

Vietnamese Immigrants in the Czech Republic:
Hiring a Czech Nanny as a Post-Migratory Family Settlement Strategy
Adéla Suralová

In January 2012 the magazine of the daily *Hospodářské noviny* printed an article about “Vietnamese Nannies,” meaning Czech women who look after the children of Vietnamese parents in the Czech Republic. It reported:

According to unofficial estimates, every other Vietnamese child has a Czech nanny. Instead of spring rolls these children love dumplings and dill sauce. One woman often went to the 24-hour convenience store to buy rolls, butter, and fresh milk, but one day she came back with seven-week-old baby twins. “Their mother worked in the store from morning till evening and didn’t have the time to take care of the baby girls”, as 67-year-old Růžena Kopáčková from Prague’s Žižkov quarter describes the moment when she came by her first Vietnamese grandchildren (Procházková 2012)

Ms. Kropáčková and her Vietnamese twins are just one of many episodes in the story of Vietnamese immigrants in the Czech Republic. Their story is markedly different from that of Philippine nannies working in the United States or Polish domestics in Germany, but also from Vietnamese migrants to Canada, France, or Germany. In the context of the worldwide model of delegated care (for children and/or households) these Vietnamese families who hired Czech nannies are especially notable because these tasks are generally carried out by migrants for majority families in Western countries. Here we find the opposite phenomenon where the work is done by women of the host society for immigrant families. This raises the question; do the relationships between the immigrant family and the nanny from the majority society correspond to the dominant model of migrant nannies in majority families? Is it the same model “stood on its head” or a completely different dynamic of relationships?

Based on my qualitative research on Vietnamese families and their Czech nannies I ask the following principal question: Why do Vietnamese families hire Czech nannies to look after their children? I don’t try to analyze the complex relationship between families and nannies, but focus instead on the demand for nannies in the post-migration lives of Vietnamese in the Czech Republic. Analysis of the motivations leading to the formation of intimate relations of mutual dependency between the nanny and the family reveals the specific nature of this pattern—not only in terms of reversing the usual ethnic logic but also in the context of the global Vietnamese diaspora and Czech society. First of all Vietnamese migrants in other countries do not look for nannies to care for their children, or at least no

researcher has described any such pattern of relations so far.¹ Second, other immigrants to the Czech Republic do not systematically seek Czech nannies to look after their children—for them the model common in other European countries applies and it is the migrants (usually from Ukraine) who work as domestics. Third, only one to two percent of Czech households hire a nanny for their children (Hašková 2008) so the model of paid care for children is not very widespread in the Czech context. So the answer to the question of “why” has to be sought in the nature of Vietnamese post-migration life in the Czech Republic as it is not a general pattern of Vietnamese migrants, nor of other migrants in the CR, nor of Czech society—only in the specific situation of Vietnamese migrants in the Czech Republic. This essay situates the story of Vietnamese families and the reasons why they hire Czech women to care for their children as part of the more complex story of their migration and settlement in a new country. On the following pages I focus on two related issues: why do some Vietnamese families in the Czech Republic hire *nannies* to look after their children and why do some Vietnamese families in the Czech Republic hire *Czech* nannies to look after their children?

The literature on domestic care workers is based on a dominant model in which the nannies are migrants and the customers are middle-class white families, and it locates the motivations for hiring a nanny as a strategy for combining family and working life. Feminist authors used to criticize societies for being founded on a family model that featured men as the main breadwinners while women were relegated to unpaid work in the household, but the social states that made this possible have ceased to fulfil their role in many countries and this has given rise to “transnational spaces of care“ (Isaksen 2012, 2010). These transnational spaces allow well off families in the global West/North to outsource child care and enable them to enjoy the advances of the feminist movement’s second wave (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003). As a number of authors have noted critically (particularly Rollins 1992, Stenum 2010, Lutz 2011), this institution of paid child care allows some women to avoid the so-called second shift, but for others it means working in often illegal markets and leads to the deepening of class and ethnic inequality among women from different continents and countries on both sides of the global map of paid work.

These approaches, however, are extremely limited in their applicability to our Vietnamese families and their Czech nannies. The main argument which I will develop is that

¹ The specific nature of the Czech Republic on the global map of paid care and the Vietnamese diaspora is reinforced by some of my interviewees (children who had a Czech nanny) who had been born in Germany, and had moved with their parents to the CR at an early age. These children had never had a nanny in Germany; their parents first sought a nanny for them in the Czech Republic.

Czech nannies are hired both in order to help reconcile family and working life, and to help manage family life in the context of post-migration settlement and the struggle for the continuity of family and private life.

The starting point is an understanding of the family life of Vietnamese immigrants in the Czech Republic. Migrants' family life has been the subject of a number of studies that have shown how life in the new country leads immigrants to reconcile their old and new ideas about family life (Kibria 1993, Foner 1997, Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). On a general level Nancy Foner (1997: 962) writes:

The cultural understandings, meanings, and symbols that immigrants bring with them from their home societies are...critical in understanding immigrant family life. Obviously, immigrants do not reproduce exactly their old cultural patterns when they move to a new land; but these patterns continue to have a powerful influence in shaping family values and norms as well as actual patterns of behavior that develop in the new setting.

She goes on to emphasize that “cultural roots” are a key to the process of redefining family life and allow us to understand the differences between various groups of immigrants (in this context for example why Vietnamese seek Czech nannies and Ukrainians do not).

One subject of these negotiations is over the concept of child care. Modern anthropological kinship theory emphasizes the formative role of care in the maintenance and reproduction of kinship/family ties and in defining what a family is—who is included in it, and who is not. Ever since the definition of kinship was detached from biology in the 1970's (Schneider 1984), scholarship has focused on the notion that ideas about the family are formed on what is done rather than on the basis of what is given (see the emphasis on the “kinning process” in Howell 2006 for an example). This approach is applied in the second part of this work as it briefly outlines what happened in the relationship between the nanny and the family.

This essay relates the partial findings of qualitative research in fifty in-depth interviews with Vietnamese mothers, their children, and Czech women working as nannies in Vietnamese families. The research was carried out from spring 2010 to fall 2012 in the Czech-German/Czech-Austrian border regions where concentrations of Vietnamese immigrants have become greatest and some of the largest Czech cities (Prague, Brno, Opava, and Zlín). I focused on the questions: What are the motivations for becoming/seeking a nanny? What ideas about child care are embedded in the relationship, what is their source and how are they articulated and practiced in everyday care? How is the paid child care

contextualized in relation to family ties? Joan Tronto's prominent article on the "nanny question in feminism" emphasizes three perspectives through which we can approach the nanny question: those of the families (mothers), the children, and the nannies. My strategy was to cover all three perspectives in order to capture the complexity of the entire relationship and the contradictions contained within it. The following is a basic description of my interviewees, and a description of the actors included in the triangular mother-child-nanny relationship.

The families I met during the research varied widely, both in their experience of immigration, as well as (to a lesser extent) their current situation (employment and type of residence). They all arrived between the 1980s era of socialist cooperation between Czechoslovakia and Vietnam (see below) and 2005. A large proportion of my interviewees came to the Czech Republic because they already had some relatives here; while a frequent pattern was that the man came in the 1980s to study, returned to Vietnam and got married, and then came back to the CR with his wife (and children). Their legal status depended on when they arrived: most of them had permanent residence permits, but a few had temporary residence permits. None of my informants (or their parents) had Czech citizenship, the main reason being that they did not want it and assumed **the parents (the first generation immigrants) would return to Vietnam** after the children are grown and are financially secure.

In selecting "child" interviewees I took two criteria into account. First was age, which I limited to 16-23 years in view of the need for in-depth interviews and the fact that I was interested in capturing the *long-term* aspect of the entire relationship. These interviews focused on recollections of childhood and a description of their current relationship to the nanny. I am not working here with "children" as an age category, but rather as a role in the mother-nanny-child relationship. A second criterion was place of birth. My goal was to carry out interviews with children who were born in the Czech Republic (10 subjects), and with children who had come to the CR with (or to) their parents at the age of 6 or younger, i.e. before mandatory schooling began (also 10 subjects).

I also carried out sixteen interviews with fourteen nannies. All of them shared one basic characteristic: they were dependent on the social state. The majority (nine) were retirees with pensions, two were on disability, two others were getting unemployment benefits, and one was on maternity leave. Indeed, four of the women lived by themselves (either divorced or widowed), and were thus the only breadwinners in their household. It turns out that this relationship to the state is generally crucial to understanding the entire

relationship between the Vietnamese families and the Czech nannies—though four of my child interviewees had had nannies who had been actively employed, two elementary school teachers, a pre-school teacher and a janitor.

The last group included those close to the Vietnamese “community” – they had experience with migration, and had a relative, friend, or acquaintance who had sought a nanny in the past. These interviews had a more informational character, as these were the individuals who got me into contact with members of the other groups. My interviewees were contacted through the “snowball” method. Most of the initial contacts took place via the second generation – I asked university students whether they had had a Czech nanny or knew someone that had. The “children” led me to the nannies and parents. In light of the intimate character of the entire study I had to rely on recommendations to find people suitable for the research, and even more so because *their recommendation of me* as a person who can be trusted was essential. This was especially true with the Vietnamese mothers, as it was not possible to contact them ad hoc through the “market” (so to speak), I had to rely on insiders to locate them for me.

The question of trust or mistrust was not the only obstacle that I had to face during the study. The atmosphere “in the field” was clouded by negative media portrayal of the Vietnamese, something which led several of the mothers to change their minds and refuse to speak with me after having agreed to a meeting. Another reason that some meetings did not take place was the parents’ busy work schedules; they simply did not have the time, energy, and will to chat with a curious researcher after a twelve-hour work day. The last problem that should be mentioned was the language barrier, as I had no Vietnamese and my interviewees often had a very limited knowledge of Czech. So the interviews were conducted through an interpreter, whose role in the research was considerable and active in providing insight and emphasis (Temple and Edwards 2002, Esposito 2001). Interviews with mothers were affected by the so-called triple subjectivity, the interaction between three actors: subject, interpreter, and researcher (Temple and Edwards 2002).

All interviews were recorded with the agreement of the subjects, and later transcribed. To preserve anonymity only pseudonyms are used here. Analysis of the interviews started while gathering the data as the interviews were transcribed and through open and focused coding of the transcriptions. The decision to study the care work relationship from three perspectives – mother, nanny, and child – was a great challenge for analysis because the combination of various perspectives on the same

phenomenon/relationship involved perspectives based in very different social and cultural worlds. The analysis of motivations focuses on three main aspects: the view of the mothers as they describe their own motivations; the ideas of the nanny about what motivates Vietnamese mothers to hire a nanny; and the stories of children, whose accounts are more founded in real experience than the responses of the nannies, but who experienced the relationship from a different perspective than the Vietnamese mothers.

When my informants were asked about their migration experience and/or that of their parents I heard a number of different stories. A very common pattern reported by many families is found in the interview with Thi, a 22-year-old university student who was born in Vietnam and came to the Czech Republic at the age of three:

My dad studied here in 1980s, then he came back to Vietnam and in 1990s the big boom of Vietnamese markets started so he decided to return here... And me and my mum, we joined him in 1994 thanks to the family reunification allowance.

Thi's story sums up the basic experience of Vietnamese migration to the Czech Republic. The experience of migration to this country differs fundamentally from that of Vietnamese migrants to the capitalist countries that began in the 1970s. The geopolitical situation at that time produced two parallel, but very different, streams of migration from Vietnam corresponding to the two sides of the Cold War. The turning point in Vietnamese migration to the CR and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was 1989, when the Soviet bloc fell apart and the nature of the migration to what was then still Czechoslovakia changed completely. Migration from Vietnam was thus shaped by two radically differing migration regimes: before 1989 it was a strictly state-managed migration between two Communist countries with closed borders (personified by Thi's father who studied in Communist Czechoslovakia); after 1989 it became a classic labour migration shaped by privatization and open markets (which Thi describes as "the Vietnamese outdoor market boom"; see Baláž and Williams 2007, Brouček 2003). As Baláž and Williams (2007: 43) noted, and as we can see from Thi's case the two phases were not unconnected; instead "the pathway(s) of the first phase migrants intersected with and informed pathway of the second phase – especially via social network and migrant-host community relationships – shaping opportunities and constraints for both groups."

The first contacts between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and Czechoslovakia date back to the 1950s, when a bilateral treaty was signed allowing for the arrival of around a hundred war orphans. In the mid 1950s several treaties were signed to promote mutual

cooperation between the two countries (Martínková 2006). They drew even closer in 1973 when “*the Vietnamese side became very significantly more active* in urging the Czechoslovak side to accept increased numbers of Vietnamese labourers and give them education, training, and subsequent experience in various trades on a larger scale than previously” (Brouček 2003: 10, italics in original). That same year a Vietnamese delegation travelled around the Eastern bloc requesting specialized training for their citizens. They asked the CSR to train 12 000 apprentices, but this was turned down as unrealistic (Brouček 2009). A year later 5000 apprentices aged 17-25 arrived in Czechoslovakia. Their stays were divided into several phases: a six-month language course, a three-year study stay, and up to three years’ practical experience in the factories—where 60-70 % of them had the opportunity later to work under the same conditions as Czech workers (Brouček 2003). The benefit of the last stage benefited the CSR by providing workers for the metal, construction, and energy industries where there was a shortage of labour.

Subsequent agreements between 1976 and 1980 further reinforced this fraternal cooperation and the integration of Vietnam into the Soviet bloc was cemented when Vietnam became a member of the Council on Mutual Economic Assistance in July 1978. These raised the numbers of interns and students in Czechoslovakia to a peak of around 30,000 between 1980 and 1983. These treaties expired in the mid-1980s, and new agreements reduced the numbers of Vietnamese in the CSR; by 1985 there were only 19,350 Vietnamese left (c. 15,000 men and 4,000 women). By the end of the 1980s there were only about 10,000 left.

The year 1989 was the major turning point. The disintegration of the existing partnership, combined with the disappearance of jobs and the difficulty of finding new ones on the regular labour market, threw the Vietnamese living in Czechoslovakia into uncertainty in terms of their future life/migration strategies. They were presented with three alternatives: return to Vietnam, secondary migration to a neighbouring country, or legalization of their residence in Czechoslovakia. As Brouček (2003) shows, despite financial compensation by the government for Vietnamese **immigrants** working in factories that were no longer able to pay them, the pressure to return to Vietnam was inconsistent. Many Vietnamese chose secondary migration to Germany, Holland, or Austria. Those who wanted to stay in Czechoslovakia had to find a way to legalize their residence. One solution was to set up a limited-liability corporation with a business license, which could then be used to obtain permanent residence permits (Brouček 2003, Nekorjak a Hofírek 2009).

A new chapter began in the lives of Vietnamese in Czechoslovakia (and then the Czech Republic and Slovakia) in the early 1990s due to the post-1989 economic collapse. Legalization of residence through business licenses paid off, especially in trans-border petty trading. Rising consumption combined with limited international trade and insufficient domestic production led to gaps in the clothing market that could be filled by new small businesses (Williams and Baláž 2005). Sales of textile and assorted products became the core economic activity for Vietnamese after 1989, followed by other business activity such as translating, publishing, groceries, etc. (Hofirek and Nekorjak 2009). Occupational concentration is one of the main features of the Vietnamese population in the CR, currently 36,000 of the 60,000 immigrants hold business licenses (25,000 men and 11,000 women).²

Starting in the early 1990s, the original core of the immigrant community grew continually to include Vietnamese from other countries, particularly Germany after the agreements with the GDR ended in 1993 and the German government forced many Vietnamese to leave (Brouček 2003). Others came from Poland and Slovakia, and newcomers arrived from Vietnam. Nevertheless, many of *newcomers* were not new to the CR—they were people who had been trainees and students before 1989. Another key characteristic of the migration flow was a legal clause allowing for reuniting families. That was the way the majority of Vietnamese women come to the CR given that the original pre-1989 migration was overwhelmingly male-dominated, “gendered around the discourse on training men in socialist ways of work” (Williams and Baláž 2005: 537). Immigrants sponsored friends and relatives as well as wives and children, while other newcomers arrived independently of any family/kinship networks. State-managed migration morphed into classic work-related migration, very often channelled into petty trading which combined “welfare maximization and risk minimization” (Baláž and Williams 2007). The work-related nature of the migration can also be seen in the demographic structure of the population. According to the Czech Statistical Office, 21 % of Vietnamese residents were children 0-14 years old in 2005 (vs. 15 % of the Czech population), while 78 % were of productive age (15 – 64) and only 1 % were over 65. Compared to other groups of immigrants, the demographic structure of Vietnamese immigrant group has a high percentage of women and children and low percentage of people in unproductive age. And it is the employment and demographic structure of the Vietnamese

² The 60,000 Vietnamese are the third-largest group of immigrants in the Czech Republic, which has a population of 10.3 million. There are 430,000 foreigners—the Vietnamese make up some 15 % of the immigrant population and 0.6 % of the overall population.

immigrant population that is the key structural pre-condition shaping family life and the demand for Czech nannies.

My main source of inspiration for trying to understand why Vietnamese immigrants in the CR hire nannies was Nazli Kibria's *Family Tightrope* (1993). Her book examined generational and gender relations in Vietnamese immigrant families in the US and described how their new economic and social context produced complicated family situations (the family tightrope) as they balanced between the Vietnamese and American cultures. It led to complicated negotiations over the meaning of family/household and relationships within it. I argue here that the recruitment of nannies by Vietnamese families in the CR is part of a complex process of settlement, balancing between here and there, between then and now, and negotiating a new family life in the new country. I focus on three main turning points encountered in the arrival in a new country: the change in work environment, which raises the question of *how to combine work and family life*; on a transnational balancing between two cultural worlds that leads to *rethinking family models from the country of origin and combining them with those of the new country of residence*; and the displacement from old social networks which creates the dilemma of *how to deal with the new family situation without the support of the broader family*. The combined effect of these three factors is a new constellation of relationships within the family which results in the decision to hire a Czech nanny.

In the initial phase of research (spring 2010) I contacted Ms. Veselá (born Nguyen), a woman from Vietnam who came to the former Czechoslovakia before 1989, married a Czech, and works as a Czech-Vietnamese translator. She agreed immediately to my request for an interview and gave me the following instructions: "Let's meet tomorrow and I will take you somewhere where you'll understand why Vietnamese do this". The next day she picked me up and took me to Brno's biggest outdoor market. We walked past stands selling clothing and food, operated by Vietnamese of every age and family status, to a small fast-food place where we ordered strong Vietnamese coffee. As we were drinking the coffee Ms. Veselá told me to look around carefully, and asked, "Now you understand it all, don't you?" At that point I realized that the commitment to their work on the part of small business owners should be understood as the main reason why Vietnamese families hire women to watch their children. In case I had any doubts, she explained in detail:

Generally, Vietnamese are taught that people of productive age must work, and being on maternity leave is not work. Everybody must work, parents, grandparents, and older children and kids have all done it since childhood. Here [in the Czech Republic] they have their shops, they are entrepreneurs, so that they do not want or they cannot close the shop. For them, when the shop is closed, the goods are not sold, there is no profit, and the clients do not come again. It is impossible to close the shop for a week or two and go for a holiday with the family. They are able to pay for education for their kids; they send them to England for three weeks to learn English, which is very expensive. They are able to pay for that; but to close the shop and go for holiday with kids, that is a waste of time, they would say.

Many of my other interviewees also cited work commitments as the most important reason for seeking a nanny. Thus my understanding of the role of the nanny in the lives of Vietnamese immigrants began with understanding their work commitments which created three common issues that are often mentioned in interviews with children and mothers.

First is the difference between working in Vietnam and working in the Czech Republic. All my adult interviewees (the parents of my children-interviewees and employers of my nanny-interviewees) were in dual-earner households in the CR. The majority of the parental couples were owners of shops or stands (either they worked together in a jointly operated one or each of them had their own), one of the parents was a translator, and one couple worked in a factory. But it would be wrong to take the dual-earner household as a manifestation of geographical mobility and life in the host country. What Ms. Veselá describes when she says that the Vietnamese learn that everybody must work when they are of productive age, is something that I heard often from my interviewees. They explained the “natural diligence” of Vietnamese immigrants as either a result of Confucian philosophy or, more often, as a reaction to experience with war and poverty. Dual-earner households were normal in Vietnam before they moved to the Czech Republic; but work life changed radically for both men and women after the move. Above all, there were qualitative changes when they shifted from their previous occupations (whether skilled or unskilled) and became entrepreneurs in the immigrant economy. This involved de-skilling. In addition, their new occupation required quantitative changes in work patterns and led to work intensifying at the expense of private life, as the logic of “close the shop and you earn nothing” shaped their existence. They experienced what Wall and José (2004) called pressures *to* work – because the migration project aims at maximizing income – and pressures *from* work like atypical or long hours, and the pressure not to miss work.

The second issue is closely connected to the first, and encompasses the adjustment of being Vietnamese and working in the Czech Republic. Interviewees said that “if I was in Vietnam, I would work less,” but they also said “if I was Czech, I would work less”. If the goal of migration is to ensure a better future for the children, work is the means to achieve this goal. Vietnamese parents must work more than Czech parents because their children enter the society with the stigma of foreignness. Ms. Ho made the following comment which expresses the link between parents’ work life and the children’s future: “We are foreigners here, and it will be hard for them to prove that they are not worse than others. We want them to have a better life than we have now.” Despite the fact that they are financially very burdensome activities, private education, additional courses after school, and holidays in English-speaking countries are considered important ways to do the best thing for the children—as well as the parents’ own future as the children’s education reflects the status of the family (see also Kibria 1993).

The third issue appears more often in the statements of my interviewee-children, and captures the nature of balancing everyday life between work and family. This is the tension between working versus living in the Czech Republic. These families experience conflicts between work and child care, they “have so much to do that they feel they have a hard time managing everyday life” (Forsberg 2009: 162). Ms Veselá’s statement, which was very much echoed in the interviews with children, demonstrates that for Vietnamese immigrants *everyday* life is *work* life. Vietnamese parents are both admired and castigated by their children for sacrificing their private lives to earn money. The struggle for family life is conducted when parents negotiate work-life strategies built upon the patterns learnt in Vietnam, but played with the cards dealt out in the Czech Republic. The efforts to reconcile the two are understood and experienced differently by parents and children: for the parents the Czech Republic is a place of *work*, while for the children it is the place of *life*. The pervasive ambivalence of a family life overwhelmed by work life reflects the fact that parents are in the Czech Republic *because of* and *for* their kids; however, they are not here *with* them.

Nazli Kibria (1993) emphasizes that immigrants reconstruct their family lives on the basis of their “cultural baggage”: the experience, ideology, and understanding of the world brought with them from their country of origin. In this text I postulate that part of this baggage is the model of child care; in other words, ideas about what child care should be and how it should be carried out, which are confronted with structural opportunities and obstacles

in the new society. Lise Widdig Isaksen (2010) showed how this works in her analysis of transnational care practices describing how Ukrainian migrant women contrast care strategies in the country of origin with strategies in the host country and that they prefer the practices that are normal in their homeland. Here I illustrate how Vietnamese families metaphorically “unpack” their cultural baggage and adapt to the new environment. First, however, we must look at what this baggage contains; that is, the ideas about caring for children that the Vietnamese migrants bring with them.

When I asked my mother-interviewees how they would handle child care if they were in Vietnam, most of them named three logical possibilities: they could stay home, put the child into day care, or find a third person. The first possibility, to stay home, was described by my interviewees as the least realistic as it’s only a privilege of those rich enough for the husband to support the family alone. The early return of mothers to the work force in Vietnam is set by the length of paid maternity leave. This ranges from four months (for normal work), to five months (for jobs that entail a dangerous environment or difficult shifts, for example women police or soldiers), and up to six months (if the woman is physically handicapped). Women receive 100% of their pay and can apply for unpaid leave in addition (Nguyen 2012: 7). This model of maternity leave produces demand for both formal and informal child care. Formal care in Vietnam is provided by a relatively dense network of private and public schools and centers – nursery schools (for 3 month to 3 year olds), kindergarten (3–5 year olds) and pre-primary schools (5–6). As Nguyen concludes, however, despite the density of this network the majority of families with children less than 3 years old rely on informal child care – richer people pay for nannies (mostly in urban areas), while others rely on the grandparents.

After coming to the Czech Republic, Vietnamese migrants – accustomed in their home country to four-month paid maternity leave and a strong network of pre-school child care facilities – find themselves in a social state which has pursued re-familization policies since 1989 (Sirovátka and Saxonberg 2006, Lister et al 2007).

[W]hen the communist walls came tumbling down, Central European women found themselves in a historically unique situation. On the one hand, they experienced the highest employment levels in the entire world, with only the Scandinavian social democratic countries coming close. On the other hand, in contrast to the Scandinavian countries, little discussion arose about the need for men to share in the household and child-rearing chores. As a result, the household remained strictly the domain of the woman. (Sirovátka and Saxonberg 2006: 185).

What are the signs of this re-familization, and what impact does it have on the lives of Vietnamese families? There are two types of paid parental support in the Czech Republic and other Central and Eastern European countries. First is maternity leave which has remained unchanged during the transformation in the Czech Republic, and is now available for 28 weeks, with a replacement rate of 69 % (Sirovátka and Saxonberg 2006). The second is called family leave, which can be taken until the child is four years old. An explicit re-familization policy is evident in the cuts in state nursery schools for children under four years old. Since 1989 the number of these facilities has been reduced from 1,043 facilities (serving c. 40 000 children) to just 45 facilities (for fewer than 1500 children). The majority of the remaining facilities are located in the larger towns and there are few of them in the border regions where there are many Vietnamese. But the lack of nursery schools is not the only factor that shapes the child care decisions of Vietnamese parents. Even where child care facilities are available, their lack of flexibility creates an important barrier. Nursery schools are usually open only until 5 pm and that doesn't meet the needs of parents who work until 8 or 9 pm. Even if they were able to place their children in a nursery school, these parents would still need someone to pick them up at 5 and watch them until they come from work.

Thus Vietnamese parents experience big differences between child care models in Vietnam and the Czech Republic. In contrast to the model familiar to them from Vietnam (returning to work after four months of maternal leave), now they must deal with a radically different setting. First, the relatively long paid family leaves and negative mythologies around collective child care shape the discourse of what Ann Oakley called "myth of motherhood" (1974) and Sharon Hays called the ideology of intensive mothering (1996). Re-familization policy in the Czech Republic strengthened the ideology of a gendered division of reproductive labour with a permanent individual carer (i.e. mother). This is radically different from the previous conceptions about motherhood and child care of the majority of Vietnamese immigrants. Secondly, the kind of child care facilities which provide important institutional support in Vietnam, are either too far away, have no vacancies, or have inadequate hours in the Czech Republic. The final option, which would have been the main option back in Vietnam, is to delegate child care to relatives within the family.

Nguyet is a twenty-year-old university student who came to the Czech Republic when she was 4 years old. Her mother went to work immediately after a four-month maternity leave before she moved to the Czech Republic. After that Nguyet was taken care of by her maternal grandmother. After the family moved to the CR Nguyet's mother had to take

a job again and she needed to find a *substitute for her mother* who to look after Nguyet. So she found her daughter a nanny.

The role of kinship relations in delegated care has been described in a few studies (such as Utall 1999), some of which are devoted to the role of social/kinship relations in the post-migration harmonization of employment and family life (Moon 2003). The absence of a network of relatives influences many different areas of post-migration life and my interviewees often spoke of it in terms of a lack of economic and emotional support. But in view of the important role played in childcare by grandparents in Vietnam the separation from kinship networks is most keenly felt when it comes to taking care of children. Hiring a nanny represents an alternative strategy for Nguyet's mother and other interviewees, one that simulates the Vietnamese model of child care in which the task is delegated to grandparents. When asked "How would you deal with looking after the children if you were in Vietnam?" the majority answered that the grandmother would take over for the mother when the latter had to return to work. As one of the nannies put it, "They don't have their grandmothers here, so they have to find some."

Basically the nanny supplements the mother and supplants the grand-mother (Nelson 1990). This leads to the potential formation of family/kinship bonds that are significantly different from relationships described in most studies on care/domestic work (Anderson 2000, Hess and Puckhaber 2004, Búriková and Miller 2010, Akalin 2008).³ These studies looked at the relationships that emerged between nanny/domestic workers and their employers as a pseudo-family, a fictive or false kinship in which the rhetoric of "one of the family" masked inequality and functioned as a moral economy that allowed families to demand unpaid overtime and so on (Hess and Puckhaber 2004). Nevertheless family dynamics function very differently in the case of Vietnamese families in the CR—mainly for two reasons. The first is that there is a different logic regarding who is a member of which family. While in research elsewhere it is the nannies who became part of the family they work for, here it is the children (and sometimes the parents as well) who become part of the nanny's family. At the same time the nannies become part of the family life of Vietnamese migrants so closer ties develop between *both families*.

³ The degree of intensity in the relationship; that is, to what degree a kinship relationship is formed between the family/child and the nanny/family of the nanny, depends on several factors: first, the age of the child when the nanny began, secondly the intensity of contact (whether every day/all day or just 3 hours a day for example), third, the nanny's care biography (i.e. relations with her children/grandchildren and her relationship to children in general; see Souralová 2012).

A second factor is the change in family dynamics caused by the separation from relatives back in Vietnam. Kibria highlights the impact of separation from kin on “shifting and expanding the criteria for inclusion in the family circle” and demonstrates how migration alters the substance of family life (1993: 8). For the Vietnamese families in my sample the main change involves the nanny’s inclusion in the family circle. She not only fills the role of grandmother, she becomes a grandmother. “Grandma” is not just the word used by both parents and children to address the nanny, it is a performative term that determines her position in the family and her relationship to the children she looks after—given their everyday contact, the transfer of Czech social and cultural capital, sharing holidays and vacations, celebrating birthdays, and buying presents. For many Vietnamese children the Czech grandma is their main anchor in the new society as well as their main caregiver and teacher. She is “simply” the person who is called “grandma” and with whom they experience “typical grandma things” that they cannot experience with their real grandparents who are too far away.

The intensity of the work commitment, balancing between the Czech and Vietnamese ideologies of child care, and separation from the kinship network are three main reasons why some Vietnamese families in the Czech Republic hire nannies to look after their children. Nevertheless these three factors still do not explain why Vietnamese families hire *Czech* nannies (and not Vietnamese or Ukrainian) so we must examine the ethnic logic of selecting a nanny.

First we must look into the substantive characteristics of this labour—the contents of the child care that Vietnamese families desire for their children. When a Vietnamese family advertises for a nanny, it often looks something like this: “Looking for woman to look after our one-year-old daughter. Monday through Sunday. Nanny can look after child in nanny’s own home. Pay: 8000 CZK (300 Euro)”, or “Seeking woman to look after our six-year-old son – pick him up from school, help with homework. Monday through Friday, sometimes weekends and holidays. Pay: 6000 CZK (230 Euro).” This illustrates that Vietnamese parents require a major commitment of time from their nannies for relatively low pay. While in 2012 the average monthly wage was over 24,000 CZK (€ 920) and the minimum wage was 8,000 CZK (€ 300), my nanny interviewees often looked after children all day or all week for an average of 6–10,000 CZK a month (€ 230–380). Typical nanny work in a Vietnamese family thus involves long working hours for a small financial reward.

All of the nannies acknowledged this, as did Mrs. Křepelková who was on disability retirement and working with her fifth Vietnamese family when our interview took place: “You cannot count the hourly wage. That is simply impossible. You have less than 20 CZK (€ 0.75). And it’s deal or no deal. But if you like doing it, then why not?” Here Ms. Křepelková refers to two aspects essential to the (self-) selection of a nanny. First is the economic side of *paid* child care; that is, who can afford to work as a nanny in a Vietnamese family. Second, and more important, is the issue of *wanting* to become a nanny and *liking* the job. Keeping this in mind, we can now proceed to two interconnected questions: first, why don’t Vietnamese families hire Vietnamese nannies to look after their children, and second, why do they hire Czech nannies.

Three interrelated factors provide an answer to *why Vietnamese families don’t hire Vietnamese nannies*. First there is the demographic composition of the Vietnamese population in the CR. As I have already pointed out only 1 % are over 65 years of age because this is a work-related migration and few elderly take part to begin with—and then many return to their home country after their productive time is finished so those who age into this cohort tend to leave. In other words, older Vietnamese women are generally unavailable in the CR. And because they came to the CR to work, even the 1 % of women who are over 65 are working and have no time to look after children. During my research I encountered only one example of a family that had grandparents in the CR – and both of them were working so that the children were taken care of by a Czech grandmother during the week; the Vietnamese grandparents only saw them sometimes on Sunday. Finally, there is the cultural (symbolic) value of child rearing and how it is valued in relation to work in the Vietnamese community. We can see this in the attitude towards maternity leave expressed by Ms. Veselá. As she emphasized during the interview “maternity leave is not work” for the Vietnamese; and when asked about what kind of Vietnamese women look after children, she answered, “women who don’t have better work than looking after some kids (...) and are incapable of doing business, so they have to do something worse that pays less.” So in the context of the Vietnamese community being a nanny is not highly valued from either symbolically or financially.

As to *why Vietnamese families hire Czech nannies* we return to the basic characteristics of these women’s lives. The fact that these are women dependent on the social state makes them suitable and available candidates for two reasons: they have sufficient free time, and thanks to the support of the social state they need less financial compensation. Working as a nanny is a side job for them and isn’t their main source of income. Unlike the

Vietnamese women they can afford to work for so little. In addition to the availability of Czech women, it is important that they are Czech; that is, they can teach the children things that their Vietnamese parents (or nannies from other immigrant groups) cannot. All the mothers and nannies I interviewed understood child care –whether performed by mothers or nannies – not only as nurturance, but above all as the transmission of social and cultural capital (Macdonald 2010, Bourdieu 2001). Teaching the Czech language to children whose parents speak only Vietnamese, helping them with homework, passing along an authentic view into Czech culture (as my children interviewees describe it), and helping them form social ties with members of the majority society, were all mentioned as major reasons for recruiting Czech nannies.

Having a Czech nanny is becoming a post-migration norm in the Vietnamese community. While only 1-2 % of Czech families make use of individual private paid child care (Hašková 2008), my interviewees report that the number of Vietnamese families seeking nannies for their children is around 80–95%. Most of them add that this is a “common”, “normal”, or “matter-of-fact” thing. Some nannies go from family to family, or are asked whether they have a friend who would take care of some friends’ children. But it is also true that taking care of Vietnamese children has become a norm for some Czech women – several of my interviewees worked as nannies for a number of Vietnamese families in succession. Experience taking care of Vietnamese children sometimes sets off a chain of other nanny jobs. For example Xuan tells of how much her Czech grandmother cried when she and her brother stopped living with her (they lived with her from Monday to Friday and with their parents on weekends). Soon after they left, the grandma, who lived in western Bohemia where there is a concentration of Vietnamese families, began taking care of other small children (provoking anger and jealousy in Xuan’s brother). According to Xuan the grandma had become so accustomed to caring for Vietnamese children that she couldn’t live without them.

The model in which Vietnamese families take on Czech nannies to watch their children can be seen in two different ways. It can be just a *strategy for reconciling working and family life* when a dual-earner couple needs a third person to take care of the children. But, on the basis of my analysis I tend to conclude that for most of these families hiring a nanny *fulfils an ideal of where relatives belong in family life*. Two findings lead me to this conclusion: First regarding the “unpacking of cultural baggage” (i.e. ideas about the family and child care) we can see that Vietnamese migrants in the CR “simply do what they would

do at home in Vietnam.” Neither the formation of the dual-earner household nor the delegation of child rearing to a third person is result of migration—both of these customs were established long before migration. Finding a Czech granny thus simulates the existing family model as adapted to the post-migration reality. In other words, the game does not change. In both the pre-migration and post-migration context the mother and father both work, and the children are looked after by someone else; only the players are changed under the new rules as a nanny is brought in for a grandma. Secondly, the relationship that arises between the family (mainly the children) and the nanny-granny is such that the nanny replaces the Vietnamese grandma in more than just looking after the kids, she becomes their “real grandmother.” Children often talk about having two different grandmothers and about being closer to their Czech granny with whom they have spent much more time and shared more experiences.

The Czech granny is sometimes more important than the parents. For example Hanh, a 17-year-old secondary school student, sums up the *babicka*’s role like this:

I can say that she gave me the feeling of home that time. Now she cannot give it to me anymore because I think differently about things. But then she simply was my home. I would have not left the Czech Republic because of her. You know, not because of my friends or teachers at school that I liked, but because of my granny. Because my granny was here for me... she was the home for me.

Thus in many Vietnamese families the Czech grandmother plays an important role in the process of settling down in the new country—for both children and parents. For a while the families are dependent on the Czech grandmother both socially and culturally. Social dependency arises mainly because of the parents’ insufficient language skills. Thus until the children grow up and can manage everything themselves the nannies are the ones responsible for communicating with schools (going to parent-teacher meetings and even signing the students’ report card in some cases) or with doctors. In this way nannies pass their own social capital on to the children (and to a lesser extent to the parents), introducing them to their friends and relatives, substituting for their missing social network, and providing a certain foundation for the entire family. Cultural dependency is most evident in the passing down of language skills and Czech traditions and customs. The children themselves say that thanks to their nanny they are better integrated into Czech society—both through “learning the Czech way of life” (for example how to spend time at Christmas, how to go mushroom hunting), and—as the excerpt above shows—by helping them find a new sense of home.

Bibliography

- AKALIN, Ayse. "Turning Labour into Love: the Employment of Migrant Domestic Workers in Turkey" in Sigrid Metz-Göckel, Mirjana Morokvašić-Muller, and Agnes Senganata Münst (eds.) *Migration and Mobility in an Enlarged Europe: A Gender Perspective*. Barbara Budrich Publishers: Opladen, Germany and Farmington Hills, CT, 2008.
- ANDERSON, Bridget. *Doing the Dirty Work? The Global Politics of Domestic Labour*, Zed Books: London and New York, 2000.
- BALÁŽ V, A.M. WILLIAMS. 'Path-dependency and path-creation perspectives on migration trajectories: The economic experiences of Vietnamese migrants in Slovakia'. *International Migration*, 45:2 (2007): 37-67.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre. "The Forms of Capital" in *The Sociology of Economic Life*. Westview Press; Boulder and Oxford, 2001, 96-111
- BROUČEK, S. *Aktuální problémy adaptace vietnamského etnika v ČR*. [Current problems of the Vietnamese adaptation in the Czech Republic]. Etnologický ústav AV ČR, Prague, 2003.
- BÚRIKOVÁ, Zuzana and Daniel MILLER. *Au Pair*. Polity Press: Cambridge, UK, 2010.
- EHRENREICH, Barbara; Arlie R. HOCHSCHILD, *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. Metropolitan Books: New York, 2003, 1–13.
- ESPOSITO, Noreen. "From Meaning to Meaning: The Influence of Translation Techniques on NonEnglish Focus Group Research" *Qualitative Health Research* 11:4 (2001): 568–579.
- FONER, Nancy. "The Immigrant Family: Cultural Legacies and Cultural Changes," *International Migration Review* 31:4 (1997): 961-974.
- HAŠKOVÁ, Hana. "Kam směřuje česká společnost v oblasti denní péče o předškolní děti?" in A. KŘÍŽKOVÁ, R. DUDOVÁ, H. HAŠKOVÁ, H. MAŘÍKOVÁ, and Z. UHDE (eds.) *Práce a péče: Proměny rodičovské v České republice a kontext rodinné politiky Evropské Unie*. SLON: Prague, 2008, 51– 70.
- HAYS, S. *Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. Yale University Press: New Haven, 1996.
- HOFÍREK, Ondřej and Michal NEKORJAK. "Vietnamští imigranti v českých velkoměstech – integrace přistěhovalců z Vietnamu" (Vietnamese immigrants in Czech cities – integration of immigrants from Vietnam) in M. RÁKOCZYOVÁ, and R. TRBOLA, *Sociální integrace přistěhovalců v České republice*. SLON: Prague, 2009, 160–197.

- HOWELL, Signe. *The Kinning of foreigners: Transnational Adoption in a Global Perspective*. Berghehn Books: Oxford, 2006.
- ISAKSEN, Lise Widding. "Transnational Care: The Social Dimensions of International Nurse Recruitment" in L.W. ISAKSEN, *Global Care Work: Gender and Migration in Nordic Societies*. Nordic Academic Press: Lund, 2010, 139–158.
- ISAKSEN, Lise Widding. "Transnational Spaces of Care: Migrant Nurses in Norway," *Social Policy*, 19:1 (2012), 58-77.
- KIBRIA, Nazli. *Family Tighrope*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1993.
- LISTER, R. et al. *Gendering Citizenship in Western Europe: new challenges for citizenship research in a cross-national context*. Policy Press: Bristol, 2007.
- LUTZ, Helma. *The New Maids: Transnational Women and the Care Economy*. Zed Books: London, New York, 2011.
- MACDONALD, Cameron Lynne. *Shadow Mothers: Nannies, Au Pairs, and the Micropolitics of Mothering*. University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2010.
- MARTÍNKOVÁ, "Šárka. "Česko-vietnamské vztahy" in: Kocourek, Pechová *S vietnamskými dětmi na českých školách*. H & H: Prague, 2006, 84-93.
- MOON, Seungsook. "Immigration and Mothering: Two Generations of Middle-Class Korean Immigrant Women," *Gender & Society* 17:6 (2003): 840-860.
- NELSON, Margaret K. *Negotiated Care: The Experience of Family Day Care Providers*. Temple University Press: Philadelphia, 1990.
- NGUYEN, Huong. "Child Care/Family Leave Policies in Vietnam," 2012, <http://www.sjsu.edu/people/amy.d'andrade/courses/scwk202/s6/PPT%20Family%20Leave%20and%20Child%20Care%20FULL.pdf>. (last visited 10/12/2012).
- OAKLEY, Ann. *Woman's Work: The Housewife, Past and Present*. New York: Random House, 1974.
- PROCHÁZKOVÁ, Bára. "Vietnamské babičky" (Vietnamese Grandmas), *Hospodářské noviny*, 1/13/2012. [http://hn.ihned.cz/index.php?p=500000_d&&article\[id\]=54409190](http://hn.ihned.cz/index.php?p=500000_d&&article[id]=54409190) (last visited 1/25/2012).
- ROLLINS, Judith. *Between women: domestics and their employers*, Temple University Press: Philadelphia, 1992.

- SCHNEIDER, David M. *A Critique of the Study of Kinship*. University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 1984.
- SIROVÁTKA, T., S. SAXONBERG. “Failing Family Policy in Post-Communist Central Europe.” *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis* 8:2 (2006), 189-206.
- STENUM, Helle. “Au-pair migration and new inequalities: The transnational production of corruption” in L. W. ISAKSEN, *Global Care Work: Gender and Migration in Nordic Societies*. Nordic Academic Press: Lund, 2010, 23– 48.
- TEMPLE, Bogusia and Rosalind EDWARDS. “Interpreters/Translators and Cross Language Research: Reflexivity and Border Crossings.” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 1:2 (2002), 1–11.
- UTTAL, Lynet. “Using Kin for Child Care: Embedment in Family Socioeconomic Webs.” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61:4 (1999), 845-857.
- WALL, Karin and José São José. “Managing Work and Care: A Difficult Challenge for Immigrant Families,” *Social Policy & Administration* 38:6 (2004), 591-621.
- WILLIAMS, A. M. and V. BALÁŽ. “Winning, then losing, the battle with globalisation: Vietnamese petty traders in Slovakia,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 29: 3 (2005), 533–549.