advantages to informally secure these positions – to the detriment of equivalently qualified lower-class people – is concealed and justified; yet, it contributes to the devaluation of academic degrees in the field of labour, especially for people of lower-class origins, who are then rendered less equipped to capitalise *at all* on their degrees. Degree devaluation in contemporary Vietnam, however, may not be fully understood based on Bourdieu's account of the French context. The research evidence provided in this study exposes the situation that higher-class people's exploitation of their advantages in access to both scholastic and nonscholastic resources, and not just lower-class people's greater participation in education as Bourdieu (1999: 423) seems to imply, must be held responsible for the devaluation of academic degrees.

In the French context, degrees have become devalued for being ubiquitous, which has not been the case in Vietnam. In France (as in many other developed economies) there is an oversupply of graduate-level workers: an increase of one fifth to one fourth of the population aged 25–64 with tertiary education between 1994 and 2003, according to Machin & McNally (2007). The present-day Vietnamese economy suffers from a shortage of highly skilled workers, with only 5% of the population having college/university education or higher as of 2010 (GSO 2010 as cited in Doan 2011). Even though graduate jobs *are* available in contemporary Vietnam, many will be filled by people with class advantages before becoming accessible to academically qualified,

socioeconomically disadvantaged people. This is another way in which lower-class people's degrees may become valueless.

Devaluation has been most emphatically linked to formal educational degrees (see, for example, Bourdieu [1979] 2009: 134, Marsh 2011). Findings in this study, however, suggest that devaluation will gradually happen to any type of credentials that adjust to an explicit rule. That is, as particular credentials are identified, accessed, and gained by an increasingly wider population they will devalue, and this devaluation is mutually reinforced by the concurrent inflation of worth of other, more exclusive class-based resources. In Vietnam, for example, the currently highly valued English proficiency may eventually lose its worth and be replaced in rank by another type of competency. This ensures a timely advantage for people who are endowed with resources that matter most, at the right time and place, in the competition for scarce rewards. These are the same people who lead and prevail in the fluctuating selection of which resources dominate. In practice, the ideal of meritocracy disguises and legitimates self-sustaining class-based discrimination in contemporary Vietnam.

Theoretical implications

The study's discussions have engaged with several theses in relation to the field of class study. It rejects the 'culture of poverty' paradigm of poor people's self-defeating cultural traits, challenges rational action theory and, most importantly, proposes to think *with, beyond, and against* some of the most relevant sociological claims made by Bourdieu and his followers (see Wacquant 1992: xiv). The key theoretical contributions of this study include the following:

1) utilisation of a wide range of Bourdieu's concepts as theoretical and methodological research guides, to

facilitate understanding of a social context in which this framework has not previously been applied;

2) critical and empirically-informed engagement with the Bourdieusian literature; and

3) empirical exploration of themes that are underinvestigated in the current Bourdieusian literature.

Thinking with Bourdieu

During the course of this study (2010–2015), as inequality has become one of the most significant global issues, achieving prominence in social research as well as in public debate (Burawoy 2015), Bourdieu's works have taken centre stage in sociological research on the themes of inequality and class. Bourdieu's conception of class as rooted in life chances is a much-needed alternative to the ideologically driven deterministic views of class in the current literature on Vietnam. In this study, the most powerful use of Bourdieu's framework concerns the task of raising questions that have been rarely asked, and definitely not systematically addressed (Nash 2003: 58) – in particular, these questions relate to social class inequalities and its reproduction in contemporary Vietnam. These questions have become increasingly relevant for a country that has been dealing with rising socioeconomic inequality and the consolidation of a complex opportunity structure as outcomes of economic reform, marketisation, and the eradication of socialist egalitarian policies (see also Outhwaite 2007, Zhou & Xi 2015). Bourdieu's framework of class reproduction informs an unprecedented analysis of the perpetuation processes over generations of class advantages and disadvantages in post-reform Vietnam.

The inquiry employs Bourdieu's social-theoretic framework as its guidance; numerous previous Bourdieusian studies have used single

concepts in a partial fashion as post-validation for otherwise unchanged empirical observations (see critiques by Sullivan 2002: 150, Atkinson 2012b: 169). In this study, the translation of theoretical categories (all interlinked and interdependent) into context-specific empirical categories relies on coherent, unambiguous, and stringent criteria, notably the following: *capital* as class-based, convertible, transmittable, usable resources; rules of *fields* as restrictive barriers to scarce advantages, determining at-stake capital; *habitus* as class-specified dispositions, inculcated throughout upbringing and informing practices thereafter. Decision-making and self-cultivation, for example, are examined in the Bourdieusian sense as class-based, habitus-guided, resource-framed, and capital-generating *practice*.

The multifaceted implications of the empirical application of Bourdieu's framework *in toto* as a theoretical tool as well as a methodological device, as discussed below, altogether illustrate how the use of the framework in this study has facilitated its applicability and relevance in a non-Western context. The application of Bourdieu's full framework grounds and systematises the wealth of empirical data and the 'endless set of empirical work possibilities' (Brandao 2010), permitting us to observe common patterns of social class reproduction from the case of Vietnam, and at the same time demonstrates how the socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional contexts in Vietnam condition the ways class works (see also Cheng 2012).

Bourdieu's conceptualisation of practice as the outcome of the encounter between habitus, capital, and field facilitates insightful and nuanced analyses of the contexts and reasons for the research participants' actions. Such analyses are not based on interviewees' own explanations of their actions, which are likely to be permeated by self-justification or fabrication, as would have been in the case in a rational action account, but on every detail that the researcher can gather about the

respondents throughout the whole course of research. An important methodological implication of Bourdieu's framework is that the reproduction of advantage and disadvantage will ideally be interpreted through agents' engagement in all kinds of activities throughout their life. In particular, as opposed to rational action, habitus informs the interpretation of a wide range of practices that includes not only decision-making but also the preceding and consequent processes through which options emerge and decisions are acted upon.

Bourdieu's conception of different types of capital and their convertibility facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of the multidimensionality permeating class-based advantages and disadvantages. Unlike Bourdieusian educational research in Western contexts, in which the role of cultural capital has been the cornerstone of social investigation, the current literature on Vietnam provides a partial, income-centric explanation of inequalities in schooling. Moving away from a reductive viewpoint that emphasises blunt economic or cultural factors, the study uncovers more nuanced manifestations of class-based inequalities. While it is found that certain context-specific operationalisations of Bourdieu's concepts in previous research (such as beaux arts participation as a form of cultural capital) are irrelevant in the contemporary Vietnamese context, some of the more conceptual and generalisable aspects of his explanatory framework (such as the interpretation of 'time free from economic necessity' as a form of economic capital) can be insightful. It is revealed, for example, that parental influences on children's educational achievements are mediated not simply by household income or parental education, but also by the child and adult's mutual share in the family livelihood (for example, demanding of children's labour contribution or allowing parents 'time free from economic necessity' for efficient involvement through monitoring-guidance). Other mediators include academic

knowledge, knowledge of rules, urban connections, quality of school, and the influences of traditional gender norms.

Grounded in a clear distinction between resource and capital, the analysis defends Bourdieu against critiques of his portrayal of working-class people (especially in *Weight of the World*, 1999) as 'resourceless' (Savage 2000: 109–110) and 'useless' (Skeggs 2004: 87). In Bourdieu's own work (see Bourdieu [1979] 2009: 114, 1986, 1987: 4, Lareau & Weininger 2003: 587) and this study alike, lower-class people are not viewed as being without resources or values, but without capital, or resources designated by the dominant class as valuable and capitalisable. While legitimating lower-class people's resources in an academic context may feel democratising (see Savage 2000: 109–110) and morally uplifting, it risks masking the reality of their disadvantages.

Thinking against Bourdieu

Whereas the concepts and methods elaborated in Bourdieu's theoretical framework have been applicable and insightful for researching post-reform Vietnam, not all of the empirical evidence from Bourdieu-inspired studies in Western contexts (including his own) have been easily 'translatable' into the Vietnamese context. Yet, the study has aimed toward – and, arguably, succeeded in providing – a Vietnam-specific empirical operationalisation of Bourdieu's concepts (see Empirical frameworks – Figures 5.2, 6.1, 7.1).

For instance, while social connections can be conceived of as social resources, *social capital* in the field of labour in present-day Vietnam has been distinctively identified as being drawn from leader-professional bonding networks. Likewise, various forms of *cultural capital* can be found in the Vietnamese context, such as extra-school knowledge (English proficiency, efficient Internet use) and knowledge of

how to work a nepotistic system, apart from the orthodox form that is formal qualification. Another important form of cultural capital that has been detected in the post-reform Vietnamese context is familiarity with and consumption of, not the beaux arts as argued in many Bourdieusian texts, but western and westernised cultural products.

Regarding the concept of *field*, for example, the study recognises school as a reproductive institutional force, aligning with the consensus across Bourdieusian education research, yet clarifies for the Vietnamese case that education inequality is reproduced through high-quality schooling and additional education – the entrenched though non-universal sections of the school system.

The study departs from some of the much-repeated narratives in Bourdieusian research. In understanding the mechanisms of class-specified practices (such as educational decision-making, childrearing, or engagement in self-cultivating activities), empirical evidence in this study urges a shift of emphasis away from internalised schemes of perception and appreciation, as found in several Bourdieusian analyses (cited below), toward the availability of past and present resources – or, at risk of oversimplification, that from habitus to capital. Analyses in this study indicate, for example, that young people's self-cultivating practices are shaped by their access to immediate resources and reinforcing fields (such as taste-based friendship), as well as in some cases by a propensity for self-cultivation rooted in an advantageous upbringing. In a similar vein, lower-class parents' struggling navigation of the education field is associated primarily with their lack of basic physical means (time and money), knowledge, and experience, rather than with a lack of academic aspirations or commitment.

Though analyses of working-class women's lack of self-assured dispositions (see Skeggs 1997, Reay 1998, 2000), middle-class children's sense of entitlement (see Lareau 2003) and advantaged people's

inscribed chances of success (see Bourdieu 1983: 346, [1990] 2009: 53, [1979] 2009: 471, Atkinson 2010c: 416) are insightful and may have been innovative, an overemphasis on built-in advantages and disadvantages risks unwittingly obscuring the effects of structural factors. A 'psychosocial', habitus-centred approach may facilitate our understanding of the manners in which individuals go about their practices – 'the degree of ease and/or discomfort' (Reay 2015: 22) – but not of the causes of the actual practices (see Turner's foreword to Susen 2007). In a worst-case scenario, a focus on disadvantaged-class people's deprivation of internalised power can be easily (mis-)interpreted as echoing the 'culture of poverty' viewpoint, blaming people's failure on their own lack of success-inducing values and norms, and justifying inequality.

Tangentially, it has become particularly urgent to detect and reject the 'culture of poverty' rhetoric that has permeated the media, public opinion, social commentaries, and academic research in Vietnam without any powerful resistance from a classism-informed audience. In a 2011 World Bank report, for instance, researchers explain the effect of parental education on school attendance in Vietnam in terms of parental aspirations, using the following words: 'perhaps because more educated parents place a higher value on education in general, regardless of their ability to afford it (also known as "tastes")' (World Bank *et al.* 2011) – an assumption easily disputed by research evidence in this study as well as by the literature on income inequality in Vietnam. It should be mentioned that the World Bank is one of the most active international providers of policy advice in Vietnam. In one of the World Bank's (2015) most recent reports, researchers' (ostensibly progressive) exhortations for pro-poor policy interventions, centred on transforming poor people's norms and attitudes, risks diverting much-needed attention away from the structural constraints and institutional

disadvantages under which poor people suffer, by focusing on the people's own behaviours.

Since state orthodoxy on 'class alliance' and functionalist stratification, and conforming establishment writings and research, thrive in place of a fine-grained and critical discourse on class inequalities in contemporary Vietnam (see Vietnam National Assembly 2001, Nguyen KM 2007, Nguyen TTu 2007, Nguyen DTa 2010, Do TK 2010b, Ngo NT 2012), victim-blaming narratives are prevalent and rarely subjected to criticism. Commenting on degree holders who have not been able to secure work, a former Vietnamese education minister remarks that these jobless graduates are not sufficiently trained to 'meet the demands of the labour market' (Pham MH as cited in Tran TMH 2015). Inferable from this study, however, is that graduates from lower-class backgrounds are at a clear disadvantage compared to their higher-class counterparts in the labour market, and that this disadvantage is reinforced and legitimised by class-based discriminating institutional barriers. The issue is not whether disadvantaged people are skilled or motivated enough to achieve rewards by individual effort; it is whether these scarce rewards are ever as accessible to them as to advantaged people in the existing opportunity structure.

Thinking beyond Bourdieu

Finally, the study has endeavoured to extend the account of class reproduction found in the existing Bourdieusian literature as well as in Bourdieu's own empirical work, through examining the *activation* process of class-based dispositions and resources as it follows and intertwines with the process of *transmission* (see Swartz 1997: 106, Lareau 2003: 278 for comments on Bourdieu's lack of attention to the activation of capital; see also Lareau 2008: 126, 131 for a retrospective analysis of her underinvestigation of the activation of inherited

resources in her previous work). The empirical evidence in this study helps fill in some links between parental upbringing and young people's achievement so far left open by Bourdieusian researchers working on topics of childrearing and education (see, in particular, Lareau 2003).

Young people's self-cultivation is analysed as class-specified practice – that is, practice oriented toward and capable of generating profits, dependent on immediate resources, and guided by dispositions (propensity for self-cultivation) and pre-existing resources (abilities for self-cultivation) which have been shaped and accrued through a resourceful, individuality-emphasised upbringing rooted in early childhood and continuing into adulthood. These links have drawn inspiration from Swartz's (1997: 76) interpretation of habitus in terms of 'cultivated dispositions' and developed based on this study's empirical evidence. The analyses offer empirical manifestations of the *connection* between the *internalisation* of objective structures into the subjective experiences of agents during socialisation within the family and the *externalisation* of these dispositions into practices – an area that Bourdieu himself, as Swartz (1997: 106) remarks, did not examine in sufficient detail.

One of the study's most notable findings is that self-cultivating practices are important channels for class reproduction. Like education, self-cultivation mediates the influences of class background on class outcomes; unlike in education, however, class inequalities in self-cultivation are harder to detect, since the effects of parental capital on self-cultivation are deeply entrenched and largely indirect. Examination of self-cultivating practices alongside analysis of education helps extend understanding of the cultural dimensions of class reproduction, or more specifically of the multifaceted mechanisms through which cultural capital mediates class reproduction.

Methodological remarks

The key methodological contribution of this study rests on its use of mixed methods. The quantitative and qualitative components are integrated not in a *sequential* order, as more commonly applied (see Creswell *et al.* 2003: 219–220), but rather, in a *concurrent* fashion *throughout* all stages of the research process. Quantitative and qualitative design, data collection and analyses take place concurrently to meet the demands of triangulation of different sources of information and cross-checking of evidence under coherent guidance from Bourdieu's conceptual framework.

The mixed methods approach in this study mirrors the wider Bourdieusian reproduction literature, wherein quantitative and qualitative studies have continuously developed to engage in reciprocal hypothesis testing. Whereas Bourdieu himself employs a variety of statistical and in-depth inquiries in his work, however, his followers have been more likely to commit to either quantitative examination (see, for example, DiMaggio 1982, de Graaf *et al.* 2000, Sullivan 2001, Bodovski & Farkas 2008, Sullivan *et al.* 2013) or ethnographic research (see, for example, Lareau 1987, 2003, Reay 1998, 2000, Skeggs 1997, Gillies 2005, Atkinson 2012, 2013). This study is a contribution to the much less developed mixed-methods Bourdieusian literature.

Limitations

Having laid out the study's contributions, its limitations must also be acknowledged. In this respect, the following limitations are particularly important.

First, there is the issue of *age* or – if one prefers – *generational specificity*. Because the survey respondents were relatively young (14 to 25 years old), there may be less upward mobility among them than

there may be among members of a more mature population. As of 2010, the proportion of leaders and professionals in the young population was about 5%, according to the current analysis, compared to about 10% in the whole population (see MPI & GSO 2011).

Yet, issues with a young population may be compensated for, considering the following:

1) The aforementioned statistics, combined with empirical evidence in this study, suggest that there is not much space in the highest class for a lot of upward mobility to occur, and even less likelihood for far-range upward movement from the working class.

2) The class achievement of young people from leader-professional backgrounds early in their careers, which has been observed in this study, powerfully encapsulates the smoothness of the transmission of privilege in the most privileged class.

Second, there is the issue of *intersectionality*. This problem concerns a number of themes that need further analytical attention that is beyond the scope of this thesis. The inquiry addresses, but not in-depth or insightfully, the intersection between social class and other sources of inequality such as gender and geographic location. There is, as delimited at the outset of the study, no examination herein of the ethnic and regional dimensions of class inequalities, mainly since the qualitative research is conducted in one ethnically homogeneous region: the Red River Delta. Nor is there any scrutiny into the most privileged and most destitute populations – no coverage of, for example, young people who study abroad or those who have no schooling. Unemployed people are also excluded from the investigation (although there are

interviewees who were being underemployed) since the focus is on occupational class and not the "underclass".

Third, there is the issue of *social mobility*. Because its overriding theme is class reproduction, the current study offers limited understanding of the multifaceted mechanisms shaping social mobility. The one channel for lower-class people's upward mobility that has been discovered relies upon occasional access to profitable resources such as are also mobilised by higher-class people to obtain field rewards. For example, enhanced knowledge about schooling options can facilitate informed educational decision-making, while a leader-professional relative in the extended family can provide job opportunities. Because it either takes years of resource accumulation and errors and failure, or good fortune, for lower-class people to get hold of capital that matters, their upward mobility is limited, especially into the leader-professional class. In addition, it is important to acknowledge that lower-class people's upward movement through methods involving patronage contributes to reinforcing, rather than undermining, nepotism and inequality. This counterintuitive finding may contradict stereotypical notions of upward mobility. There may be alternative channels for mobility, possibly involving the conversion of lower-class people's *unique* resources into capital, which will become more visible through a theoretical lens that goes further beyond Bourdieu than this study has been able to achieve.

Even though a special focus on the perpetuation of class advantages has been the study's aim from the beginning, the researcher's position as an outsider may have put some limitations on the investigation into lower-class groups. Effort at building trust and rapport in qualitative interviews may not have been able to eliminate biases, such as those resulting from lower-class interviewees' construction of answers along the stereotypes socially imposed on them (for instance, describing themselves as having 'weak-learner gene' or 'limited abilities') (see also

McKown & Weinstein 2003, Spencer & Castano 2007, Steele 2010, Gorski 2012). It should be noted, however, that Bourdieu's framework proves particularly helpful as a methodological tool to deal with these forms of bias, through facilitating the triangulation of evidence and through facilitating the researcher's reflexivity, especially during data analysis.

Most contemporary stratified societies are characterised by particular, historically variable, degrees of class inequality. The current research is among the earliest studies to discover, demonstrate, and explain how class-based inequalities have penetrated key areas of social life in present-day Vietnam. To be sure, there is much more to learn about contemporary Vietnamese society, especially in relation to the role of social class in a post-communist historical formation (cf. Outhwaite 2007, 2011, Outhwaite & Ray 2005); after all, the topic remains shunned in domestic establishment research and overlooked by non-establishment researchers. The study provides evidence from post-reform Vietnam of the powerful influence of class background on people's life chances, and of salient class-based discrimination in education and employment. It helps break the ground for a vast area of future research.

Appendix 1. Informed consent form

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

2 copies (1 copy for participant, 1 copy for researcher file)

Researcher's name: Ly Chu
Research topic: Social Reproduction in the Red River Delta
Research institution: Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, City University London
Northampton Square, London EC1V 0HB, United Kingdom +44 (0)20 7040 5060
Contact in Vietnam: Dr. Dzung Lam, Museum of Anthropology, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University – Hanoi. Email: bebimkch@gmail.com

1. I agree to take part in the above City University London research project.
2. I have had the project, the aim, and the nature of the interview explained clearly to me. Any questions I had about the project, the aim, and the nature of the interview have been answered clearly by the researcher. I have read the participant information sheet, which I may keep for my records.
3. I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.
4. I mark 'x' next to the terms that I agree with below:
   ☐ I consent to the interview being audiotaped.
   ☐ I consent to the information given in the interview being transcribed verbatim and the transcriptions being used in the thesis.
   ☐ I consent to the transcriptions being used in scientific publications.
   ☐ I consent to myself and my residence being photographed.
   ☐ I consent to the photographs of myself and my residence being used in the thesis.
   ☐ I consent to the photographs of myself and my residence being used in scientific publications.
5. I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

Appendix 2. Participant information sheet for parent respondents

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
For parent respondents

Researcher's name: Ly Chu
Research topic: Social Reproduction in the Red River Delta
Research institution: Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, City University London
Northampton Square, London EC1V 0HB, United Kingdom +44 (0)20 7040 5060

I would like to invite you to take part in the above study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

1. The purpose of the study is to understand the ways parents of different socioeconomic standings involve in their children's educational and occupational attainment.

2. You are one of forty people chosen to take part in this study. Your gender, age, and your occupation are suitable for the study.

3. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

4. You will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher about your childrearing practices, your children's education and career. The interview will last from one hour to

two hours. You are free to end the interview at any time, or decline any topic you are not comfortable to discuss.

5. The researcher will not disclose any information you provide to any of your family members or the person who introduces you to her.

6. The researcher wishes to audiotape the interview with you. The tape will help the researcher recall accurately the content of the interview. With the help of the recorder, the researcher will be able to listen to your opinions attentively without having to take many notes. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher alone. The transcriptions will be kept by the researcher alone. The researcher is responsible to provide you with the tape and the transcription if you request. However, you are free to decline being recorded at any time and without giving a reason.

7. The researcher wishes to take photographs of you and your residence. These photographs will be of great value to the study. Besides, during the interview, if you have any materials to illustrate your stories (such as family pictures), please share with the researcher. Please be aware that these materials may reveal your identity. You are the one to decide whether the researcher can use these materials in her thesis or other publications in relation to the thesis. If you decide not to give consent for them to be used in publications, they will be used by the researcher alone for the analytical purpose only.

8. This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, City University London

9. If the study is stopped, all the information that you provided will be stored by the researcher alone. The researcher will ask for your permission before using those information for future research.

10. If you have any further questions about the study, please contact the researcher at abcv552@city.ac.uk

11. If you have any problems, concerns or questions about this study, you speak to the researcher. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this through the University complaints procedure. To complain about the study, you need to phone 020 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is: 'Social Reproduction in the Red River Delta.'

You could also write to the Secretary at:
Anna Ramberg
Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee
Research Office, E214
City University London
Northampton Square
London
EC1V 0HB
Email: Anna.Ramberg.1@city.ac.uk

You could also send your complaints to the following local address:
Dr. Dzung Lam
Museum of Anthropology
School of Social Sciences and Humanities
Vietnam National University – Hanoi
Email: bebimkch@gmail.com

12. City University London holds insurance policies which apply to this study. If you feel you have been harmed or injured by taking part in this study you may be eligible to claim compensation. This does not affect your legal rights to seek compensation. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for legal action.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix 3. Participant information sheet for young respondents

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

For young respondents

Researcher's name: Ly Chu
Research topic: Social Reproduction in the Red River Delta
Research institution: Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, City University London
Northampton Square, London EC1V 0HB, United Kingdom +44 (0)20 7040 5060

I would like to invite you to take part in the above study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

1. The purpose of the study is to understand the ways young people of different socioeconomic backgrounds move about in life, with or without the help from their parents.

2. You are one of forty people chosen to take part in this study. Your gender, age, and either your parents' occupations or your own occupation/educational level make you suitable for the study.

3. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

4. You will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher about your childhood, education and career. The interview will last from one hour to two hours. You are free to

end the interview at any time, or decline any topic you are not comfortable to discuss.

5. The researcher will not disclose any information you provide to any of your family members or the person who introduces you to her.

6. The researcher wishes to audiotape the interview with you. The tape will help the researcher recall accurately the content of the interview. With the help of the recorder, the researcher will be able to listen to your opinions attentively without having to take many notes. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher alone . The transcriptions will be kept by the researcher alone. The researcher is responsible to provide you with the tape and the transcription if you request. However, you are free to decline being recorded at any time and without giving a reason.

7. The researcher wishes to take photographs of you and your residence. These photographs will be of great value to the study. Besides, during the interview, if you have any materials to illustrate your stories (such as family pictures), please share with the researcher. Please be aware that these materials may reveal your identity. You are the one to decide whether the researcher can use these materials in her thesis or other publications in relation to the thesis. If you decide not to give consent for them to be used in publications, they will be used by the researcher alone for the analytical purpose only.

8. This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, City University London

9. If the study is stopped, all the information that you provided will be stored by the researcher alone, and the researcher will ask for your permission before using those information for future research.

10. If you have any further questions about the study, please contact the researcher at abcv552@city.ac.uk

11. If you have any problems, concerns or questions about this study, you should ask to speak to a member of the research team. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this through the University complaints procedure. To complain about the study, you need to phone 020 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is: 'Social Reproduction in the Red River Delta.'

You could also write to the Secretary at:
Anna Ramberg
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You could also send your complaints to the following local address:
Dr. Dzung Lam
Museum of Anthropology
School of Social Sciences and Humanities
Vietnam National University – Hanoi
Email: bebimkch@gmail.com

12. City University London holds insurance policies which apply to this study. If you feel you have been harmed or injured by taking part in this study you may be eligible to claim compensation. This does not affect your legal rights to seek compensation. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for legal action.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

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