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Standardized forms of Vietnamese selfhood:

An ethnographic genealogy of documentation

A B S T R A C T

Three standardized forms used to write the self in Vietnam structure ways of thinking about the relationship between the individual, family, and state; legitimize technical expertise and tools of self-improvement; and promote specific configurations of political economy. Two of the forms (the *lý lịch* autobiographical statement and the "Cultured Family" self-assessment checklist) are closely associated with socialist practices. The third (social work case file) is best classified as neoliberal. Tracing the genealogy of these forms and their ethnographic contexts reveals, however, underlying continuities in logics of individual assessment and faith in the application of technical expertise to achieve desired development outcomes. It also demonstrates that the ostensibly more coercive socialist technologies of documentation have provided narrative frameworks that enable individuals to represent themselves in other contexts, whereas the social work case file that aims to empower individuals may ultimately render them passive subjects of transnational expertise. [*documentation, case files, expertise, social work, neoliberalism, socialism, Vietnam*]

As an anthropologist who has conducted life history research in Vietnam for nearly 20 years, I maintain an abiding interest in the forms through which people narrate their lives. By *forms,* I mean the structure, content, and context around which individuals compose their autobiographies. But I am also interested in forms in a more technical sense: as written documents that require individuals to submit particular details about themselves for official scrutiny and recordkeeping.

Three examples of these literal forms sit on my desk: an autobiographical statement *(lý lịch)*, a "Cultured Family" self-assesment checklist *(bảng điểm tự chấm xếp loại "Gia đình Văn hóa")*, and a social work case file *(hồ sơ xã hội)*. Key elements in a Vietnamese corpus of technologies of self, these standardized forms elicit details that serve as the basis for expert assessment and classification of a person and his or her family. This assessment may prompt intervention—rewards, punishments, strategies of reformation—intended to enable the individual to become an appropriate self and the family to forge desired bonds of economy and affect, which, together, will advance national political-economic goals.

These three forms of individual assessment overlap temporally; all were in use in 2010. But they are also iconic of different moments in Vietnam's recent history. The lý lịch (autobiographical statement; Appendix A) is a tool of revolutionary socialist transformation used to assess individual class status and revolutionary commitment. In the southern part of the country, where I conduct research, the lý lịch was used after the end of the war in 1975 as an instrument of political and economic reckoning.[1] The answers it elicited determined disposition of property, access to jobs or education, sentencing to reeducation camps, or dispatch to barren New Economic Zones in the tense border region with Cambodia. By the 1990s, lý lịch served primarily as a curriculum vitae required for job applications, university admission, or any kind of official paperwork.

Nevertheless, the document's continued focus on locating the individual and his or her extended family within socialist class-ification, and the lingering bitter memories of dispossession that such schemes caused for many of the middle-class urbanites I know, prompted many to continue to see it as a tool of socialist governmentality.

The self-assessment checklist (Appendix B) is an evaluation tool used during the ubiquitous "Cultured Family" (Gia đình Văn hóa) campaigns of the 1990s–2000s. Originally associated with agricultural collectivization and, later, with family planning campaigns, the Cultured Family ideal had by the 1990s been transformed into a model for improving family quality, with benchmarks related to affective relationships, material conditions, and civic engagement. Although the Cultured Family self-assessment checklist was a tool in a socialist-style campaign, its logic and implementation aptly captured a "transitional" moment in which socialist mass mobilization practices were being reinvented to serve the needs of the rapidly changing "market economy with socialist orientation" *(kinh tế thị trường định hướng xã hội chủ nghĩa)* or, more simply, "market socialism."[2]

The third form is, in fact, a series of documents that, together, construct a social work case file. Unlike the other two, the case file is not a tool for self-assessment. Instead, it is filled in by an expert: a social worker trained in modern, scientific methods of determining the causes of individual, family, or community distress. Once completed, the form is used to develop a plan of intervention to empower the "client" *(thân chủ)* to solve his or her own problems. Although social work has a rich history in industrial liberal democracies, its promotion in contemporary Vietnam suggests a trend toward neoliberal development in which valorized experts "responsibilize" individuals to assume control over the circumstances of their lives and livelihoods (Rose 1999; Rudnyckyj 2010).

I encountered case files frequently in 2010–11 as I conducted fieldwork on the reemergence of the social work profession in Vietnam. Several decades earlier, the government had deemed social work a bourgeois "Band-Aid" unnecessary in a socialist society destined to eliminate the economic inequality that caused poverty and other forms of individual or family distress. With the development of market socialism, however, the government acknowledged that inequality was on the rise and, with it, social problems such as poverty, drug addiction, homelessness, and child abandonment. Official attitudes toward social work shifted to view it as a scientific means of addressing dilemmas of modernization and industrialization, culminating in the announcement in 2010 that the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs planned to train 60,000 cadres in social work by 2020. The story of Vietnamese social work thus provides a lens through which to consider connections between changing notions of personhood, visions of the family as a moral and economic unit, and shifting configurations of political economy.

To explore these issues, I conducted six months of participant-observation with social work students and faculty at a major university in Ho Chi Minh City. I audited introductory classes with second-year students to understand how they perceived the field. I also followed advanced students as they completed required practicum placements with local government welfare organizations or domestic and transnational NGOs. The final assignment for the practicum was to submit a case file for one particular client. The result of months of observation and interviewing, completing the forms and questionnaires in the file would serve as the crucial first step in working with individuals and families to resolve their issues. The case file was thus both an authoritative assessment of a client's situation and personal qualities and proof of the neophyte social worker's professional expertise.

The other documents on my desk—the lý lịch and Cultured Family self-assessment checklist—stem from my earlier research (1994–2010) among women market traders. Many had found themselves on the losing side of the war, but by the 1990s they were experiencing an increase in economic, if not political, status. Their memories of the concrete consequences of possessing "bad" lý lịch highlighted the stakes of knowledge production about the individual. Even as many of the women I know resisted state-sponsored self-assessment forms and campaigns such as the "Cultured Family" as oppressive, I found that the process of generating these documents informed their subjectivities, particularly in terms of how they articulate their pasts and envision their relationships to family, society, and state.

Three distinct periods. Three separate documents. Three different approaches to an expert technology of the self. Yet, just as they sit side by side on my desk, they can be coincident in people's lives, provoking consideration of the relationship between them. A first set of related questions is ethnographic. How are these forms used? How are the completing and submitting of such documents also processes of subject formation in which one becomes knowable to one's self and others? How might these logics of selfhood be employed, transposed, or resisted in other contexts? A second set of questions is genealogical. What logics gave rise to these particular forms at particular moments in Vietnamese experience? What forms of expertise originating from what sources motivate them? How do these forms relate to each other? Did the lý lịch somehow give rise to the case file? Does the newer technology make sense because it draws on aspects of the older? Or is the newer document a reaction against earlier forms?

By attending to both the ethnographic and genealogical contexts of documentation, in this article I consider how the production of new regimes of political economy occurs quite literally through the creation of new "forms"

of selfhood that acquire authority precisely because they draw on prior documentary conventions, each of which has also incorporated transnational forms of expertise. Such an anthropology of documentation views forms as simultaneously ideological (revealing what information merits eliciting and which answers are "right") and material (as physical traces, their circulation links or divides, withholds or mobilizes resources). Fetishlike, forms can constitute reality, but they can also inscribe new forms of agency as they travel transnationally and locally and between individuals and official experts.

Tracing the circulation of forms of selfhood in Vietnam also highlights points of continuity that disrupt triumphalist narratives that neoliberalism and the market have displaced socialism there. The social work practices of knowledge production that many in Vietnam, including practitioners and government officials, tout as "new" and "modern," in fact, share with socialism particular technologies of individual assessment and a faith in the application of technical expertise about the person, family, and society to achieve desired political-economic outcomes. This commonality also suggests the ongoing and crucial, albeit circumscribed, role of the Vietnamese state in fostering individual dispositions and familial relationships as desirable moral goods that will, in turn, generate growth. Finally, it points to the ways in which both socialist and market-socialist governmentality, in the specific guise of personal assessment documents, can be adapted to constitute individual subjectivity in other contexts.

Toward a genealogical ethnography of documentation

Bruno Latour declared the file or the record to be "the most despised of all ethnographic objects" (1990:54). To understand this characterization, one need only consider the prominent role documents such as identity cards, police files, and dossiers have played in repressive regimes. As Michel Foucault famously described, case files seem inherently suited for nefarious purposes, as they make possible the "'formalization' of the individual within power relations" (1977:190) by amassing disparate personal data points to generate detailed, collective, and authoritative depictions of populations. Several recent studies bear out this point by exploring how documents can inculcate new ways of seeing and being through their ideological association with valorized forms of modernity or scientific rationality and through their physical insertion in corridors of power, where they acquire talismanic ability to determine reality by seeming only to describe it (Hetherington 2011; Hull 2012; Strassler 2010). To give but a few examples: Dossiers in the Argentine Supreme Court serve as "the venues of knowledge-making; that is to say, that which counts as knowledge is actually what is *in* the files" (Barrera

2008:6). A recently opened police archive in Guatemala contains crusty *fichas* (identity cards) with handwritten notations of political affiliations, thus leaving no doubt that the cards served as tools of surveillance and ideological control (Weld 2012; see also Nelson 2009). Similarly, in Indonesia, the identity card of Suharto's New Order regime, "with its reduction of the individual to a rigidly conventionalized system of representation, enacts the fantasy that human subjects can be measured, known, archived, and thereby controlled by the state" (Strassler 2010:130).

Alongside these coercive effects, recent ethnographic studies also highlight documents' acquisition of power through interpretation, with unexpected outcomes. Because documents cannot speak for themselves, "governing paper is central to governing the city. And paper is also the means by which residents acquiesce to, contest, or use this governance" (Hull 2012:1; see also Hetherington 2011). It follows, therefore, that what seems a top-down exercise of governmentality can be disrupted: If individuals or groups can insert themselves into circuits of documentary transmission and reading, they can use files to wage struggles for recognition and rights. Soon-to-be displaced victims of urban development in Ho Chi Minh City can amass paperwork to document land tenure and demand higher compensation (Harms 2012). Patients can compile their own medical records so that they can more easily get treatment at a public health clinic in Mozambique (McKay 2012). Campesinos in Paraguay can become "guerrilla auditors," tracking the movement of land titles to document unjust appropriation and mobilize the production of new documents to shape courses of future action (Hetherington 2011). As Matthew S. Hull (2012) argues in his study of graphic artifacts in Pakistan, this disruptive potential is inherent in the technology of the file. As folders and sheets of paper travel through bureaucratic circuits, individuals' recommendations and actions leave material traces in the form of sticky notes or marginalia. These additions would seem to record individual responsibility, but they, in fact, diffuse it by rendering authorship ambiguous, thus making it possible for other authors to insert other claims. Bureaucratic classification is an act of reification, but it is also a labile social practice of contestation and negotiation (Herzfeld 1992:67; see also Brenneis 2006; Harper 1998; Riles 2006).

The purported tyrannical hegemony of forms is disrupted even further if we consider what happens when forms travel outside standard bureaucratic channels to participate in a broader "culture of documentation" (Strassler 2010). The identity cards that the New Order used as a basis for surveillance continued to get deployed in other contexts, such as personal photo albums, funeral portraits, or memory books exchanged by schoolchildren (Strassler 2010). A warrant cover with its blanks only cursorily filled in inspires inmates in a Papua New Guinea jail to produce their own

"autographs" that mimic the aesthetic conventions of the official form but insert new personalized content to become souvenirs of incarceration (Reed 2006). As I discuss below, lý lịch in Vietnam similarly provided a model for the composition of personal narratives that followed the conventions of the standardized form yet exceeded its parameters.

Such studies begin to realize the promise that motivated Latour's (1990) own call to attend to these erstwhile "despised" ethnographic objects. What Latour termed "inscriptions" can render things both fixed and mobile. These "immutable mobiles" condense information in a concrete form so that it can be transmitted to other locations in ways that draw people into relationships and alliances. Housed in bureaucratic centers of calculation, inscriptions can be coercively authoritative, but they also might serve as resources for other interpretive schemes, forms of action, and community formation. The anthropology of documentation has thus been exemplary in tracing the movement of files temporally and spatially as ideological and material objects to consider what motivates people to record things, what the technology of recording permits to be recorded, and how that interaction constitutes what counts as knowable or legitimate within and beyond specific circuits of documentation.

What is less clear in anthropological studies of documentation is how particular forms have come to be in the first place, or how, in Latour's words, "someone convinces someone else to take up a statement, to pass it along, to make it more of a fact, and to recognize the first author's ownership and originality" (1990:23). How do inscriptions acquire their authoritativeness? How does one form of inscription generate cognitive abilities or dispositions that give rise to other technologies of inscription? Addressing these questions requires constructing a genealogy of the forms themselves. Put differently, it requires that we relate these objects not just to the networks of human beings who create and circulate them but also to each other as elements within a universe of forms. In the discussion that follows, I demonstrate the utility of this approach for understanding a form such as the social work case file as an ethnographic object produced under specific circumstances, both in terms of regimes of political economy that prompt the construction and valorization of particular approaches to the self and in terms of the experiences of those who use this technology by designing and completing standardized forms. But such ethnographic understanding remains incomplete unless we also trace the case file as a textual artifact whose form and content emerge from a genealogical relationship to other technologies of knowledge with which it is implicitly in dialogue. It is through engaging with and adapting techniques from prior forms of documentation that an apparently novel genre of individual inscription acquires authority by being simultaneously innovative yet familiar enough to seem self-evident.

The social work case file

In the late 1980s, the Vietnamese government began a series of initiatives known as Đổi Mới (Renovation) to promote market-oriented growth and attract transnational investment. Although market socialism has made progress toward these goals, its various "-izations"— globalization, industrialization, urbanization, modernization, commoditization—are also blamed for growing inequality and a rise in "social problems" *(vấn đề xã hội)* such as rural and urban poverty, prostitution, drug addiction, and child abuse or neglect (see, e.g., Võ Thuấn 2005:37–38). Proponents of social work argue that these developments have weakened the economic and moral capacity of the traditional Vietnamese family and see strengthening this unit as the particular mission of social work. As the head of the social work program at a university in Ho Chi Minh City told students in the introductory class, Vietnam faces the very same problems that Western countries experienced with their own development a century earlier. In pursuing the "-izations," Vietnam therefore needed to follow the solution that those Western countries had themselves devised: a program of social work that could function as "a mechanism to promote equality." The Vietnamese government seemed to agree, with the Ministry of Education and Training adopting a national social work curriculum in 2004. Six years later, the prime minister approved a ten-year plan to develop the profession throughout the country.

Although supportive of these efforts, the practicing and academic social workers I know were also concerned that their field's rapid expansion would dilute its quality. They eagerly sought to secure their field's professional status by highlighting the scientific foundation of their assessment techniques—a move that also served to distinguish social work from mere charity.[3] Emphasizing the science of social work, university courses introduced psychological theories of human behavior and structural accounts of social problems. Students learned to apply these concepts through concrete steps of information gathering, assessment, diagnosis, and collaborative goal setting with clients. Students also memorized the field's ethical principles, such as confidentiality and nonjudgmental acceptance of the client. Meanwhile, the profession's emotional and interpersonal demands were acknowledged by requiring practicum students to keep diaries and attend group supervision sessions so that they might work through their more subjective reactions to casework.

When faced with actual clients, however, students had a hard time sensing that problems such as drug addiction were not primarily the result of poor morality or choices— an attitude reinforced by the government's long-standing condemnation of "social evils" *(tệ nạn xã hội)*. They also struggled with seeing family as both cause of and solution to a client's problems, as the following example illustrates:

Students interning with a transnational NGO met a young woman who had been sexually abused as a child by her father's drinking buddy. Now homeless, she was addicted to heroin, working in the sex industry, and mother to an infant that she had almost relinquished for adoption. The NGO's team sought to reunite her with her family, arguing that the only long-term solution lay in reintegrating her into the family system. In discussions with several groups of social work students, it became clear to me that two principles of Vietnamese social work knowledge—empowering individuals to solve their own problems and strengthening families—might be in conflict. I asked one group whether the concept of empowering the individual *(cá nhân)* might reflect social work's western European and North American origins and, hence, be too "individualistic" for Vietnam. After some hesitation, one student ventured that the goal of social work was to empower the individual so that he or she might assume a proper social role. Heads nodded as the student continued to describe the concept of the individual in Vietnam as relational rather than autonomous, so that one could not be individually empowered without being a part of a family or other social group. The key to social work intervention, then, was to reintegrate the individual or family within a specific social context by documenting how that context had broken down and where opportunities to reconstruct it might lie.

Providing precisely this form of documentation was the main purpose of the social work case file *(hồ sơ xã hội)*. As noted above, creating such a file was the final requirement for the first semester of the advanced practicum.[4] A series of courses introduced students to a diverse arsenal of assessment tools, principles of data collection, theories of human behavior, and models of environmental influence. Students could freely choose from these techniques and a range of formats, but typical case files included the following documents:

- Intake Form (Phiếu Đánh giá Ban đầu): initial presentation of client's problems and basic details such as gender, age, educational level, place of birth, employment, family circumstances, and health history;
- Outreach to Understand Client Needs (Tiếp nhận Tìm hiểu Vấn đề và Nhu cầu của Thân chủ): detailed reports of conversations and observation with the client and with members of the client's family or community;
- SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats relevant to the client's situation;
- Case Narrative and Client Biography (Tiểu sử Cá nhân): details on family, childhood development, current life circumstances, education, illness, criminal history, social and recreational activities, and religion;
- Eco-Map (Biểu đồ Sinh thái): a graphic representation locating the client within various social relationships and networks (Appendix C);

- Assessment (Đánh giá): social worker's diagnosis and findings;
- Intervention Plan (Kế hoạch Can thiệp): specific steps the social worker and client will take, including SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-Bound).

Completing the forms calls on social workers not merely to provide detail but to develop logical assessments of the causes of a client's problems that will be amenable to resolution through the specific, concrete steps proposed toward the end of the file. Fact and judgment mingle. For example, one student working at a charity school for children unable to attend state schools located her client on the intake form as follows:

> 10 year old boy … Academically behind … Lacks love … Moved from official to charity school … Doesn't live with his biological family. He finishes his work at school at 10am, but stays all afternoon because he doesn't want to return home.[5] He's now living near the school in a house with two old people whom he calls maternal grandparents, but they're just people that his father found to rent him a place to live. This "grandmother" hits him, doesn't love him, takes his money. She cares much more for another child she is raising. This other child harms the client, but he can't do anything about it because the grandmother will hurt him.
>
> His development was normal, but his mother didn't pay much attention to her child's psychological changes … He lives in a family whose method of care is hit and scold. This makes the child afraid and angry. It is a method stemming from deterrence and prohibition, not love.

In presenting information from interviews with the client, his family, teachers, and neighbors, the social work student chronicles the boy's displacement from a seemingly normal family in which he was the much-loved youngest child to his current status as a boarder expected to do housework, subjected to verbal and physical assault, and prohibited from playing. Although his biological mother lives nearby, she focuses on the new family she has formed with a different husband. Given that the boy's father arranged the current living situation, the student believes the mother to be unaware of his day-to-day circumstances. As a result, the boy "is not getting the services that a child needs, and he's not getting development with respect to education."

On a different form, the child's environment is described as "complicated, with many social evils that have a significant influence on him." He wants to study but has been "infected by habits of wandering, fighting, being irritable, and shouting obscenities. After this, if he's not able to remain in a learning environment, it will be easy for him to fall into the social evil activities of his neighborhood."

No member of the immediate or extended family yet "realizes the importance of family for a child. They simply think of bringing him somewhere for care, even if the child isn't treated well. There's no clear method to resolve or intervene in the client's situation."

The SWOT form lists the numerous challenges faced by this child. "The father is a wanderer who won't let the boy return home to his mother out of fear that the new husband is hurting the child … The mother is illiterate, says little, shows only limited emotion and seems resigned to the situation." Informed of the social worker's assessment of her son's living arrangement, the mother does not say much. The social worker suspects that the boy's father has prohibited her from getting involved. Another challenge comes from the father's gambling, which has involved the boy's elder siblings and "exposed him at an impressionable age to an environment of 'social evils'" populated by his loved ones.

The intervention plan outlines the goals that the social worker wishes to achieve:

- Get the boy to live with a family member, immediate or extended, who will love him. To be accomplished by meeting with family members.
- Help him with legal documents so he can continue to study. To be accomplished through working with parents and providing tutoring two times per week so that the boy can return to grade-level.
- Counsel him so he can cope with his circumstances if they can't be changed. To be accomplished through weekly counseling sessions.
- Help him to study martial arts or swimming, which he says he likes and which will increase his focus, discipline, and confidence. To be accomplished by talking to parents.
- Help family members to understand the importance of family to provide a child with appropriate support.

One item missing from this case file, but often included in others I read, was a checklist characterizing the client's appearance and behavior, intelligence, speech, psychological state, and level of self-awareness. For example, for psychological state, the social worker could circle any of the following: "normal," "depressed," "anxious," "excessively happy," "consistent with emotional state," or "opposed to emotional state."

Neoliberal technologies of self?

It is hard to read this particular social work case file without being moved by the multiple, intertwining dislocations that can cause one person or family so much hardship. One also senses the struggles of the neophyte social worker as she seeks to help by setting feasible priorities for intervention. As she spoke with me about the process, she described feeling overwhelmed, unsure where to begin, and cognizant of how little she knew about the concrete steps to take. This lends the document a conjectural tone, as she strives to determine cause and effect relations to explain the boy's distress. She also struggles to reconcile structural and individualized explanations: The mother seems willfully ignorant or blithely unconcerned about her son's welfare, but the social worker suspects that she is a victim of gendered ideologies that simultaneously exempt men from providing financially or emotionally for other men's children yet expect women to have partners to provide for them. Women made single in middle age, especially those with few resources, often have to choose between children and mate.

Despite such complexity, it is tempting to interpret the case file, in both content and form, as an example of the proliferation of neoliberal logics. There has been significant debate about exactly what *neoliberalism* means, to the point that the term risks becoming an analytically vacant "black box" (Schwegler 2008:682). Nevertheless, I find it useful for indicating how particular logics associated with the marketplace have crossed the boundaries of the strictly economic to morph into broader moral claims about ways of being that dictate the supposedly proper conduct of persons, groups, and states in other domains. As Christina Schwenkel and I argue elsewhere, these logics can involve such processes as "the transfer of aspects of governance from the state to private, corporate, or transnational entities; the proliferation of market logics of efficiency, efficacy, and profitability as the yardsticks for assessing health, aesthetics, or government performance; and the conflation between market behaviors and appropriate forms of moral personhood" (Schwenkel and Leshkowich 2012:382).

The social work student implicitly refers to exactly such neoliberal logics when she suggests that parents should seek to provide the kind of nurturing environment and investment in their child's development that will improve his quality. The boy, in turn, needs to develop habits of concentration and discipline so that he can succeed in school and progress toward stable employment away from the deleterious environment of social evils that have ensnared his close relatives. Although much of the discussion is about emotional nurture, the logic of its rational application to maximize benefit so that the child can grow up to contribute to society seems to reference market logics of calculative action and utility. As Nikolas Rose points out, the family may be treated in a market context as a site of voluntary lifestyle, but it is also "familialized": "valorized once more as a mechanism for stabilizing the passions of adults, responsibilizing the parent as a wage earner and instilling the rules of moral order and ethical comportment into children" (1999:266). Familialization, along with the forms of selfhood individual family members are enjoined to cultivate, has propelled a global rise in social, self-help, and mental health experts schooled in transnational knowledge, of which the social

workers in Vietnam are but one example (Matza 2009:492; Nguyễn-võ 2008:79; Ong 2006:3; Rose 1999:149).

Although the social worker viewed the context for dislocations that the child is experiencing as structural (the "-izations"), the case file individualizes them. Structure recedes, having no direct place in the narration of the boy's story. Foregrounded instead are the individual acts that led to this boy being separated from his family and lacking the affective care that family should provide. The solution then becomes a depoliticized technical intervention to change the family's actions and morality rather than an effort to achieve broader socioeconomic transformation (Li 2007:7). This outcome is to be achieved through the intervention of experts, "concerned professionals seeking to allay the problems, anxieties and uncertainties engendered by the seemingly so perplexing conditions of our present" (Rose 1999:87). In short, the social worker seems motivated to find a way to "responsibilize" both the boy and his parents through the adoption of particular aspirations and anxieties so that they can appropriately self-regulate. And the techniques through which this is to be done—SWOT and SMART, themselves adapted from transnational pop-cultural management psychology—suggest the quintessentially neoliberal proposition that the standards of the market can be used to optimize outcomes in other domains of human experience and action.

As neoliberal as this may seem, Andrew Kipnis has recently cautioned that the three main features of neoliberalism identified by Rose and that I have used to structure the analysis above—"governing from a distance, calculability, and the promotion of self-activating, disciplined individuated subjects—can be found in a variety of governing cultures that are historically quite distant from anything associated with Western neoliberal or even liberal governing philosophies" (2008:283). Kipnis calls for greater ethnographic research into apparently neoliberal situations to counter the diffusionist tendency to see neoliberalism as emanating from the West and now globally ascendant. In his account of educational audits in China, for example, practices that seem neoliberal to Western scholars of governmentality appear fundamentally socialist to those implementing them. Likewise, Vietnamese social workers creating case files would see themselves not as extending market rationality through a helping profession but as providing relief from it. This viewpoint does not preclude the possibility that the outcome of their efforts is an entrenchment of market logics into the domain of the family, but it does suggest the dynamics of this knowledge economy to be more complicated.

Just as we need to question the origin of the logics that motivate social work, so too must we interrogate the forms in which these logics proliferate. Which brings me to what I found most surprising in my fieldwork with social work students, faculty, and practitioners: their ready acceptance
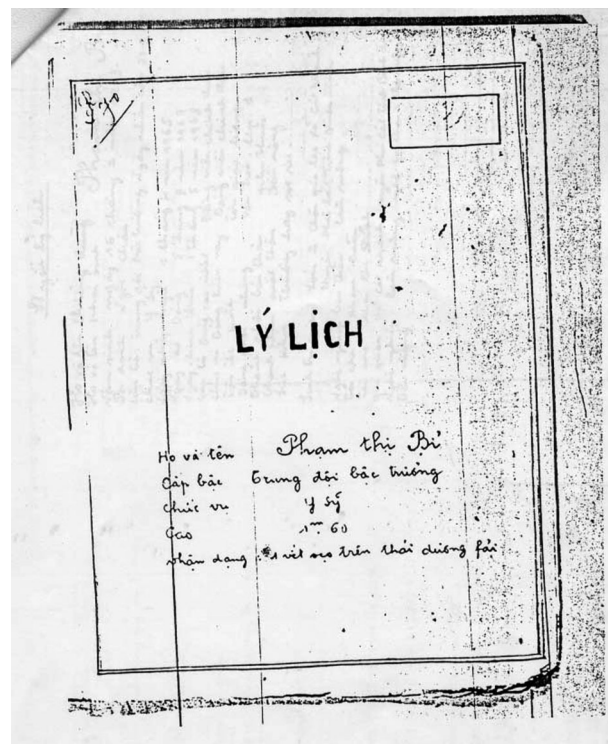

Figure 1. The cover of a wartime lý lịch (autobiographical statement). Source: Combined Document Exploitation Center, Saigon: Captured documents from the Vietnam War, 1966–1973, Joiner Center, University of Massachusetts, Boston.

of the relatively novel format of a social work case file as an authoritative, scientific representation of the causes of a person's distress and a technique for assessing the effectiveness of different interventions to resolve it. How did the social work case file, a peculiar document with a particular history of emergence in western Europe and North America, acquire authority in Vietnam as a technology of self? To address this question, I need to return to the two other documents sitting on my desk: the autobiographical statement and the Cultured Family self-assessment checklist.

Lý lịch

The lý lịch autobiographical statement has been used in Vietnam as a socialist tool of classification to make the population legible through state categories of economic and political class. Such legibility was the first step in implementing a system of class restructuring through reform, reward, and punishment. First adopted by the Việt Minh during the war of resistance to French colonialism, lý lịch became a regular feature of life in the independent North after 1954 and of the Việt Cộng movement in the South (Figures 1 and 2). After the end of the war in 1975, these documents were crucial to the economic and political reckoning of the "high socialist" years as the basis for classifying

Figure 2. The inside of a wartime lý lịch, with information about the author's wartime activities, party service, family background, political activities, and class status. Source: Combined Document Exploitation Center, Saigon: Captured documents from the Vietnam War, 1966–1973, Joiner Center, University of Massachusetts, Boston.

southerners in political terms as supporters or opponents of the revolution and in economic terms by documenting their peasant, worker, or bourgeois capitalist origins. It was these postwar lý lịch that were familiar to the urban southerners I know. For example, in the mid-1990s, traders in Ho Chi Minh City's central marketplace explained to me that their "bad lý lịch" *(lý lịch xấu)*—bad class or political histories—prevented them from getting jobs in the state sector and their children from accessing education. While peasants or workers may never have had to submit a lý lịch, the female traders I know—women who typically came from preliberation middle-class backgrounds and had family histories that the state viewed with suspicion—talked about lý lịch as a ubiquitous presence in their postwar lives. Lý lịch determined the fate of their property, their employment, their freedom, and their educations, and those of their children's and grandchildren's generations as well.

In today's more relaxed market-socialist environment, lý lịch must still be produced whenever one seeks to change residence or jobs, apply to school, open a business, or receive permission to travel abroad. While those with "bad" life histories are no longer punished by the government, writers of lý lịch still take care that they craft their life stories to reveal meritorious devotion to the nation and to improving themselves to become proper socialist citizens.[6]

What types of knowledge about the person are generated through these forms? Often translated as "résumé" or "personal history statement," the lý lịch is a more detailed life account than the English terms imply. Written in a small individual notebook or folded sheets of paper and sealed with a picture and signature, the lý lịch requires one to answer questions not just about one's self but about one's family—parents, siblings, children, and spouse. Information includes dates and locations of birth, places of residence, details of what the individual and family members did for or against the revolution, occupational histories, and educational levels. Narrative sections ask the individual to describe his or her life from childhood to the

present with a particular focus on revolutionary and reactionary activities, to account for family and individual socioeconomic status, and to provide an assessment of personal strengths and weaknesses. Market traders told me that this focus on family connections was used to monitor and punish the relatives of those who had fled the country or who had been placed in reeducation camps. Later, after multiple versions of the lý lịch had been produced, officials could choose to scrutinize the lý lịch of questionable individuals for consistency. Inconsistencies were not attributed to memory lapses but were viewed as evidence that one had something to hide.[7] Follow-up investigations were conducted to reveal the truth of one's background to determine appropriate reeducation or punishment.

The logic and form of lý lịch have their origins in the Soviet revolution, when the personal history form *(lichnyi listok)* appears to have been used in a party purge in 1921. After that, such forms were used to help identify "deprived" classes of traders, clergy, and kulaks, most notably during the 1930s dekulakization campaigns and issuing of internal passports (Fitzpatrick 1993). Like their counterparts in Vietnam, Soviet written life histories from the 1930s onward asked respondents to provide "every possible circumstance bearing on social identity," including family information. Depending on the political climate, individuals could be held responsible for the negative backgrounds and activities of their relatives (Fitzpatrick 1993:764; see also Yurchak 2006:264). The forms were typically supplemented by oral reports (Terry Martin, personal communication, March 2001). Although still in use in the 1980s, the forms had become anachronistic and vulnerable to parody, for they "created the possibilities and constraints for being a Soviet person but no longer described what a Soviet person was" (Yurchak 2006:286).

Similar forms were used in China, although low literacy rates appear to have made them less important than oral statements or public "speak bitterness" sessions. According to Lisa Rofel, speaking bitterness made telling a life story "a self-conscious political act with concrete, material ramifications" (1999:14). She describes the experience as a process of "interpellation," which "led people to conceive of themselves as new kinds of subjects, as subaltern subjects" (Rofel 1999:14).[8]

Although adapted from other socialist countries, lý lịch's method of scrutinizing the person through a dual process of self-confession and examination of family history was not a novel one in Vietnam. For centuries, Vietnamese Buddhist monks and Confucian scholars had composed their life histories. Prominent Buddhist monks nearing the end of their lives typically wrote autobiographical poems to distill lessons for their disciples (Nguyen Trieu Dan 1991:11). Confucian scholars kept elaborate genealogies to trace the glory of their patrilines as evidence of

their descendants' present merit. Descendants also bore the burden of their forebears' misdeeds. In the Chinese examination system, which formed the basis for the Vietnamese bureaucracy, five guarantors had to vouch for the potential candidate's morality, among other things confirming that the previous three generations of his family had not been "rebels or practitioners of mean professions, like brothel keeping" (Woodside 1988:177).

Similarly, misdeeds in the present could cast a shadow over one's ancestors and descendants, with certain crimes carrying the punishment of destruction of ancestral tombs and execution of living family members in three or, in the case of high treason, as many as nine categories of kinship, including grandparents, parents, adult children, adult grandchildren, siblings, uncles, and aunts. As a result, when the socialist government asked cadres to report on the activities and socioeconomic status of not just themselves but also their relatives, and when it required individuals to assess their personal merits within the overall context of their families' behavior, it drew on centuries of entrenched Confucian familial morality, which inextricably bound the fate and talent of the individual to that of the family through ties of mutual responsibility and interdependence.

To return to the context of my fieldwork with female market traders in the 1990s, I would soon learn that, as much as they despised lý lịch, the process of completing these forms could shape how individuals constructed and presented a sense of self. Shortly before I returned to the United States, I received a call from Đại Hải, a woman whose family ran several upscale boutiques. With no preamble, she declared, "I've finished writing it and am at the main store. Can you come by and pick it up?" The "it" that Đại Hải had finished writing was her life history. I had first met Đại Hải six months earlier. Her main shop was one of the nicest in downtown Ho Chi Minh City, with ample supplies of various types of silk woven and decorated according to Đại Hải's own designs. She told me that the design innovations were the result of trips to France and Germany with her sister to market their fashions and learn about the latest international trends.

Over the next few months, I spent a number of days speaking with Đại Hải at the shop and observing her conduct business. Our casual conversations, as Đại Hải checked her inventory or completed a transaction, suggested that, while she was younger than other successful traders I had met, her life had followed a similar pattern. She casually mentioned details such as her father's service as a South Vietnamese Air Force pilot, his training in the United States, and her mother's struggle to find a source of livelihood after 1975. She also spoke with pride about her sister's business acumen and her siblings' cooperation in expanding the business. Yet Đại Hải also surprised me by wistfully commenting that her life was not

the one she would have planned for herself. She said that she would much prefer being able to stay home with her young son and that running a shop demanded that she be simultaneously more aggressive and more submissive than she considered appropriate. She described herself and her family as "traditional" but forced to adapt to post-1975 circumstances.

Đại Hải's comments intrigued me, and I invited her to meet me outside the shop for a life history interview. She demurred, joking that all the questions would "give me a headache." About ten days before I was to return to the United States, Đại Hải suggested that if I really wanted to know the history of her family and her business, she would be happy to write it for me. Suspecting this to be a polite way to put me off without a direct refusal, I told her that I would leave it to her to write about the aspects of her life that she felt might be most interesting to me.

It was therefore with surprise that I received Đại Hải's call informing me that "it" was ready. I hopped on my bike and rushed over to her shop. After we exchanged pleasantries and farewell gifts, Đại Hải handed me her life history. She had used an inexpensive pupil's theme notebook—the kind that is mass-produced out of recycled paper and features cartoon characters on the front and back covers. This one had pictures of the Japanese teenaged superheroine Sailor Moon. At the end, she affixed a picture and signed her name, as if marking the document as authentic and official (Figure 3).

The structural resemblance between Đại Hải's voluntarily produced life story and the lý lịch that she and her family members had completed for officials was uncanny. Much as Strassler (2010) found with identity documents in Indonesia and Adam Reed (2006) observed with warrant records in Papua New Guinea jails, the state-mandated lý lịch that constrained the form and content of official personal histories could provide frameworks for compelling accounts of personal experience in other, more voluntaristic contexts. Đại Hải's booklet made me realize that the required submission of lý lịch represented the first time in Vietnamese history that women, in particular, were systematically asked to write about their lives. While many resented having to do so, lý lịch told them that their stories mattered and gave them categories of knowledge through which they could begin to order and represent their experiences to themselves and others. Dominant narrative tropes that were felt to be repressive in one context were productive of subjectivities that enabled self-representation elsewhere, in ways that both confirmed state notions of personhood and could subtly demonstrate how the authors' lives had departed from government-sanctioned blueprints. To give just one example, Đại Hải's narrative turned the revolutionary ethic of sacrifice on its head by blaming the state for requiring her to give up too much.
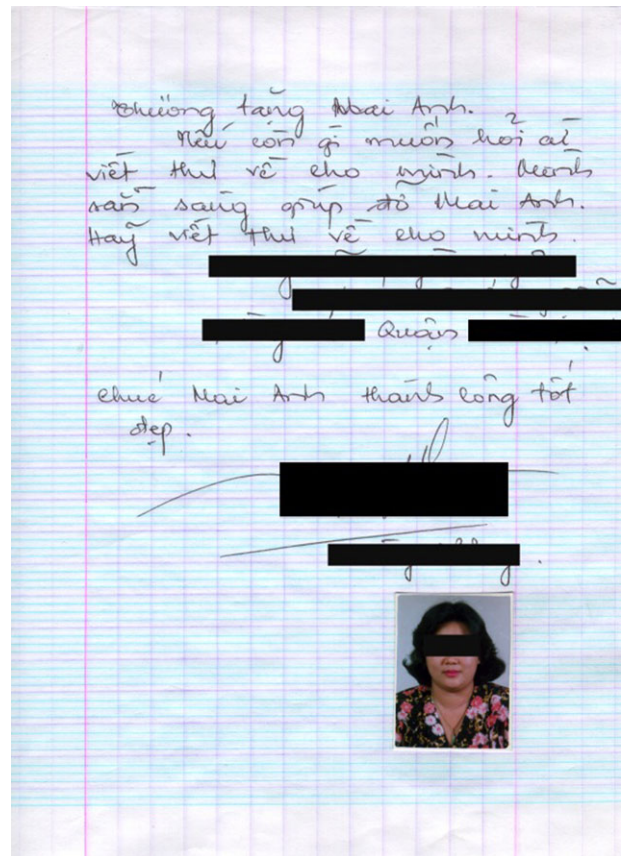

Figure 3. The last page of Đại Hải's life story (identifying information concealed). Source: Gift to the author, June 1997.

Just as state-mandated narrative forms could travel to other contexts, prior experience with lý lịch might work to make the social work case file, although a novel genre, seem an appropriate, commonsensical way to generate and assess knowledge about the person. Individuals' histories are narrated to produce a legible self, one whose existence owes as much to family and environmental context as to some kind of internal locus of identity. These accounts then become endowed with the authority to justify subsequent intervention intended to enable a person to become the kind of self valorized within a particular configuration of political economy. There is an important difference, however, between the lý lịch and the case file as technologies. Lý lịch were self-produced, with the implication that the process of examining one's life through this form was itself a means of becoming through the internalization of particular socialist norms and values. The case file, in contrast, locates creative agency with the social worker, for it is the expert who narrates and assesses the depicted self. The process of authorial production would seem, therefore, to work against social work's stated mission of empowering individuals to solve their own problems, an irony to which I return in the conclusion.

Cultured Family self-assessment checklist

Whereas lý lịch presented (and, in doing so, functioned as a technology to construct) the socialist self by anchoring it within a familial and political-economic context, a second common document has been used more recently in Vietnam to prompt individuals to evaluate their families as particular kinds of social, economic, and affective units. As part of a broad and ongoing "Cultured Family" campaign, a self-assessment checklist presents criteria for families to achieve in four areas: family relationships, material and intellectual life, community relations, and civic responsibilities (Appendix B). The concept of the "Cultured Family" (Gia đình Văn hóa) originated with agricultural collectivization in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (northern Vietnam) in 1962. Through the performance of collective labor, practice of good hygiene, and conformity to party policies, the Cultured Family would play a pivotal role in promoting socialist modernity and creating socialist citizens (Drummond 2004:164–165). It was thus intimately linked to earlier campaigns begun by Hồ Chí Minh in the 1940s to construct a New Way of Life centered on the New Socialist Person (Drummond 2004:162). The New Socialist Person, in turn, had been adapted from similar campaigns in the Soviet Union that had emphasized a cultural revolution centered on secularization, the promotion of education and literacy, and the redesign of living spaces to change family relationships from bourgeois to communal (Scott 1998:195). As in the Soviet Union, the self-help pamphlets produced for Vietnam's New Way of Life campaign barely mentioned family relations. If anything, family was a barrier to individuals' forging of direct relationships with the socialist collective (Drummond 2004:162–163). By the 1960s, however, the focus shifted to affirm the centrality of families in creating socialist persons and in contributing to the construction of socialist economic and political relations.

Over the past 50 years, the campaign has undergone subsequent shifts. In the 1980s, the Cultured Family focused on family planning, with citizens urged to limit their children to one or two. During the 1990s, the issue of ideal family size morphed into one of family quality, paralleling developments in China, where the One Child Policy increasingly emphasized the concept of investing in the population's quality *(suzhi)* (Anagnost 1995; Fong 2004; Kipnis 2006). Although family planning remains important in Vietnam, calls for families to cultivate certain affective attributes—being harmonious, happy, and actively engaged in relations with neighbors—have come to the fore (Drummond 2004:165–166). Red banners draped over streets testify that particular alleyways and neighborhoods have successfully attained quotas for the number of families certified as "cultured." The campaign also focuses on wives–mothers as crucial caregivers for the physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being of husbands and children in the midst of the dislocations caused by globalization and commodification (Drummond 2004; Gammeltoft 1999; Pettus 2003; Rydstrøm and Drummond 2004).

The term for "culture" *(văn hóa)* carries a rich, shifting semantic load, on which I can touch only briefly here. In current prevailing usage, the term is normative and hierarchical. It indexes certain qualities or attributes that individuals or social groups should possess, such as education, refinement, and appropriate comportment. People can therefore have or not have culture.[9] Although reflecting long-standing concern in revolutionary circles about the particular merits of Vietnamese culture, especially in its traditional, mass, or folk forms, it also is consistent with the notions of culturedness, or *kul'turnost,* promoted in the Soviet Union. Often used to justify the vanguard status of the intelligentsia, culturedness suggested a correlation between "good intentions, respect for others, interest in high culture, education, and status" (Patico 2008:50).

The Cultured Family self-assessment checklist betrays neither these details of history nor shifts in meaning. Rather, as checklists typically do, it offers a seemingly objective description of a Cultured Family, broken down into constituent thematic areas with their own benchmarks. One is asked to rate one's family according to these criteria, a process that both suggests the existence of definite standards somewhere out there and requires that one adopt an externalized gaze to decide how one's own experience measures up. One's responses produce a verdict about whether one's family is or is not cultured. Family life is reduced to a formula. The checklist thus seems yet another example of socialist mass mobilization that enacts assessment through "counting the points" (MacLean 2012).

Although a fascinating document, the self-assessment checklist by itself says little about the circumstances of its production or its use as part of a nested series of dialogic trainings and evaluations. Signed by the "head of household," typically a husband–father, the checklist is, in fact, supposed to spark a collaborative conversation, both within a family and between family representatives and other community members and leaders. The criteria are also not, in fact, self-evident. Local leaders and families have had to be trained to know what such items as "proper behavior," equality and harmony between husband and wife, or "implementing community conventions" might mean. An arsenal of cultural production buttresses the checklist: Bookstores offer manuals on child development and family relationships; television programs depict newly prosperous middle-class families with children seduced by the pleasures of an urban market economy; advice columns counsel women in the subtleties of companionate marriage and sexual techniques;[10] contests test children's knowledge of what a family should be. Finally, the document reveals nothing about its subsequent use. Once completed (and perhaps revised), it is tabulated with others to produce statistics.

These are then displayed through certificates, banners, and progress reports tracking how many wards or communes have achieved quotas for families certified as cultured.

The Cultured Family campaign has rendered the family a technical unit to be developed in particular ways in service of national development goals. It does so by adapting a production metaphor to the purposes of social engineering, with benchmarks for assessment and quotas to be achieved by unit. Although some of these outcomes are material, most are affective and moral; they address the quality of family experience rather than the number of its members or its level of income. The Cultured Family campaign thus treats the family as a moral project requiring constant vigilance and improvement of its members, even as family stability and quality have become increasingly linked to having sufficient resources to ensure proper education and health. Material wherewithal is subsequently glossed as an enterprise of moral cultivation: Work hard so that you can have an appropriate, respectable family. The logical outcome, however, is that those who have not achieved this kind of family must have something wrong with them. Poverty becomes a moral indictment. If the self-assessment checklist, and its certification by local authorities to achieve a quota, seems to render the Cultured Family a technical matter to be counted through specific points, it does so by also rendering it moral in ways that valorize the behaviors demanded by the market and that turn inequality into failures of individual morality or lack of "culture." The checklist might therefore be classified as hybrid in its use of the techniques of socialist-style mass mobilization and self-assessment to promote seemingly neoliberal development.

Writing selves in Vietnam

The emergence of the social work case file, poised to become an authoritative technology of self, would seem to confirm developments elsewhere as actually existing socialist societies become postsocialist or market socialist. There is much in this tale to support the general global trends characterized as neoliberal: "responsibilizing" individuals and populations (Rose 1999); rendering poverty or distress as technical issues to be solved through the application of expertise (Li 2007); and transferring the agency for improving the quality of life from state to individual citizens—what Daromir Rudnyckyj (2010) dubs "the afterlife of development." These transformations have produced an obsession with the self, both as a subject of individual scrutiny and reform and as a target for assessment by a host of helping professions. In formerly socialist contexts in eastern and central Europe, this "self" would seem to present a particularly dramatic transformation involving the rapid emergence of new forms of expertise, as chronicled, for example, in Tomas Matza's (2009) work on the increasingly popular industry of psychotherapy in Russia as a tool to

acquire the self-esteem and self-knowledge needed in a market economy. Other scholars note how shifts in regimes of valued knowledge force some people to engage in rapid programs of self-cultivation and training while marginalizing others for possessing outdated or irrelevant expertise (see, e.g., Boyer 2005; Ghodsee 2005; Rivkin-Fish 2009).

There is ample reason to be cautious, however, in interpreting changing technologies of self and shifting economies of expertise as a move from socialism to neoliberalism. Although Matza (2009:493) sees Russian psychotherapy as in many ways neoliberal, some of its proponents advocate technologies of self that seem more about liberal citizenship than rational choice. Even more strikingly, scholars of China have charted complicated and contradictory assemblages of seemingly neoliberal approaches to selfhood that, in fact, support or are directly connected to state-sponsored projects (see, e.g., Hoffman 2008; Ong 2006; Ong and Zhang 2008). In contrast to privatization models that depict modernization as shifting authority from state to citizens or private transnational capital, China seems to present a diversification of forms of governmentality—neoliberalism drafted into the service of socialism, or what Aihwa Ong and Li Zhang (2008) term "socialism from afar."

Although the model of socialism from afar rightly challenges oppositions between the socialist state and free market capitalism, it risks overstating the control exercised by a central state, particularly in Vietnam, where "the state" receives considerable support for its initiatives from transnational NGOs and seems as much beholden to private capital as it is the decisive agent inscribing the zones and paths of its circulation (Schwenkel and Leshkowich 2012). All the more so in a field such as social work, whose history in Vietnam has been shaped by three different regimes (French colonial, Republic of Vietnam, Socialist Republic of Vietnam), domestic and foreign universities with various relationships to state organs, state and nonstate organizations (the United Nations Development Programme, transnational child welfare NGOs, city-run urban welfare offices, private nonprofits), and religious perspectives (Catholic, Buddhist).

With these multiple trajectories, meanings, and outcomes confounding neat periodization or teleology, classifying the social work case file as neoliberal obscures more than it reveals about the dynamics of its emergence. Even if the file can justifiably be interpreted as a Weberian ideal type of neoliberal technologies of self, doing so presumes rather than traces causality. It also neglects the perspectives of those implementing this technique, most of whom view it as combating, or at least softening, market logics rather than promoting them.

In this article I have argued that understanding the case file or any other documentary technology requires tracing its composition ethnographically (its construction by

particular individuals under particular regimes of political economy) and genealogically (its relationship to prior technologies for writing selves). With respect to the three forms examined here, several points emerge from this ethnographic genealogy.

All three technologies of self—the social work case file, the lý lịch, and the Cultured Family self-assessment checklist—reflect faith in the application of technical expertise to reform the individual and family in service of desired political-economic outcomes. Rather than highlighting differences between socialism and market capitalism, they suggest an ongoing high modernist (Scott 1998) optimism in the role of science and rationality in socioeconomic actualization.

Each form works to responsibilize the self as a member of society by embedding the individual in family relationships. Although the logic motivating each form traveled to Vietnam from somewhere else (the Soviet Union for the lý lịch, China and the USSR for the Cultured Family, and western Europe and North America for the social work case file), its adaptation by Vietnamese cadres and professionals involved inserting a dynamic and mutually constitutive relationship between individual and family as basic social units. Putting aside hyperbolic, essentialist rhetoric about the family-centeredness of Vietnam or other Asian societies, this adaptive reworking suggests an ongoing project to construct the family as the basic unit for assessment and intervention in both "socialist" and "neoliberal" schemes. This project, in turn, likely has worked to naturalize state policies defining the family or household as a unit of production, first, as a member of a cooperative and, later, as an independent unit of production and consumption under market socialism.

Finally, comparing the uses to which the forms have been put complicates the teleology of a move from central control toward individual choice. The supposed ethic of neoliberalism is that of self-accountability, whereas socialism would seem to focus on accountability to the collective. The technology of the production of these forms inverts this relationship: The tools that seem most "socialist" (lý lịch and Cultured Family form) were tools of self-assessment in which one became a particular kind of individual or part of a particular kind of family through self-writing. In contrast, the production of a social work case file, although reflecting dialogue with a client, is entirely in the hands of the social worker. The professional becomes the expert producing knowledge of the self, who is, in fact, being constructed as other to the author. Whereas a lý lịch felt oppressive and disciplining to the southern market traders I know, the active process of composition provided opportunities to engage with concepts of selfhood and self-representation that could be adapted for other domains and other purposes. In contrast, the social worker's monopolization of the technology of the case file—a document whose production is supposed to serve as the basis for a program of individual empowerment—suggests that writing the individual as client and case may foreclose other forms of self-representation and the possibilities for discrepant subjectivities that they could enact.

Notes

1. The war commonly referred to outside of Vietnam as the "Vietnam War" is officially known within Vietnam as the "Anti-American Resistance War for National Salvation" *(cuộc kháng chiến chống Mỹ cứu nước)*, or "American War" for short. To many southerners, however, that term erases the fact that it was also a civil war. I follow the usage of my informants in referring to it as "the war."

2. *Transitional* does not mean that market socialism represents a middle point between socialism and capitalism. Some scholars have persuasively documented the dangers of neat teleology that depicts capitalism as inevitable and socialism as merely a detour (see, e.g., Anagnost 1997:7; Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Stark and Bruszt 1998; Verdery 1996; West and Raman 2009). Instead, I follow prevailing usage in Vietnam that characterizes the economic reforms first begun in the late 1980s as leading the country toward a desired goal of development and prosperity. In this view, *transition* signals a period of accelerated, palpable change.

3. For example, one textbook notes that the concept of "self-help" in social work is "not an act of charity, but one that aims to promote the mission of the client's system (individual, group, and community) to help them solve their own problems" (Võ Thuấn 2005:4).

4. The casework method similarly secured the field's professional legitimacy in the United States through its authoritative analysis of clients' social and economic positions (Walkowitz 1999:10).

5. Charity schools often lack the material and human resources to provide all-day instruction covering multiple subjects. At this particular school, students studied for three hours each day and focused on the core subjects of language arts and mathematics.

6. The lý lịch is still rumored to play a role in admission to university, those with "bad lý lịch" facing stricter entrance requirements or mysterious rejection.

7. Nguyen Ngoc Ngan recalls his terror on being asked to complete a second lý lịch after he had spent a year in a reeducation camp: "I knew that any variation in the form I now submitted from the one already on record would most surely result in a lot of trouble for me, perhaps even could mean that I would be sent to some harsh camp in the North. Consistency in reporting was essential" (1982:200–201).

8. For a detailed description of speaking bitterness during the 1940s, see Hinton 1966.

9. For more on the concept of "văn hóa," see Harms 2011:19–21, 213.

10. For a discussion of the appeal of scientific discourses about sexuality to middle-class Vietnamese women, see Nguyễn-võ 2008.

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Appendix A
First two pages of a lý lịch from the 1990s, original and English translation by the author

CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM
Độc Lập - Tự Do - Hạnh Phúc

SƠ YẾU LÝ LỊCH

Họ tên khai sinh : _____ Bí danh : _____
Họ tên thường dùng : _____
Ngày , tháng , năm sinh : _____
Sinh quán : _____
Trú quán : _____
Thành phần - Gia đình : _____ Bản thân : _____
Dân tộc : _____ Tôn giáo : _____ Đảng phái : _____
Trình độ văn hóa : _____
Trình độ chuyên môn . kỹ thuật : _____
Ngày tháng tham gia cách mạng (Nếu là ĐV ĐCSVN thì ghi rõ ngày tháng kết nạp chính thức .lý do đứt liên lạc) : _____
Nay là hội viên đoàn thể nào ? : _____
Chức vụ và nơi công tác hiện nay: _____

I - QUAN HỆ GIA ĐÌNH

A - HỌ TÊN CHA : _____ Tuổi: _____
Tên thường gọi : _____ Bí danh : _____
Sinh quán : _____
Trú quán : _____
Trước Cách mạng . sau Cách mạng trong kháng chiến chống chống Pháp, chống Mỹ , làm gì cho dịch (chức vụ , cấp bậc . sắc lính . ở đâu ?) : _____

Hiện nay làm gì . ở đâu ? : _____
Làm gì cho cách mạng ? Chức vụ : _____

B - HỌ TÊN MẸ : _____ Tuổi: _____
Tên thường gọi _____ Bí danh : _____
Sinh quán : _____
Trú quán : _____
Trước Cách mạng . sau Cách mạng , trong kháng chiến chống Pháp, chống Mỹ , làm gì cho dịch (Cấp bậc. chức vụ . tổ chức nào . ở đâu ?) : _____

Hiện nay làm gì . ở đâu ? : _____
Làm gì cho Cách mạng ? Chức vụ , nơi công tác : _____

C - ANH CHI EM RUỘT (Cũng nói rõ họ tên , tuổi , bí danh , sinh trú quán , làm gì cho dịch , cho ta . Từng thời gian , cấp bậc , chức vụ , sắc lính .Hiện nay làm gì , ở đâu?) Yêu cầu nói rõ từng thời gian từ năm 1945 đến 1954 và từ năm 1955 đến tháng 4 -1975 . Nếu nhiều anh chị em thì ghi lần lượt hết anh chị em này đến anh chị em khác. (Chỉ kể những người ruột thịt, anh chị em khác không kể) : _____

D - TÌNH HÌNH CHÍNH TRỊ KINH TẾ CỦA VỢ HOẶC CHỒNG VÀ CÁC CON (Hiện nay làm gì ? ở đâu ?) : _____

II - QUAN HỆ XÃ HỘI

Nói rõ bản thân từ lúc nhỏ đến nay thường quan hệ bạn bè thân thiết nhất là ai ? Những người này trước và trong kháng chiến chống Pháp, chống Mỹ, làm gì cho dịch, làm gì cho cách mạng Hiện nay người đó ở đâu ? Làm gì ? Ai biết ? : _____

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
Independence - Freedom - Happiness

LÝ LỊCH PROFILE

Name registered at birth: _____ Alias: _____
Name normally used: _____
Day, month, year of birth: _____
Birthplace: _____
Permanent address: _____
Class – family: _____ Class – self _____
Ethnicity: _____ Religion: _____ Party: _____
Educational level: _____
Level of professional and technical training: _____
Date of participation in the revolution (if party member, date of official admission and reason for breaking off contact): _____
Current organization memberships?: _____
Current position and place of work: _____

I- FAMILY RELATIONS

A – FATHER'S NAME: _____ Age: _____
Name normally called: _____ Alias: _____
Birthplace: _____
Permanent address: _____
Before the Revolution, after the Revolution, in the resistance against France, US, what did he do for the enemy (position, rank, branch, location): _____
What does he do now, where?: _____
What did he do for the revolution? Position: _____

B – MOTHER'S NAME: _____ Age: _____
Name normally called: _____ Alias: _____
Birthplace: _____
Permanent address: _____
Before the Revolution, after the Revolution, in the resistance against France, US, what did she do for the enemy (rank, position, organization, location): _____
What does she do now, where?: _____
What did she do for the revolution? Position, place of work: _____

C – BLOOD BROTHERS AND SISTERS (Also specify name, age, alias, birthplace, what they did for the enemy, for us. For each time period, state rank, position, branch. What are they doing now, where?) You need to specify for each time period from 1945-1954 and from 1955-April 1975. If you have many brothers and sisters, then write everything about one before moving to the next. (You only need to describe blood siblings, don't mention any other brothers and sisters, cousins):

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

D – POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUTATION OF WIFE OR HUSBAND AND CHILDREN (What do they currently do? Where?):

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

II – SOCIAL RELATIONS

State clearly who have been your closest regular friends from childhood to the present. Before and during the resistance against the French, against the US, what did they do for the enemy, what did they do for the revolution? Where are they now? What are they doing? Who knows?:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix B

Cultured Family self-assessment checklist from the 2000s, original and English translation by the author. Source: Original posted by Hoang Dan Lieu to the Vietnam Studies Group e-mail list, September 12, 2007

BẢNG ĐIỂM TỰ CHẤM
XẾP LOẠI "GIA ĐÌNH VĂN HÓA" NĂM 200...

Họ và tên chủ hộ: ....
Nơi ở: ....

Căn cứ vào 4 nội dung "GIA ĐÌNH VĂN HÓA" đề nghị ông, bà tự xem xét, đối chiếu và cho điểm gia đình mình theo biểu dưới đây

TT	NỘI DUNG CÁC TIÊU CHUẨN	ĐIỂM CHUẨN		TỰ CHẤM CỦA TỔ	
		Điểm TC	TD	Điểm TC	TD
1	**GIA ĐÌNH HÒA THUẬN - HẠNH PHÚC - TIẾN BỘ:**		35		
	- Ông, bà, cha, mẹ...được quan tâm, chăm sóc chu đáo;	4			
	- Vợ chồng bình đẳng, hòa thuận, chung thủy;	10			
	- Người lớn trong gia đình luôn là gương tốt cho con cháu;	4			
	- Trẻ em trong độ tuổi đi học được đến trường *(đạt chuẩn phổ cập Trung học phổ thông)*; chăm học, chăm làm, lễ phép, hiếu thảo; được chăm lo dạy dỗ, học hành, vui chơi, giải trí...	8			
	- Mọi thành viên trong gia đình đều hoàn thành nhiệm vụ sản xuất, kinh doanh, công tác, học tập; có nếp sống thanh lịch, văn minh *(ứng xử văn hóa trong gia đình, cộng đồng và ngoài xã hội bằng hành vi, thái độ đúng mực, không nói tục, chửi bậy...)*; Thường xuyên rèn luyện nâng cao sức khỏe.	7			
	- Giải quyết tốt các mâu thuẫn trong gia đình, không để xảy ra bất hòa lớn.				
2	**ĐỜI SỐNG VẬT CHẤT, TINH THẦN ĐƯỢC NÂNG CAO:**		20		
	- Kinh tế gia đình ổn định và phát triển có kế hoạch, thu nhập chính đáng, tiêu dùng hợp lý, tiết kiệm;	8			
	- Nhà ở gọn gàng, sử dụng nước sạch, công trình phụ hợp vệ sinh...theo tiêu chí "Gia đình sức khỏe";	3			
	- Có các phương tiện nghe, nhìn cơ bản phục vụ cho việc tiếp nhận thông tin đại chúng và nâng cao đời sống tinh thần của mọi thành viên;	2			
	- Các việc trong gia đình (cưới, tang, giỗ, tết, liên hoan, sinh nhật, mừng thọ...) được tổ chức theo đúng tinh thần các quy ước cưới, tang, lễ hội;	3			
	- Không sinh con thứ 3;	4			

3	**ĐOÀN KẾT, TƯƠNG TRỢ XÓM, PHỐ**		20
	- Đoàn kết giúp đỡ xóm giềng trong trong phát triển kinh tế; khi hoạn nạn, khó khăn và lúc cần thiết khác	4	
	- Không xâm phạm đến mọi quyền lợi của làng giềng; Tôn trọng đời sống riêng, không làm ảnh hưởng đến sự yên tĩnh, sự ổn định...của hàng xóm	4	
	- Khi phát sinh mâu thuẫn, giải quyết bằng sự hòa giải, thân tình, không gây lớn đánh, cãi nhau	4	
	- Thực hiện nghiêm túc các quy ước của cộng đồng *(khu tập thể, thôn, làng, tổ dân phố, số nhà đồng hồ...)*	4	
	- Tích cực tham gia các hoạt động nhân đạo, từ thiện và các phong trào văn hóa xã hội vì sự tiến bộ của cộng đồng	4	
4	**THỰC HIỆN TỐT TRÁCH NHIỆM CÔNG DÂN**		25
	- Gương mẫu chấp hành chủ trương, chính sách của Đảng, pháp luật của Nhà nước; Thực hiện đầy đủ nghĩa vụ công dân *(quân sự, thuế vv...)*; tuân thủ những quy định của chính quyền các cấp, quy ước, hương ước cộng đồng.	5	
	- Không có người vi phạm các tệ nạn xã hội (buôn bán, tàng trữ, sử dụng ma túy, mại dâm, cờ bạc...); Không vi phạm trật tự an toàn giao thông; không tham gia các hoạt động mê tín dị đoan;	4	
	- Không kinh doanh, lưu hành và sử dụng văn hóa phẩm không được phép lưu hành *(có nội dung xấu, phản động, đồi trụy, các băng đĩa hình, nhạc ngoài luồng...)*; Không kinh doanh và tham gia các loại hình dịch vụ không lành mạnh;	4	
	- Tham gia giữ gìn an ninh chính trị, trật tự an toàn xã hội; các phong trào thi đua, các sinh hoạt, hội họp ở cộng đồng và bảo vệ di tích lịch sử - văn hóa, cảnh quan của địa phương	4	
	- Thực hiện nếp sống văn hóa nơi công cộng	4	
	- Tích cực giữ gìn vệ sinh môi trường; đổ rác, chất thải đúng giờ, đúng nơi quy định. Chăm sóc bảo vệ cây xanh, các sinh vật cảnh	4	

Sau khi đối chiếu tiêu chuẩn, gia đình tôi đạt............điểm, tôi tự nhận thấy gia đình
...........danh hiệu gia đình văn hóa năm 200......

Hà Nội, ngày........tháng........năm 200
tôi................

Ký tên

SELF-ASSESSSMENT CHECKLIST
"CULTURED FAMILY" CLASSIFICATION YEAR 200…

Name of head of household: _____
Place of residence: _____

Based on the four contents of the "CULTURED FAMILY," please self-examine, compare, and give points to your family as indicated in the table below.

CONTENT OF THE CRITERIA	BENCH MARK points total	GROUP SELF-ASSESSMENT points total
1 HARMONIOUS – HAPPY – PROGRESSIVE FAMILY:		
- Grandparents, parents… receive attentive care;	4	
- Wife, husband are equal, harmonious, faithful.	10	
- Adults in the family are always good models for children	4	
- School-aged children go to school (*standard universal secondary education*): are studious, hard-working, polite, filial, are being attentively raised through teaching, learning, play, and recreation…	8	
- Every member of the family fulfills the tasks of production, business, work, learning; have a refined, civilized lifestyle (*behaving in a cultured way in the family, community, and society through proper behavior, attitude, no profanity or cursing…*); Regularly train to improve health.	7	
- Good solving of conflicts in the family, not letting big disagreements occur	2	
	35	
2 MATERIAL AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE IS ENHANCED:		
- Stable family economy with planned development, reasonable income, rational consumption, economizing;	8	
- Neat home, use of clean water, appropriate sanitation… according to the "Healthy Family" standard;	3	
- Have basic means to listen to, watch in order to receive public information and improve the intellectual life of every member;	2	
- Events in the family (weddings, funerals, death anniversaries, new year, parties, birthdays, longevity celebrations…) are organized following the correct spirit of marriage, funeral, celebration regulations;	3	
- Haven't given birth to a third child;	4	
	20	
3 SOLIDARITY, MUTUAL ASSISTANCE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND BLOCK		
- Unity in helping the neighborhood develop economically; when there's distress, difficulty, and whenever necessary	4	
- Not infringing on neighbors' rights; Respecting their own lives, not influencing neighbors' quiet, stability	4	
- When conflicts arise, solving them by reconciliation, friendship, not fighting or squabbling	4	
- Seriously implementing community conventions (*apartment complex, hamlet, village, block, multi-family home…*)	4	
- Actively participating in humanitarian, charitable activities and sociocultural movements for community progress	4	
	20	
4 GOOD IMPLEMENTATION OF CIVIC DUTIES		
- Exemplary execution of guidelines, policies of Party, government laws; Full implementation of civic obligations (*military, taxes, etc.*); comply with regulations of different government levels, community conventions, agreements.	5	
- No one is guilty of social evils (selling, storing, using drugs, prostitution, gambling…); Not guilty of crime against transportation safety; no participation in superstitious activities;	4	
- No trading, circulating, or using banned cultural materials (*with contents that are bad, reactionary, depraved, smuggled video or audio discs…*); No trade or participation in unwholesome services;	4	
- Participating in keeping political security, social order and safety; emulation movements, community activities, meetings about preserving historical-cultural landmarks, local landscape	4	
- Implementing cultured lifestyle in public places	4	
- Actively preserving environmental hygiene; disposing of garbage and waste in the designated time and place. Protecting flora and fauna.	4	
	25	

After comparing the criteria, my family got …………… points, I certify that my family ……………………………………… has earned the title cultured family year 200……..

Hanoi, day   month   year 200

Signature

Appendix C

Social work eco-map. With client–family at the center, the eco-map traces relationships (clockwise from top left): religion, health services, friends, neighbors, organizations, office, recreational sites, school, extended family, social welfare, local government, and other. Arrows indicate the direction of the relationship, with pattern, length, and size measuring quality and degree of intimacy. Source: Võ Thuấn 2005:44
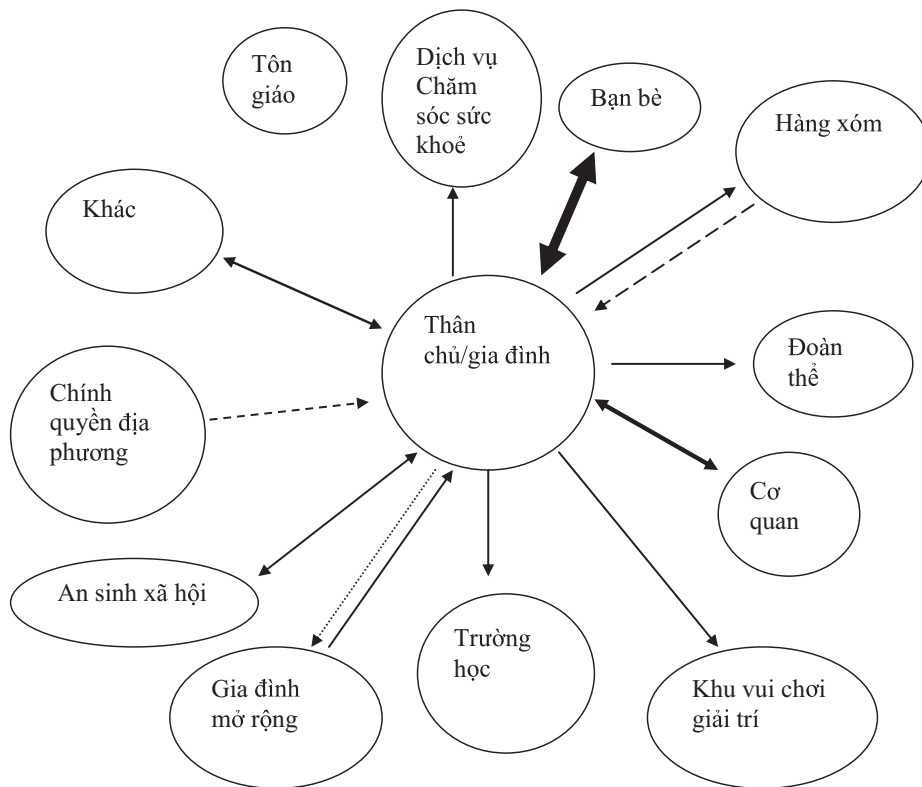
BIỂU ĐỒ SINH THÁI (ECO-MAP)

Thân chủ:

Ngày:

Chú thích:

⟶　　　　Quan hệ tốt nhưng chỉ một phía

‐ ‐ ‐ ‐→　　Quan hệ xấu khó tiếp cận

⟷　　　　Quan hệ hai chiều

⟷　　　　Quan hệ tốt (mức độ dài ngắn thể hiện mối quan hệ xa

gần, thân mật nhiều hay ít).

Trang 44