

Tapping into Social Resources to Address Occupational Health:  
A Network Analysis of Vietnamese-Owned Nail Salons

by

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning,  
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

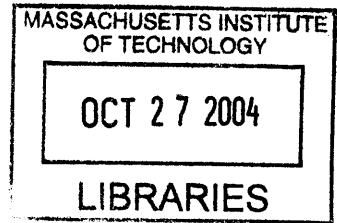
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**Abstract**

Social networks in the Vietnamese nail salon industry were studied for their utility in addressing occupational health risks. Major findings include heavy reliance on family networks for fundamental needs, an extensive industry network effective in spreading information, and a sparse community network. Practitioners hoping to work with this population are directed to the opportunities and challenges to taking action, particularly the potential for greater cooperation and the lack of weak-bridging ties.

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To my mom, a courageous woman, serious networker and tireless translator.

And to Josh, with love.



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The large number of Vietnamese immigrants working in the nail salon industry has attracted attention from public health practitioners, regulatory agencies and community-based organizations. Vietnamese-led organizations in California, Massachusetts and Texas have raised concerns about the occupational health and economic mobility of this population of workers and entrepreneurs. Of concern is the daily exposure to toxins from products used for nail treatment, as well as the economic outcomes of working in an increasingly saturated market with limited financial returns and opportunities.

Occupational health in nail salons has complex technical, regulatory, and social dimensions and has typically required more resources than any single group of organizations can muster. Community-based groups have often sought the technical assistance of environmental organizations and health centers. Research institutions have similarly sought the assistance of community groups. In many cases both have worked with regulatory bodies who often have far less information about this population than the community groups.

Toxicological and epidemiological information on dose exposures is not well documented for the products and chemicals nail salon workers are exposed too, although some community groups have begun to document effects. One small community-led survey in Springfield, Massachusetts shows workers experience negative health effects associated with certain chemicals. Another survey led by UMass Lowell with workers in Dorchester, Massachusetts has yet to publish its results. Since workers are actually exposed to multiple chemicals each day, the impact from combined exposures is difficult to study. The effects of combinations of chemicals can differ markedly from those of a single exposure. Finally, the efficacy of interventions proposed by agencies like NIOSH or the EPA, such as downdraft ventilation tables, is also untested.

Until recently, the nail salon industry has largely gone unnoticed by the regulatory system, excepting the controversy around MMA (methyl methacrylate). There are few regulations specific to the nail salon industry and the ones that apply are outdated or ineffective. Regulatory agencies for this industry are often understaffed and lack linguistic and cultural

competency. EPA Region 6 has recently collaborated with community stakeholders in Houston to produce a manual for best practices. The EPA has begun distribution of this information at workshops. Unfortunately, the manual was produced mostly by technical consultants and lacks ground-proofing. Other than this voluntary program, there is no state program or policy to regulate the industry.

The social dimension of the problem, in particular, distinguishes this sector from the mainstream economy and explains why the community players in this case play an active intermediary role rather than a more activist one. The salons are important to the local economy, supplying much-needed jobs, particularly for new immigrants. They also serve a social function, bringing people of different races together in the same venue. The Vietnamese community groups bringing attention to the industry do not want heavy-handed regulation or enforcement of these salons – they do not want salons shut down. However, as some groups struggle to find strategies for motivating salons to change unhealthy practices, regulatory pressure begins factor into their thinking. Still, the main thrust of their work has been to preserve the businesses and make them more sustainable.

Unfortunately, despite diverse collaborations, elements of the problem appear intractable. The actual impact of chemical use on salon workers, and therefore the extent of the problem, is unresolved. Other than the forthcoming UMass Lowell study, there is little data on health effects. Many workers have not been in the industry long enough for long-term effects to manifest. For chemicals that are known hazards, safer alternatives do not exist or have not been located. The efficacy of engineering controls remains untested. Aside from exposure-limiting practices, organizations are at a loss for recommendations. Finally, even if there were solid recommendations to make, how would the information reach salons and what would motivate owners to change their practices?

Given the technical challenges, this paper focuses less on finding a technical solution. Instead, this paper is concerned with how organizations might approach assessment of the problem and development of interventions by tapping into social resources in the affected population. These resources are often overlooked. Rarely in the above collaborations have salon workers and owners themselves been called upon to play an active role in assessing the problem or developing interventions. Workers and owners have traditionally been recipients of training or services and have served as sources of information.

The Dorchester Occupational Health Initiative (DOHI), a collaboration serving Vietnamese and Cape Verdean immigrants in Boston, hopes to take a different approach. DOHI is undertaking a four-year project to engage workers and owners in participatory research and development of interventions. But this is uncharted territory for most members of DOHI. They are unsure of how to carry out participatory research or how to include immigrant workers and owners in the strategic process.

One barrier to carrying out this approach is the limited availability of information on the resources workers and entrepreneurs bring to bear on the problem. Vietnamese entrepreneurs and workers are clearly very resourceful. In an environment where financial resources are scarce, non-native English speakers are at a disadvantage, and social safety nets are deteriorating, some Vietnamese immigrants have found jobs, started businesses, purchased homes

and sent children to college. It appears social resources, as much as economic factors, contribute to economic development in this community. What can we learn from the ways Vietnamese immigrants have worked together to solve problems like labor market barriers or lack of capital? Who do they draw upon for support and information? Who do they trust? This paper offers community organizations and state agencies crucial information on social networks as resources for action.

## Research Question

As part of the Vietnamese team in the Dorchester Occupational Health Initiative, I became interested in social networks as a way to advance our strategic thinking. I suspected networks were important assets in the Vietnamese community and that understanding their mechanisms might offer clues and resources for working on the specific problem of occupational health. I suspected networks were important for information sharing and resource-pooling in an under-resourced environment. But how useful are these social networks for addressing a problem like occupational health risk, an externality whose cost has not been assessed?

This study looks at the social resource of networks and the trust and norms of cooperation that reside in them. How useful are social networks as a resource for addressing occupational health in Vietnamese nail salons? Using the theoretical framework of social capital, I characterize the structure and function of the networks to reveal implications for community development practitioners.

## A. Review of Relevant Literature

This review places the study within connected bodies of literature and constructs a theoretical framework for understanding the findings. The discussion moves from the general to the more specific contexts, embedding the thesis within the literature on networks and markets, ethnic economies and ethnic resources, and social capital and social networks. I elaborate on the choice to study social networks in the context of an economic and environmental problem. I explore the constraining and enabling forces created by the use of ethnic resources in ethnic economies. Finally, I choose a theoretical framework for understanding types of relationships and how they are used in social networks.

I conclude the literature review with a handful of other theses on Vietnamese-owned nail salons. I pull out useful background information and discussion around the use of social resources.

### 1. Networks and Markets

On the broadest level, this study fits into the field of economic sociology, where the study of networks and the study of economic organization meet. Neither the economic or sociological

perspectives adequately explain the forces of economic organization but some combination of theories may be useful. This paper focuses on the sociological perspective because it offers greater possibility for sustainable outcomes built on the participation of relevant stakeholders.

In the introduction to their volume, *Networks and Markets*, Rauch and Hamilton frame an emerging field of study that combines the thinking and methods of economists and sociologists. Granovetter's 1985 article, "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness," argued that "all economic action is embedded in networks" [Rauch and Hamilton, 2001] and is credited with guiding the formulation of an economic sociology framework. The field explores how social relationships govern economic organizations; network analysis has become a tool for understanding industrial organizations and markets.

Attention to the study of networks of association grew in the 1970's, in contrast to "deterministic cultural" accounts that did not leave room for human agency and individualistic or "atomized" approaches that did not recognize the importance of social structures [Powell and Smith-Doerr, 1994]. Though there are several branches of study on networks, the literature on networks of access and opportunity seems most relevant to this study. Here again, an earlier work by Granovetter plays an important role.

In "The Strength of Weak Ties" Granovetter was concerned with understanding how "interaction in small groups aggregates to form large-scale patterns" particularly macro phenomena like social stability, community organization and political structure. Granovetter sets up a scenario where groups with strong internal ties (high-density networks) are bridged by weak ties, which make up a low-density network. Weak ties are acquaintances or people who are dissimilar whereas strong ties are family or close friends, people who share characteristics. Granovetter argued it is the weak ties, connections we have to individuals and groups who are not part in our "primary group", that creates flexible organizations, able to mobilize when necessary to respond to threats and opportunities. He found that weak ties were useful for finding jobs and people without weak ties outside their primary groups (bridging ties) were at a disadvantage concerning information and upward mobility.

Economic sociologists study whether bridging ties are useful devices for explaining not only individual economic outcomes but economic phenomena at a higher level of aggregation [Rauch and Hamilton, 2001]. In their study of the electric power industry, Mark Granovetter and Patrick McGuire have shown how the technical and organizational form of the industry was more dependent on preexisting ties among principal actors in the industry than on technical and economic circumstances. Networks influenced the path-dependent choice of central over distributed power generation.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, sociologists have looked to networks as an analytical tool and a form of governance over economic life [Powell and Smith-Doerr, 1994]. They have argued that economies do not arise exclusively from technological or economic factors, and that social and institutional foundations structure ownership, control, and exchange relationships in the economy [Rauch and Hamilton, 2001].



A few researchers have studied Asian business networks specifically and I review two such studies here. Manuel Castells examines business networks in East Asia as precursors to networks in the new information age [Castells, 2000]. Although Castells is talking about business networks in Asia and not immigrant business networks in America, his discussion is particularly useful.

Castells describes the business networks in Japan, Korea and China, mainly during their developmental booms. The most relevant description is that of Chinese business networks which are largely family dependent. Family firms were linked cross-sectorally in business networks often owned by one family. The family was more important than the business, which I interpret to mean the nature of the business was not as important as the gains it brought to the family.

Thus, families prosper by creating new firms in any sector of activity deemed profitable....Connections between firms are highly personalized, fluid, and changeable, unlike the long-term commitment patterns of Japanese networks. Sources of finance tend to be informal....

In such a structure, management is highly centralized and authoritarian....[W]orkers' loyalty is not expected, since the workers' ideal is to start their own businesses, and thus they are suspect as future competitors. Commitments are short-term, which undermines long-range planning strategies. On the other hand, the extreme decentralization and flexibility of such a system allows for fast adjustments to new products, new processes, and new markets.

The weak point in these small-scale Chinese business networks is their inability to undertake major strategic transformations, requiring for instance R&D investment, knowledge of world markets, large-scale technological modernization, or offshoring of production.

The ideology of entrepreneurial familism, rooted in an ancestral distrust of the state in southern China, cannot be taken at face value, even if it shapes, to a large extent, the behavior of Chinese businessmen....

In addition to culture as an influence on Asian business networks, Castells points out the strong role the state played in shaping different business networks. In China before the developmental push, state policies were unfriendly to private enterprise. Castells writes: "Without a reliable state enforcing property rights, you do not need to be Confucian in order to place your trust in kin rather than in a legal contract on paper....When the state did not act to create the market, as in China, families did it for their own, bypassing the state and embedding marking mechanisms in socially constructed networks."

Though set in a different context, Castells' descriptions of Chinese business networks has relevance for Vietnamese-immigrant business networks. The centrality of the family, the view of workers as potential competitors, and the distrust of the state are traits Chinese and Vietnamese businesses may share.

In seeking to understand a more specific Vietnamese business culture and finding no studies in the US, I looked at a study of firms in Vietnam. Again, though the context is different, I found the work useful. Stoyan Tenev et. al. (2003) found that private enterprises in Vietnam, as opposed to state-owned enterprises, relied more heavily on social networks for business services and access to capital. Tenev's study asked firms to rank the importance of personal relations (family and friends) in the following business activities: bargaining with officials, source of capital, firms internal problems, bargaining with banks, sales, and business services. In every category, private enterprises ranked the importance of friends and family higher than did state-owned enterprises. Firms in Vietnam still rely heavily on personal contacts or informal networks for debt and equity financing. Despite their reliance on social networks, private firms are less likely to join business associations, from which state-owned enterprises receive many of their business services and resources for collective action [Tenev et al., 2003].

I found this information about private firm practice in Vietnam intriguing as clues to Vietnamese-immigrant firm practice in the US. Both Castells and Tenev et. al. implicate culture and conditions created by the state as factors influencing firm reliance on family networks.

## 2. Ethnic Economies and Ethnic Resources

Back in the US, within the general economy or as an alternative to it, is the ethnic economy, where the Vietnamese nail salon sector resides. Weber, Marx and Sombart conceive of modern capitalism as emerging from and superceding more traditional, fraternal or kin-based economic systems [Light and Karageorgis, 1994]. After a summary of definitions, I review the benefits and constraints of operating within ethnic economies and relying on ethnic resources.

Bonacich and Modell (1980) first operationalized the concept of ethnic economy to mean "any ethnic or immigrant group's self-employed, employers, and co-ethnic employees." This distinguishes employment generated from within an immigrant or ethnic minority group from employment found in the general labor market [Light and Karageorgis, 1994]. An ethnic enclave is more specific. Light and Karageorgis (1994) define an ethnic enclave as having "locational clustering of firms, economic interdependency, and co-ethnic employees, whereas an ethnic economy requires none of these." Chinatowns may be easily classified as enclaves since they are locationally very distinct. Little Saigon in Orange County, though much larger geographically than any Chinatown, might also be considered an enclave. Interestingly, Vietnamese nail salons are located within and outside the enclave. In fact, they seem to do better outside the enclave.

In *Chinatown, The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave*, Min Zhou shows how an enclave can serve to channel members into the mainstream society and economy while keeping certain cultural assets intact. Zhou explains how community networks and social capital, emanating particularly from family ties, have helped members of Chinatown gain mobility socially and economically.

The ethnic economy is an important source of employment for new arrivals. Tarry Hum reports 80 percent of new Chinese immigrants found employment in the ethnic economy [Hum, 2001]. (She also found a strong correlation between period of immigration and labor market location.) Hum claims the ethnic economy is more important to Asian immigrants than Latino immigrants, and particularly to Koreans. More than half (57%) of Chinese immigrants and more than two-thirds (73%) of Korean immigrants are employed in their co-ethnic businesses.

Ethnic groups cluster into different niches. South-Asian immigrants dominate the motel business. The majority of doughnut shops in California are owned by Cambodian immigrants [Hum, 2001]. Korean merchants locate in labor-intensive niches: grocery and fish stores, carry-out restaurants, lower-line apparel and ethnic beauty supplies [Lee, 1998]. Also, ethnic clusters can be different depending on location. For example, in New York, nail salons are predominantly owned by Korean immigrants, otherwise they are often owned by Vietnamese immigrants. Advantages to such clustering include vertical integration, credit from co-ethnic suppliers, pooling of orders, and the formation of business associations.

For some immigrants, particularly Korean immigrants, employment in the ethnic economy can be a stepping stone to self-employment, but for most groups, the ethnic economy presents dilemmas. For many Latino and Asian immigrants, employment in an ethnic economy is not a first step – it is a permanent labor market position [Hum, 2001]. With the exception of the Chinese ethnic economy where 46 percent of workers arrived in the last five years, the majority of workers in ethnic economies immigrated to the US in the 1970s and 1980s. They have spent many years in similar jobs.

Hum points out several other dilemmas including menial jobs, marginal industries, few worker benefits, few opportunities to learn English, racial tension, exploitation, and marginal economic growth. Hazardous chemicals and occupational health are also potential problems in businesses like dry cleaners, nail salons and hardwood floor-sanding businesses. The latter two are major sectors for Vietnamese immigrants.

Researchers debate the importance of ethnic resources in accruing benefits [Bates, 1997, Waldinger et al., 1990, Yoo, 1998, Bonacich and Modell, 1980]. Bates, an economist, argues that class resources alone (financial capital and education) can explain the success of certain small immigrant businesses, particularly Korean immigrants [Bates, 1997]. Light also finds that Korean entrepreneurs in Los Angeles rely much less on rotating credit associations and business associations and more on accumulated capital and education gained before emigration from Korea [Light, 1980]. On the other hand, Waldinger, Aldrich and Ward, use a model of opportunity structures and group characteristics (social resources, ethnic networks and human capital) to explain differences in economic outcomes.

Several studies focus on the role of networks and ethnic resources in small immigrant business creation, including Korean immigrants in Atlanta [Yoo, 1998], Japanese immigrants in Los Angeles [Bonacich and Modell, 1980] and Cuban immigrants in Miami [Waldinger et al., 1990]. The study of Korean entrepreneurs in Atlanta is particularly useful because Yoo distinguishes between the use of family networks and social networks made

up of friends. First Yoo describes the important role family networks play in chain migration, where potential immigrants consider the availability of jobs based on information from family in the US. Still, Yoo finds the dominant use of family networks is for business capital whereas social networks are used for business information. Yoo also finds that class resources (educational attainment) strongly determine the resourcefulness of social networks.

Light and Karageorgis (1994) summarize examples of ethnic resources, positive and negative: trusting one another more than others, following one another into the same trades, working long hours in unsafe conditions, expressing satisfaction with low wages, helping one another acquire business skills and information, utilizing rotating credit associations, and deploying multiplex social networks to economic advantage. Several of these examples apply to the use of ethnic resources in the Vietnamese case.

Ethnic solidarity is also considered an ethnic resource. Solidarity may come from a desire to see one's displaced ethnic group gain prestige in a new society or to show its worthiness for citizenship and social acceptance. Ethnic solidarity also requires entrepreneurs to adopt a paternalistic attitude toward co-ethnic workers, offering training, sponsorship and patronage they might not offer an outsider [Light and Karageorgis, 1994].

But ethnic solidarity also has a downside. Sanders and Nee offer a more nuanced view of social solidarity, pointing out the earning-returns for immigrant employers were higher than for employees. Alexander Portes also discusses the downside of community solidarity or enforceable trust. It is possible that some members of a group will drain the resources of others who would otherwise reach greater economic success. Portes points to the case of a successful Vietnamese entrepreneur, the owner of a manufacturing firm with 300 employees, none of whom were Vietnamese. The entrepreneur had anglicized his name so Vietnamese people would be less likely to recognize him as Vietnamese. Like other ethnic resources, solidarity offers advantages and disadvantages to the group in question.

### **3. Social Capital and Social Networks**

This takes us to our last theoretical discussion. Social capital can be an ethnic resource, but the concept of social capital is broader. Unlike an ethnic resource which connotes ethnic inheritance, social capital can be built up or diminished and the group that shares and benefits from this resource is not necessarily defined by ethnicity. This section reviews key definitions, types and uses of social capital. This is the lynchpin of the literature review as it explains the criteria I will use to characterize and analyze data from my study.

Ian Winter (2000) neatly summarizes definitions of social capital developed by some of major theorists: Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam. All three understand social capital to be a resource for action (individual and collective) generated by the practice of trust or cooperation in social relationships or networks. However, the three differ in their frame of analysis and their ideas for how to use social capital. Bourdieu sees social capital as a means for securing economic capital and analyzes individual behavior in class competition.

Coleman sees social capital as a way to acquire human capital and looks specifically at how families and communities help us do this. Putnam is interested in a broader scale. He sees social capital as a key ingredient in securing an effective democracy and economy and looks at trends on the regional or national level [Winter, 2000]. Elements of all three definitions are useful here, but emphasis is placed on Putnam and later, Briggs.

In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam writes that some scholars who study ethnic niche economies have questioned whether bonds of trust and solidarity actually restrict growth and economic mobility. More disadvantaged members of an ethnic group may rely heavily and take resources away from more upwardly mobile or resourceful members. Putnam cites Portes and Sensenbrenner and Woolcock who suggest that to realize their full potential, entrepreneurs may have to broaden their ties to customers, financial institutions and civic associations. Putnam tells the story of Tupelo, Mississippi and how building social capital through developing community development institutions led to high levels of investment, job creation and economic development.

Putnam points out that though we can be confident of the benefits of social capital and networks of trust to the individual, we are uncertain about the benefits to the whole. And we are also uncertain about the how strong the link between social capital and economic development is, though researchers like Dasgupta and Serageldin, Saegert, Thompson and Warren and Woolcock are looking into these links in developing countries and in poor communities in the America. Gittel and Thompson argue that social capital in poor communities can be drawn upon to leverage market power for the benefit of community economic development [Gittel and Thompson, 2001]. They speak to different organizational forms and institutions, including cooperatives, credit unions and venture capital networks.

Though there are several ways to operationalize social capital, I will focus on two systems of classification: mobility effects and orientation [Briggs, 1997]. I will apply Briggs' typology scheme for social capital to social networks specifically, although I will also look at the trust and norms of cooperation in the networks, making the two terms (social capital and social networks) virtually interchangeable for the purposes of this study.

Social networks can be classified by their use, either to get by (use social support) or get ahead (use social leverage) [Briggs, 1997]. These two uses have different mobility outcomes. Briggs' getting by examples include confiding distress, sharing caregiving duties or lending rides. These activities have limited mobility outcomes. Getting ahead may involve referring someone to a job or connecting a young person to a scholarship. It involves changing the opportunity structure.

Briggs notes it can be difficult to achieve upward mobility by using ties within a group to get ahead. This is because others in your group have similar disadvantages. A poor person can help another poor person find a job but these do not tend to be well-paying jobs – this harkens back to Granovetter's weak ties. Therefore, Briggs points out that getting ahead behavior has greater mobility outcomes when they involve forming ties across dissimilar groups. In this paper, I will define getting by as maintaining a similar number and type of economic opportunities and similar quality of life. Getting ahead then means increasing the number and type of economic opportunities and improving quality of life.

Another way to differentiate social networks is by orientation. This can generally be thought of as inward versus outward orientation. More specifically, there are differences between bonding versus bridging ties and private-regarding versus public-regarding ties. Bonding occurs between similar groups or individuals who share ethnicity, class, religion or other identifying characteristics. Bonding social capital is related to "getting by." Bridging occurs across dissimilar actors and is related to "getting ahead" through external linkages.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1.1 below shows the theoretical framing of social networks.

Table 1.1: Mobility Effect by Orientation of Ties in Social Networks

Orientation	Mobility-Effect	Outcome
Bonding	Getting by	Maintaining the number and type of economic opportunities and quality of life
Bridging	Getting ahead	Increasing the number and type of economic opportunities and improving quality of life

#### 4. Prior Research on Vietnamese-Owned Nail Salons

Several Vietnamese student researchers have written papers on the Vietnamese nail salon sector. Their work builds an important foundation for this study. Below is what we already know about why Vietnamese immigrants enter the nail salon industry and some of the issues and challenges they face.

Craig Trinh-Phat Huynh interviewed 10 female manicurists in the Los Angeles area. He focused on understanding why they entered the industry, what types of federally-funded social services and networks are available to them and what issues they face in the workplace [Huynh, 1996].

Huynh describes an informal network that has emerged, facilitating the growth in numbers of manicurists and salons. Prospective cosmetology students often learn about the availability of financial aid or job training funds through relatives or friends. Nail salon owners find technicians by word or mouth or by recruiting from local beauty schools. Owners also advertise through Vietnamese-language newspapers, radio and television.

An interesting finding of Huynh's is that although Vietnamese workers and owners use informal networks and Vietnamese media extensively, they do not use low to no-cost technical assistance services available to them through public and private agencies. Huynh found that some salon owners were not familiar with business assistance programs when they started

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<sup>1</sup>There are also cross-cutting types of social networks where a characteristic that bonds one group also allows for bridging with another group. An example could be class. It binds one racial group together but also builds bridges to another low-income racial group. Briggs has particular interest in this type of social capital building as a way to build political coalitions and minimize ethnic conflict.

their businesses and when they became aware of them later, they assumed they would not be eligible for the services. Some are aware of bank loans but for a variety of reasons do not use them. Huynh cites limited English skills, lack of trust and unfamiliarity with the loan process. One 55 year old woman he interviewed who had worked as a manicurist since 1981 knew about the SBA but did want to be 'self-reliant.' She was going through a bitter divorce when she was setting up her salon and wanted to prove to herself and her husband that she could start a business, 'without help from anybody.'

Few Vietnamese or other Asian-Pacific clients frequented the Vietnamese-owned salons Huynh observed. He found salons were located in a variety of neighborhoods, ranging from mostly white to mostly African-American, Latino or multiethnic. Clientele were usually made up of local residents and workers in those neighborhoods or districts.

Huynh's central concern is why and how Vietnamese women entered the manicure business. One woman he interviewed was 28 when she arrived in Los Angeles in 1980. Despite enrolling in a city college, taking English classes and studying accounting, she was unable to find a job. Her Vietnamese friends opened salons in the city and she became interested when she learned salons require about \$6000 in capital to start, a simple state licensing process, and no English proficiency requirement. She started out by renting space in a hair salon. When the owner retired, she bought the salon and worked there for eight years before moving to a new location in San Fernando Valley.

About half of Huynh's respondents did garment work before coming nail technicians. One such worker made so little money sewing she often had to bring work home where her husband and children could help her sew. After she switched to nail salon work, she began earning four to five times more than she did sewing.

Other advantages cited by Huynh's respondents include preferences for limited contact with the public and flexibility to care for children. One respondent explained, 'What I like most about my work is I can take my daughter to the shop and look after her while I work on my customers.' She has set up a mini child care center in the corner of her salon.

Despite these benefits, Huynh found significant problems in this niche economy. The Southern California market has become saturated and competition in some parts of Los Angeles had become fierce. One respondent explained '[Vietnamese people open] their nail salons just a couple doors down the street from yours. Not only that, they lowered their prices and competed for the same customers in the area.' Non-Vietnamese salon owners decry the lowering of prices that has come with this intense competition. In the 1980's, the price of a full set of nails was \$60. Today, Vietnamese salons charge about \$18-20 for the same service.

Huynh also mentions health risks as a problem, particularly since Vietnamese workers and owners may have difficulty reading the warning labels on products.<sup>2</sup> Finally, customer

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<sup>2</sup>Material Safety Data Sheets, or MSDSs, which salons are required to have on hand are difficult to read, even for fluent English speakers.

relations are a problem often cited by workers and owners. Misunderstandings due to language or cultural differences give rise to conflicts with clients.

Thy Bich Nguyen interviewed 47 Vietnamese women in order to investigate barriers to utilization of health care services by nail salon technicians [Nguyen, 2000]. She finds that despite differences in acculturation and length of stay in the US, both uninsured and insured nail salon technicians have mainly economic barriers to utilizing health care services. Uninsured women did not have the money to visit doctors while insured women did not have time. Shrinking profit margins brought on by competition decreases the affordability of medical attention. Nguyen quotes a Vietnamese professor at San Jose State who believes 'the presence of Vietnamese-owned small businesses in many cases is just a sign of poverty, not affluence.' Though this is a harsh statement, it is possible to see why Nguyen may have found this statement resonant, particularly for nail salons. Indeed, if Vietnamese people had other opportunities, there might not be so many nail salons.

Nguyen brings into the discussion information about traditional Vietnamese culture to help explain some of the behavior and attitudes her respondents had toward seeking health care. She refers us to Buddhist and Confucian teachings that influence attitudes toward suffering and understanding about the sources of illness, citing the work of Laura Uba.

Many Vietnamese believe that suffering is an unavoidable part of life and that the length of one's life is predetermined. These beliefs may discourage many individuals from seeking early health care, since they believe that nothing can be done to relieve their suffering or to avoid death.

Nguyen found these beliefs to be less prevalent in her sample than she expected: 87 percent of the women in her sample said there were no spiritual reasons keeping them from visiting the doctor. However, Nguyen found that 34 percent of her respondents still used traditional healing techniques. To some degree the beliefs around enduring suffering are still echoed in perceptions of agency among Vietnamese immigrants.

Mary Ly's paper on occupational health risks for this population is immensely informative and comprehensive. Ly interviewed experts in occupational and minority health in California and Massachusetts and 9 Vietnamese nail salon technicians [Ly, 2003]. She looks at past interventions including regulatory responses, discusses practices and perceptions of risk, and maps the major stakeholders. She provides valuable insight into technicians' and owners' understanding and perceptions of risk, which were generally low.

A number of Ly's findings are instructive for this study. Ly found that services offered in salons varied by the skill of technicians and location of salon. New workers begin by doing manicures and pedicures (smoothing the nail surface, cutting cuticles, and applying polish) and move on to more complex procedures (applying artificial or acrylic nails, fill-ins, wraps, airbrushes, nail art and gels). In some salons, natural techniques are preferred, while in others, artificial nails are preferred, potentially increasing exposure to chemicals.



Like Huynh, Ly found immigrants entered the industry for the flexibility, as well as interest in the art of working with nails and ease of entry. She found mixed opinions on the importance of money. Though the jobs offered 'fast cash', some workers entering the business started out making only \$100 each week.

Ly found health and safety training at cosmetology schools was usually inadequate to protect workers. Workers did not learn very much about how the chemicals could affect them. Some workers and owners expressed poor understanding of health risks or did not perceive the risks to be present at all.

Those who were bothered by the work environment tended not to take action. One employer explained that when she gets sick, she does not consult a doctor; she feels her work requires tolerance of the chemicals. Others echoed this view by explaining how unpleasant aspects of the job, such as strong odors, must be endured [Ly, 2003]:

It's part of the job and making money. If you can't stand the smell, then how do you sit there? It depends on your personal tolerance.

I feel like with this occupation, you have to withstand the smell. There is no opinion at this point. For example, workers who have to wear a shielded mask..., the sparks fly towards your protection, but you still have to do it. You don't know if one day, a piece of steel flies into your eyes or face, and that's why you're protected so you can feel safe. I do my work like this, too.

Ly points out with this latter quote that workers and owners often think of acute exposures or hazards and neglect chronic effects.

Finally, Ly maps a complex web of responsibility that includes government, medical practitioners, manufacturers, employers and employees. She recommends that interventions be comprehensive, require cooperation from different levels of intervention, and include resources that will aid the Vietnamese in understanding the interventions. She notes that social networks may be an effective way to distribute information once engineering controls or substitution products were tested by a few salons.

Kang (2001) provides an ethnographic study of race, gender and class dynamics in New York nail salons, which are predominantly owned by Korean women. Like Huynh, she also found that one incentive for women to participate in this niche is independence from male financial support. She found that when Korean women became business owners, this changed the power structure in the home in a way some husbands found threatening [Kang, 2001].

## B. Methodology

### Creating a Research Instrument

In the early stages of this research project, there was a dual focus to the inquiry: assessing network capacity for action and understanding business practices and willingness to change practices. To assess networks, I drew upon the social capital literature. I wrote questions for every relationship I could think of that would be significant in facilitating entry into the industry and day-to-day work as a nail technician or owner. To measure the strength of the relationship, I asked about the frequency of interaction. Where possible, I encouraged respondents to elaborate on the types of interactions that occurred.

The second focus on business practices came from the data collection needs of Viet-AID and New Ecology. I included questions on purchasing behavior and ventilation systems. I was attempting to merge the occupational health focus of their inquiry with my principal interest in the networks. I tried to test the capacity of networks with willingness or interest in addressing occupational health issues. I hoped to find a link between network capacity and business practice or willingness to change. Unfortunately, it was later pointed out to me this method might be difficult to support. I was measuring propensity for action that had not yet occurred. I have since retreated from explicitly finding a correlation and will focus instead on describing networks and evaluating opportunities.<sup>3</sup>

After doing the pilot interview with a technician, I realized there were some questions technicians would not be able to answer and some questions that did not apply to owners, so I created separate interview instruments for technicians and owners. Several questions overlapped and owners had about 10 more questions than technicians. In hindsight, there were more questions that should have overlapped. For example, I asked workers if they socialized with other workers in the salon during work and outside of work. I failed to include these questions for owners, forgetting that owners are also workers.

I knew I would not have much time with most respondents, so I made some questions close-ended and a few open-ended. Close-ended questions are very useful for moving the interview along, particularly for clear-cut topics. They also made data analysis easier by eliminating the coding step.<sup>4</sup>

All questions were translated with the help of my mom. Translation involved not only turning English to Vietnamese, but finding the most polite way to ask questions.

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<sup>3</sup>Including the questions about occupational health also made the interview instrument longer which may have complicated data collection.

<sup>4</sup>Later in the research process when I better understood what information I wanted to collect, I realized the close-ended nature of some questions did not allow me to collect the kind of in-depth information I needed. As Weiss explains in "Learning from Strangers", it is interviews that "sacrifice uniformity of questions to achieve fuller development of information [that] are properly called 'qualitative' interviews."

## Recruiting Participants

Recruiting participants proved to be very challenging. This has been true for other researchers of this population, so I read about other strategies before embarking on my own. Barriers to participation in interviews included long work hours, unfamiliarity with the purpose or value of social science research, and fear of exposure or misrepresentation.

Several strategies were used to recruit participants, but the most effective by far was the use of personal networks. One failed strategy was more formal outreach. I sent letters to 30 salons in the Cambridge, Dorchester and Downtown Boston area. The letters had been carefully written and translated into Vietnamese. After a couple weeks, I visited the salons in Cambridge where letters had been sent. The response from this strategy was so low,<sup>5</sup> I decided to devote time exclusively to using personal contacts.

Through talking to staff at Viet-AID and attending local events, I was able to generate a list of about 10 people who might know people who worked in or owned salons. This list ranged from friends I knew through professional contact to people they knew. Each person knew 1 to 2 people I could contact. From this list of about 12 people, I began calling. In some cases, my intermediaries felt it would be more effective for them to contact potential respondents directly. One interview was in fact conducted by this intermediary.

Despite a fairly extensive list of local contacts, many leads were unfruitful. People were out of the country (in Vietnam), phone numbers were wrong and so forth. Due to this difficulty recruiting participants, the study was expanded to include other cities where my personal networks stretched. This explains the presence of one worker interview in Maryland and the three owner interviews in Los Angeles. In the end, this sample proved to be advantageous as the data suggests the extent of social networking is really cross-continental and transnational.

Overall, recruitment was not meant to be random but to find participants who would be most comfortable talking about the issues in great depth. The recruitment process turned into a very interesting exercise in social network mapping in its own right.

## Conducting Interviews

When possible, interviews were conducted in person at respondents' homes and salons. Two interviews were conducted at homes and two were conducted at salons. The remaining interviews were conducted by phone or in person by an intermediary. The length of interviews averaged 45 minutes. Some were only 25 minutes long and others were over an hour. The longest interview was 2 hrs long.

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<sup>5</sup>Only one salon out of five said I could come back when the owner was available and when I came back the owner was not there.

Interviews began with a brief description of the research project and information on confidentiality. I would usually begin with the questions in order. However, to keep conversations flowing naturally, I would often have to skip around and change the sequence of questions on the spot. Though I would return to as many questions as possible, some questions were not covered due to the length of interviews and the comfort level of respondents.

Also, for the first few interviews, I read from my list of questions and paused after each response to write down everything I heard. I noticed this interrupted the flow of the interview and may have detracted from a more in-depth conversation. I then tried to write notes as the respondent spoke and avoided pausing between questions that were linked. In face to face interviews, in order to maintain eye contact, I would wait until after the interview to write my notes. Writing notes while interviewing seemed to make some respondents less comfortable. I tried to gauge my respondent's comfort level and direct the interview in ways that would provide the richest information.

It was very difficult to catch all the important things respondents said, even when I took notes during the interview and especially when I wrote notes after the interview. It is even more difficult to remember tones and nuances. An additional complication comes in the language difference. I conducted the interviews in Vietnamese. Though I can speak Vietnamese, I do not write well in the language and my instant translations onto paper were not as quick or accurate as I would like.<sup>6</sup>

In the end, I conducted 1 pilot interview, 4 interviews with technicians, 6 interviews with owners and 1 interview with the owner of both a supply store and nail salon franchise. Altogether, I spoke to 12 people in the industry.

## **Other Sources of Data**

For over a year, I have also been heavily involved in another research project which undertook data collection on a much larger scale. This project was led by Lenore Azaroff and Cora Roeloffs at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell and carried out with Viet-AID. As an intern at New Ecology, I worked with Viet-AID and UMass Lowell to design the survey, recruit respondents, train interviewers, conduct interviews, set up the database and enter data. This research project focused on assessing health impacts, perceptions of risk, and work practices. However, because Viet-AID is also interested in developing economic development programs involving this sector, the survey also collected some demographic and occupational data. Some of these data are particularly useful and will be cited throughout this paper because the sample size in the UMass Lowell project is much larger than any in-depth sampling of nail salon workers to date. A total of 128 Vietnamese workers were interviewed. Of these, 63 were nail salon workers.<sup>7</sup> The study is currently awaiting formal

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<sup>6</sup>I would strongly consider taping interviews in future qualitative research though taping is particularly difficult with a population unfamiliar with social science research.

<sup>7</sup>The other respondents in the UMass Lowell survey were hardwood floor sanders (19) and workers in other sectors (46).

data analysis but I have been given permission to present some of the raw data in this paper.

## **Data Analysis**

I followed the guidelines for issue-based, generalizable data analysis described in Robert Weiss' *Learning from Strangers*, a practical guide for qualitative research. The four basic components of this analysis are coding, sorting, local integration and inclusive integration [Weiss, 1994]. Coding and sorting are self-explanatory. Local integration involves picking the most relevant issues, finding the main line and its variants, and forming mini-theories. One way to present this work is to summarize the main line and its variants. This is the method I chose. After local integration, inclusive integration is the final step and links the issues or mini-theories logically together to come to some general conclusion.

As I mentioned, most of the coding was built into the research instrument. I further coded responses to the open-ended questions. I began sorting by typing up notes from interviews into an Excel spreadsheet so responses to the same question could be displayed together. The frequency of responses was examined and where possible, I looked for relationships between different questions or variables. Local integration was done on the questions that seemed most useful and relevant for the analysis. This first part of the analysis was mostly descriptive, using responses to map out the networks.

The second part of the analysis took the observed networks and applied the theoretical framework from the literature. The issues were linked using inclusive integration and observations were organized along theoretical lines.

## **Limits of Interpretation and Research Design Alternatives**

Results generated by this research method seemed robust in some areas and weak in others. I feel confident the research instrument was reliable, particularly since the instrument produced similar responses across respondents and under different interviewing conditions.

Validity is more difficult to assess but I was encouraged to see many of my findings supported by prior research. New findings would have benefited from second interviews and a larger sample size. As mentioned earlier, validity may have been undermined by translation and communication issues. Taping the interviews would have improved validity tremendously. Validity could also have been improved by the use of other research methods, such as embedded participant observation. Another student researcher found the only way she could encourage workers to respond to her survey was to get her nails done at each salon. A modified version of this could have included getting my nails done and observing interaction in the salon. Two of the interviews were in fact conducted in salons, but there was not enough time to see significant interactions and there were no opportunities to speak to customers.

The representativeness of the findings is undermined by the small sample size and the method used to recruit participants. It is possible I would have encountered a larger variety of networks if I had sampled a larger group of workers and owners in a single location or chosen a different location, perhaps where the Vietnamese community is less segregated than in Boston or Los Angeles.

The significance of my analysis could also be strengthened were I to do this project again. The interpretation of results is undermined by unanswered questions (missing data) and the presence of only one, possibly two clear cases where the use of networks differed strongly from other cases in the sample. My arguments around the utility of industry networks could be bolstered by interviewing other members in the network, particularly supply store owners and cosmetology school owners. Also, since I did not interview any workers or owners who had left the nail salon industry, I cannot be as confident about my conclusions around mobility effects and outcomes.

## **C. Synopsis of Next Chapters**

The next chapter provides historical context on Vietnamese immigration and the rise of the nail salon industry. This chapter also provides background and demographic information on respondents in the study.

Chapter Three presents relevant findings and the network analysis. It begins by describing salient features of networks. These features are then compared with theory to develop a richer model of social network utility. The chapter ends with examples showing the difference in outcomes based on use of network ties.

Chapter Four summarizes implications of these findings for community development practitioners. It also offers recommendations specifically to DOHI.

## Chapter 2

# Background and Context

First, I review how the Vietnamese came to settle in America, which provides important clues to the choices and perspectives of the subjects in this study. Then, I summarize specifics of the nail salon niche. Finally, I present the characteristics of respondents in this survey.

### A. Vietnamese Immigrants in America

For this study, the most relevant aspects of the Vietnamese immigrant experience are 1) the traumatic departure from Vietnam and the financial, human and social resources immigrants brought with them and 2) the areas of the US where immigrants have settled and resettled.

#### **Leaving Vietnam, Passage to the US**

Mass emigration of Vietnamese people from Vietnam began in the months immediately after US withdrawal from Saigon in April, 1975 [Le, 2004]. Although the US had only planned for the evacuation of key South Vietnamese allies (about 17,000), increasing political and humanitarian pressure prompted President Ford to issue the Indochina Migration and Refugee Act of 1975 to allow for the departure of 200,000 people who would be in immediate danger following the establishment of the communist government. In the months following the fall of Saigon some 130,000 Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian and Hmong were resettled to the US. This group was considered to be among the more highly educated, and thus this departure is often cited as a brain drain on Vietnam.

These first immigrants were scattered to refugee camps at Camp Pendleton in Southern California, Fort Chaffee in Arkansas, Eglin Air Base in Florida, and Fort Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania. At this time and in the early years of resettlement, it was US policy to disperse settlement sites to prevent overburden of any one city's public services and to

prevent "ghettoization." Some of these arrival points later became hubs, attracting future immigrants, as the familial and old social connections from the home country, as well as the desire to live amongst one's own ethnic group, would serve to reunite Vietnamese immigrants.

Communist reorganization of Vietnam disrupted and traumatized those who still lived there. The first few years of communist rule were marked by "reeducation" camps, the closing of businesses owned by ethnic Chinese living in Vietnam, the seizing and redistribution of farmland, mass relocation from urban areas to uncultivated and war-damaged rural areas, depletion of national resources to build up the military and the eventual invasion of Cambodia and retaliation by China. These policies and events, along with growing political instability, increasing corruption, natural disasters, and poor infrastructure development sparked the desperate departure of many Vietnamese people, this time in overcrowded, under-equipped, and poorly constructed boats.

These escapees, dubbed "boat people", often used their entire life savings and sold material possessions to gain access to a boat or bribe government officials to look the other way. Some were captured, executed or jailed for their attempts to escape. For those who did manage to leave Vietnam, the passage by sea to nearby Thailand, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Indonesia and Singapore was treacherous. Boats fell prey to pirates, starvation and capsizing. It is unknown how many refugees lost their lives, but estimates range from 10 to 50 percent. Others estimate one-third were victims of robbery, rape or murder. Between 1978 and 1981, some 400,000 Vietnamese people left Vietnam in this fashion, accounting for what some call the second wave of Vietnamese immigration. These refugees were likely to arrive with no material assets.

Entry of the Vietnamese boat people into the U.S. was facilitated by US policy, the Refugee Act of 1980, and eventually, Vietnamese policy, in the form of the Orderly Departure Program, drafted in consultation with the UN under international humanitarian pressure. The former allowed for the departure of family members of former South Vietnamese government and military officials. By the mid-1990s, over 200,000 Vietnamese had entered the U.S. this way.

The latest, or third, wave of Vietnamese immigration came in the early 1990s. In 1988, the Amerasian Homecoming Act allowed for the resettlement of over 70,000 mixed-race descendents of American servicemen and in 1989, the Humanitarian Operation Program facilitated the departure of the remainder of former South Vietnamese prisoners. Immigration slowed beginning in the early 1990s and many of the new arrivals were family members of those already settled in the US.

The circumstances surrounding entry into the US indicates the trauma Vietnamese immigrants carry with them as they make their choices in the US. One of the community contacts I made while recruiting participants felt the history of Vietnamese people, beleaguered by a succession of wars and transplanted by the latest one, helps to explain some of their economic choices. He believed Vietnamese people in America live in "survival" mode. They take whatever jobs they can to feed their families and do whatever they can to ensure their



children have better opportunities than they did. He felt, in this scenario and given the availability of jobs in the US, there was no room to be picky. These sentiments are echoed later in the responses I heard from interview participants.

### Settling in America

Despite the dispersed location of their initial settlements, Vietnamese immigrants found their way to a few major metropolitan areas where friends and relatives lived. Nearly 40% of all Vietnamese Americans live in California (447,032). The largest concentration of Vietnamese outside Vietnam resides in Orange Country (135,548), south of Los Angeles. On the East Coast, both Virginia and Massachusetts have large numbers of Vietnamese residents. See chart below and Figure 2-1.

Table 2.1: Five States with Highest Vietnamese Immigrant Populations

States by Rank	Number of Vietnamese
1. California	447,032
2. Texas	134,961
3. Washington	46,149
4. Virginia	37,309
5. Massachusetts	33,962

(Total Vietnamese Population in U.S. in 2000 = 1,122,528)

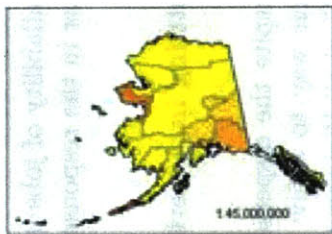
(Source: US Census 2000)

Fields Corner, a neighborhood in Dorchester (part of Boston) where this research project began, is home to the largest concentration of Vietnamese immigrants in Massachusetts: 10,000, according to the 2000 Census. Dorchester is the largest neighborhood in Boston and one of the poorest. Viet-AID estimates 38% percent of the Vietnamese families in Fields Corner live below the poverty line. This is much higher than the national average of 16%, as reported by NAVASA (National Alliance for Vietnamese American Service Agencies) and the Census in 1999.

Vietnamese immigrants are one of the poorest Asian immigrant groups. In 2002, NAVASA reports the poverty rate for people reporting as Asian, native Hawaiian and other Pacific islander as 10.2%. The March 1998 Current Population Survey (CPS) shows the rate of Vietnamese immigrant use of welfare, 17.6%<sup>1</sup> was higher than the average for all immigrants (12.9%) and much higher compared to other Asian immigrant groups (e.g. Filipino at 3.9%, Chinese/Taiwanese at 6.9% and Korean at 9.3%) [Camarota, 1999].

Vietnamese businesses, in general, garner the lowest average annual receipts (\$95,361) of Asian American-owned businesses and well below the average across Asian groups (\$336,195),

<sup>1</sup>For any combination of public assistance, supplemental security income and food stamps).



## Ethnic Vietnamese in the US by County (2000)

as a percentage of county population

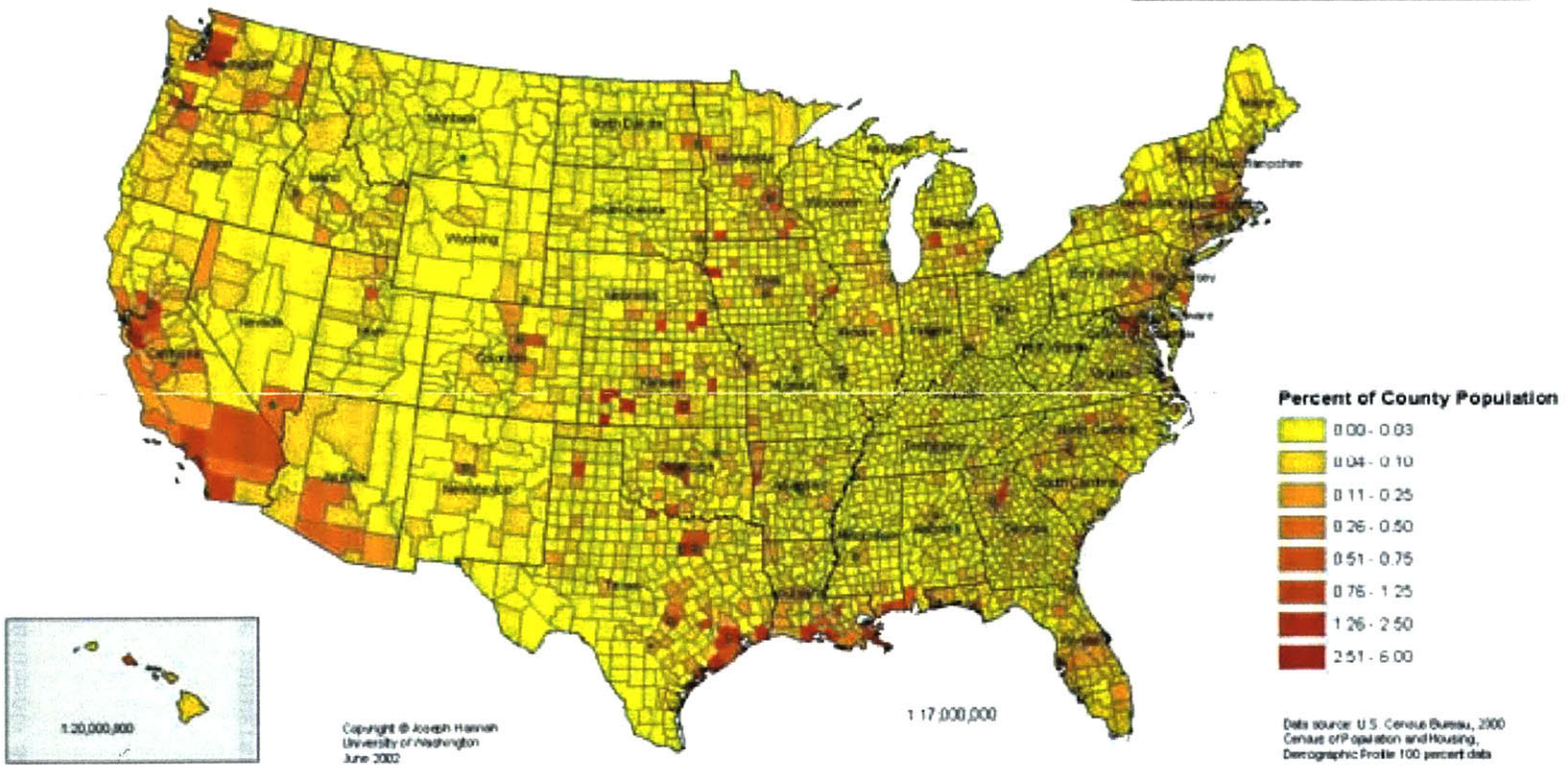
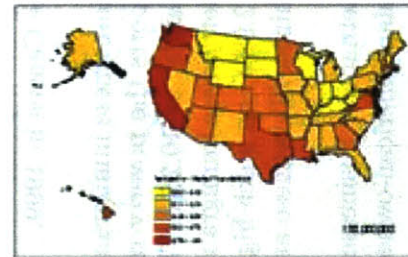


Figure 2-1: Vietnamese Population as Percentage of Counties (Joseph Hannah, Univ. of Washington)

according to the Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises, US Economic Census 1997. Annual receipts for Vietnamese firms in the “personal services” sector (where nail salons would fall) total a little over a billion, with an average of \$29,000 per firm (\$95,000 per firm for firms with paid employees).<sup>2</sup>

Nail salons have provided a way out of the poverty and an entrepreneurial opportunity for many Vietnamese immigrants but as the above numbers indicate, the returns are not necessarily high. The section to follow presents some of these dilemmas.

## B. The Nail Salon Niche

The nail salon industry is dominated by Vietnamese technicians and owners. In 1996, 30 percent of the 22,000 salons in the US were owned by Vietnamese Americans, and in Los Angeles, the figure was 80 percent [Huynh, 1996]. Vietnamese technicians make up 37 percent of all licensed manicurists in the country according to the trade publication, Nails Magazine.<sup>3</sup> In 2002, Nails reported 368,818 licensed manicurists in the US, meaning there were an estimated 136,463 Vietnamese manicurists.

Conversely, more Vietnamese people are employed or self-employed in this sector than in any other single sector. The 2000 US Census estimates the total Vietnamese civilian labor force in the US at 566,706. Using the 37 percent figure from Nails, I calculate that 24 percent of Vietnamese people are employed as manicurists. A search on the Massachusetts Board of Cosmetology website for common Vietnamese surnames yielded roughly 4000 manicurists, some with expired licenses. In Massachusetts, the Census counted 15,289 Vietnamese immigrants in the civilian labor force. Using these figures, we can estimate 26 percent of the Massachusetts Vietnamese workforce works in salons, similar to the national estimate. Estimating that nail salons make up a large portion of the “personal services” sector in the US Economic Census from 1997, close to 30 percent of Vietnamese-owned firms in the US are nail salons.

### Growth of an Industry

Researchers imply growth in this industry began in California [Huynh, 1996]. Huynh writes that Vietnamese women have been manicurists for over 20 years. According to Huynh, the number of licensed manicurists in Los Angeles County increased by 50 percent from 9,755 to 15,238 between 1984 and 1989 and that Vietnamese-Americans comprised 80 percent of this increase.

With the rise of nail salons came the proliferation of cosmetology schools in Southern California, which reported large numbers of new Vietnamese students in the 1980’s. As the

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<sup>2</sup>Nail salons tend to employ five or less technicians, according to Nails Magazine.

<sup>3</sup>Ethnic Vietnamese comprise less than 1 percent of the US total population.

popularity of manicure licenses grew, Vietnamese themselves began managing the schools themselves. Huynh found these schools adapted their programs to meet the needs of Vietnamese students. Courses began being offered in Vietnamese and financial aid became available.<sup>4</sup> Though it has not been well documented, further integration in this sector also involves the growth of Vietnamese-owned nail supply stores.

As the number of Vietnamese salons and technicians grew in California towards a saturation point, salons began appearing in other parts of the US. I was unable to find longitudinal data on the rise of this industry, but the trade publication, Nails Magazine, had done a regional analysis showing the change in the number of salons and licensed technicians between 2001 and 2002 for states and regions. Table 2.2 shows a sample of that data for the regions and the states with the most dramatic changes within each region. (Massachusetts and California are included for reference.)

The "regional analysis" shows the highest growth in salons between 2001 and 2002 occurred in the Northeast while the highest growth in licensed technicians occurred in the South. The number of salons and licensed technicians is declining in the Midwest and holding steady or growing at a slower rate in the Western and Mountain regions. The most dramatic growth in number of salons occurred in Vermont (49 percent), Maine (30.3 percent) and South Dakota (25 percent). The most dramatic growth in number of licensed technicians occurred in Maine (80.4 percent), New Hampshire (43.2 percent), Vermont (54.5 percent), North Dakota (110 percent), and North Carolina (46.4 percent). Note these states may show particularly dramatic growth where the number of salons and technicians was low to begin with.

Although Nails does not show in the data set the proportion of growth attributable directly to Vietnamese entry into the industry, there is information on the high rates of Vietnamese participation in general. In 2001, Nails reported Vietnamese immigrants had helped to expand the number of nail salons and practitioners by 374 percent and 327 percent respectively in the last 10 years.

It has been suggested that these ebbs and flows of salons and technicians is due not only to saturation and resettlement patterns but also to the disparities in regulatory policy and enforcement. It is beyond the scope of this study to show how the shifts in numbers by states and regions relate to these factors, but this regional analysis provides an intriguing look at how the industry is shifting locations.

## **Regal Nails**

The most recent chapter in the story of this industry's growth is a new player that changes the landscape of Vietnamese business ownership. Regal Nails is the parent company of over

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<sup>4</sup>In California, the training can cost between \$1200 and \$1500, but government-sponsored job training programs sometimes cover tuition. Though most beauty colleges offer a "complete professional course" requiring 1600 hours of instruction, Huynh claims Vietnamese school offer a "specialized manicuring course" with only 350 hours.

Table 2.2: Change in No. of Salons and Technicians between 2001 and 2002 by Region and States with Greatest Change [Nails Magazine, 2002]

Region or State	% Change in No. Salons	% Change in No. Technicians
<b><i>Northeast</i></b>	7.7	5.8
D.C.	17.3	6.1
Maine	30.2	80.4
Massachusetts	5.2	-5.4
New Hampshire	16.6	43.2
Pennsylvania	2.4	20.6
Vermont	49.0	54.5
<b><i>Mountain</i></b>	4.1	2.2
North Dakota	0	110
South Dakota	25	0
<b><i>Midwest</i></b>	-1.0	-9.30
Ohio	-5.8	-35.9
<b><i>South</i></b>	3.3	9.5
North Carolina	4.8	46.4
South Carolina	5.4	26.2
Tennessee	-0.7	25.3
<b><i>West</i></b>	4.1	1.2
California	3.9	0.80

700 nail salons, located in Wal-Marts across the country. It was launched in 1997 by two Vietnamese brothers.

Quy Ton, the president and co-founder, has lived in the US for 19 years and completed his bachelors degree in chemical engineering here in 1995. He has more schooling than most of the other owners in this sample and he has lived in the US a long time, which means he is likely to have larger stores of human and financial capital. But like the other male college graduate in this sample and like other owners who have lived in the US for 15 years or more, he had difficulty finding work and opened a small business with the help of family and friends. He raised \$25,000. The other \$25,000 he needed was lent to him by the manufacturer for whom he distributed nail supplies.

After two years in the supply business, and seeing prices continue to fall, he recognized it as a dead end. Though the idea to set up a salon in Wal-Mart was his own, it was the relationship he had to someone else that helped him launch his franchise. The elderly Caucasian man who managed the property of his supply store negotiated the Wal-Mart contract for Quy and helped Quy convince Wal-Mart it needed nail salons in all its locations across the country. The Regal Nails franchise has been growing at the rate of 100 firms each year since the franchise started in 1997.

Regal Nails is based in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and has a 50 person management team. Mr. Ton reports the team is mostly Vietnamese, though his accountant and lawyer are Caucasian-American. His Vietnamese staff are mostly college graduates, some with business degrees, and were recruited through personal referrals, not a competitive process. Mr. Ton recalls in one case he hired almost an entire family: four sisters.

### **Income and Contract Relationship**

Vietnamese salons use a contract arrangement for their technicians. Technicians are themselves self-employed. Salon owners pay rent on the salon, buy materials and manage the salon. Technicians mainly perform the service (though owners often work as technicians also) and "rent" the space from the owner. A technician explained to me that in storefront salons, you usually earn 60/40 or 60 percent of the service fee. In malls, technicians tend to earn 50/50 because the traffic is higher.<sup>5</sup> Due to this contractual employment structure, technicians receive few benefits. The uninsurance rate among Vietnamese nail salon technicians surveyed by Thy Nguyen was 40 percent [Nguyen, 2000].

I also learned from owners in this study that in some salons, owners will pay a salary during the winter months when work is not as steady the summer months. In one salon, located in a higher income neighborhood in Rhode Island, employees are paid a weekly salary of \$400 in the winter and according to the number of clients they have in the summer, taking in between \$700 to \$800 each week.

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<sup>5</sup>It is unclear whether technicians bring their own instruments or they are provided by the salon. There seems to be a mix in this practice.

According to Bureau of Labor Statistics, the mean annual wage for manicurists is \$16,920 with only 10 percent earning more than \$25,000 a year (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000). Though \$16,920 is not a high annual wage by any means, nail salon work tends to be attractive. Wages are slightly higher than those for other jobs new immigrants tend to find. Owners often do not earn much more than technicians do. In fact, some earn less as I will illustrate later.

## Work Environment and Health Hazards

Nail salon technicians work with chemicals with the potential to affect every organ system through acute or chronic exposure [Ly, 2003]. The trade involves the continuous application and evaporation of solvents to prepare, shape, polish and harden nails. The application of artificial nails utilizes several hazardous products, such as the notorious methacrylates, and raises more concern from industrial hygienists than manicures or pedicures.<sup>6</sup> Artificial nails can take 1 to 2 hours to complete. Depending on the task, workers may also be exposed to acetone, toluene, formaldehyde, and other carcinogenic, neurotoxic, teratogenic, or corrosive chemicals as they travel in liquid, dust, and vapor form in the workspace.

MMA (methyl methacrylate) has received the most attention in the media, for health effects on customers, not necessarily workers.<sup>7</sup> MMA is a colorless, flammable liquid with a strong, bitter odor. It is found in the liquid monomer that, when combined with a powder polymer, forms a paste applied in layers to build an artificial nail. MMA is an eye and mucous membrane irritant. It can cause allergic and irritant dermatitis and occupational asthma. Other reported health effects include slowed peripheral nerve conduction, hand numbness and pain, headaches, nausea, fatigue and sleep disturbances [MADPH, 1997]. Once polymerized, it is relatively inert and nontoxic. However, when cut or sanded as in salons, the dust can cause further eye, skin, and mucous membrane irritation [MADPH, 1997].

In response to this media exposure, the FDA restricted the use of products containing 100% MMA. About 30 states have subsequently banned MMA. The salon products manufacturing industry responded by introducing EMA (ethyl methacrylate), touted as a safer product despite its nearly identical molecular structure. EMA-based products also costs upwards of 5 times as much as MMA-based products. Less is known about the toxicity of EMA than MMA, but it is believed to have similar health effects. There is currently no OSHA standard for EMA. Industrial hygiene recommendations are the same for both [MADPH, 1997].

The lesson here is there is still limited information on risks and even less information on what would be a safer alternative. There are few epidemiological studies for salon work. A handful of studies do show greater prevalence of respiratory irritation [Hiipakka and Samimi, 1987], diminished neurological performance [LoSasso et al., 2002], and increased risk of spontaneous abortion among manicurists [John et al., 1987]. Still, with exposure levels in salons

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<sup>6</sup>Owners and workers actually reported performing more manicures and pedicures on any given day than any other procedure.

<sup>7</sup>Some Vietnamese believe this negative press is part of an attack on Vietnamese entrepreneurs.

mostly unmeasured and health effects for many products unknown, with exposure to mixtures of chemicals unstudied and with pressure to produce smooth, durable nails high, the challenge of finding a practical solution remains daunting.

## **Regulatory Environment**

Salons are governed at the state and local level by building, fire, sanitation, and hazardous waste handling codes. At the federal level, there are general OSHA standards for hazard communication, safety equipment, and some chemicals. State cosmetology boards usually handle licensing of salons and technicians. Though these regulatory bodies have oversight of nail salons, neither their policies or implementation programs seem adequate to address occupational health. Current exposure levels in salons are sometimes orders of magnitude lower than the permissible exposure limits (PEL's) set by OSHA, EPA and NIOSH. For MMA, the PEL is 100 ppm and exposures in salons tend not to exceed this limit. However, MMA has been found to be irritating at concentrations below 50 ppm, measured as an 8 hr time weighted average [MADPH, 1997].

These outdated or ineffective standards may discourage triggering of regulatory intervention. When agencies do make a visit, it is usually due to complaints from neighboring businesses of strong odors . Visits may be rare as agencies are often understaffed. According to Mary Ly (2003), the Massachusetts Board of Cosmetology has three inspectors for the entire state. These three inspectors divide their time over more than a thousand salons, including hairdressing, nails, tanning and others. Since they are required to inspect the opening of salons, there is little time for other investigations. Another example of ineffective regulation is ventilation, governed by building codes. Owners are required to have ventilation systems when applying for an occupancy permit, but building inspectors rarely confirm a ventilation system's capacity or use.

## **Past and Current Interventions**

Community-led interventions into this sector include outreach and education programs. In San Jose, CA, Vietnamese health workers and actors working with the Santa Clara Center for Occupational Safety and Health (SCCOSH) perform plays to heighten awareness. In Springfield, MA, the Pioneer Valley Project developed an EPA funded Vietnamese Nail Salon Education and Problem Solving Program to facilitate the collaboration of Vietnamese-American Civic Association, the Vietnamese Health Project, two Vietnamese religious groups, the local Health Department and health care centers with other statewide efforts to develop a training and technical assistance program.

For the past year, I have worked on the Dorchester Occupational Health Initiative with New Ecology, Inc. (NEI), an environmental non-profit and technical assistance provider to community development corporations (CDCs), and Viet-AID, a CDC targeting the Vietnamese community in Fields Corner. Much of the work we have done so far has been to assist the



researchers at UMass Lowell with the large survey project, to collect information through focus groups and other strategies, and to think about how to develop effective occupational health interventions.

Viet-AID is also concerned about the upward mobility of nail salon technicians and is interested in providing workforce development training possibly combined with health and safety trainings. Both New Ecology and Viet-AID are interested in working with owners to identify industry leaders who will pioneer sustainable business practices. This may include forming purchasing cooperatives to lower the cost of switching to less toxic products or installing more effective ventilation systems. NEI and Viet-AID hope to recruit technicians and owners to explore these strategies with them.

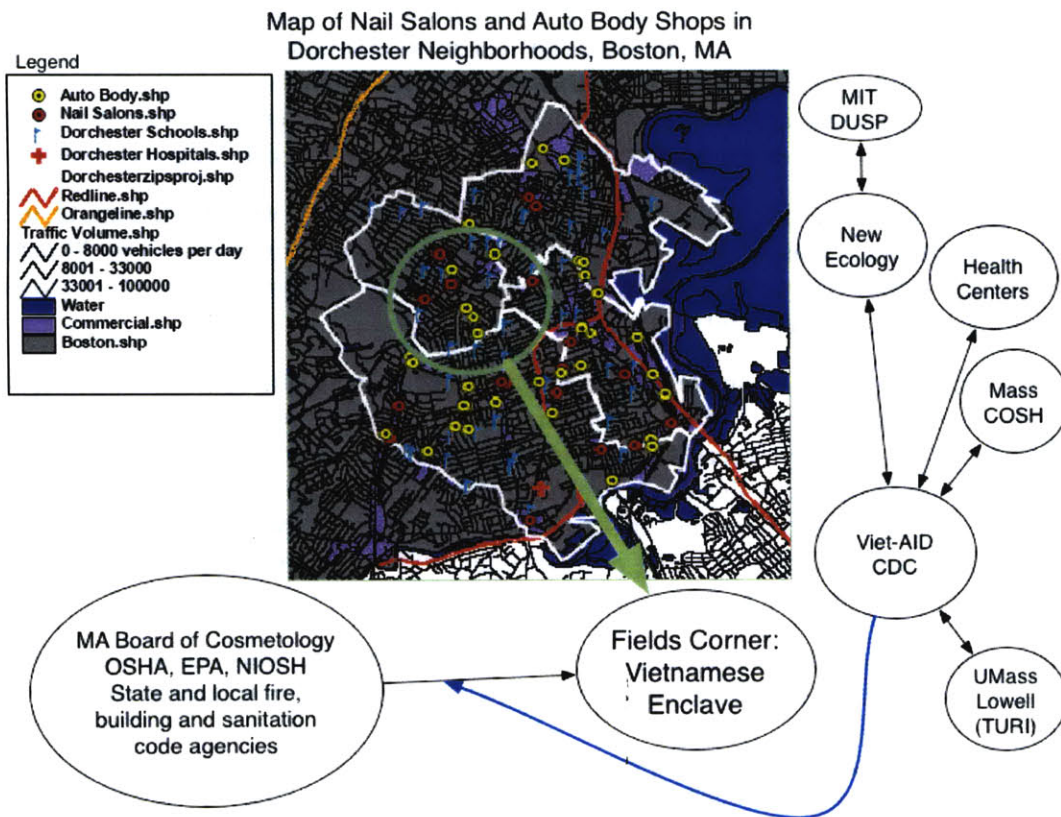


Figure 2-2: Stakeholders in Nail Salon Industry, Dorchester, MA [Centrella et al., 2003]

## C. Respondent Characteristics

### Age and Gender

The majority of respondents in this survey were women in their late twenties or thirties (63 percent),<sup>8</sup> a characteristic supported by finding in other studies [Huynh, 1996, Nguyen, 2000, Ly, 2003]. Among 63 nail salon workers in the Greater Boston area, the UMass Lowell found the age of workers ranged from 17 to 55 years old and the median age was 34 years old. In the UMass Lowell study, 90 percent of respondents were women and 10 percent were men.<sup>9</sup> The trade magazine, Nails, reports 95.9 percent of nail technicians are women and their average age is 37.6 years [NailsMagazine, 2001].

### Education and English Language Skills

Data on education was not gathered during interviews.<sup>10</sup> But the UMass Lowell study revealed most nail salon technicians have a high school education or less, mostly completed in Vietnam. The average number of years of schooling completed by nail salons workers in the UMass Lowell study was 15 years. Despite this high number, it is difficult to gauge how educated the workers are. The quality of education in Vietnam varies depending on urban versus rural locations and schooling that occurred during or shortly after the war as opposed to schooling during the more stable later years. Still, an average of 15 years of schooling indicates these are women who may be ready for further job training or higher education if they were given an opportunity to improve their English language skills.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, when asked, in the UMass Lowell study, whether they would participate in job training developed by Viet-AID, 38 out of 63 (60 percent) said they would. The 40 percent who said they would not participate or were unsure, citing old age, income after training, and training topics as considerations.

Most technicians and owners spoke limited English, with more fluent speakers tending to be those who have lived in the US for more than 10 years. Sixty-three percent of respondents in the UMass Lowell study described their English reading ability and/or English speaking ability as “limited” or “very limited.” In this group, the median number of years spent in the US was 5 years. Thirty percent described their reading or speaking ability as “good” and one person described her reading and speaking abilities as “excellent.” In this group, the median number of years spent in the US was 10 years.

Of the respondents in my study, three cited the opportunity to learn more English while working in the salon as a positive aspect of nail salon work. One respondent said:

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<sup>8</sup>Twenty-seven percent were women over 40.

<sup>9</sup>The predominance of women of child-bearing age in this profession is one of the reasons Viet-AID became concerned about health impacts.

<sup>10</sup>I was concerned a question about education would make respondents feel uncomfortable.

<sup>11</sup>This figure seemed high so when I took the average without the four people who had college degrees, the average dropped to 11.5 years. Only 60 people responded to this question total.

If I had worked in a factory these last few years, I would be done for. At least in the salon, I learn a little English by talking with my customers.

Table 2.3: Summary of Respondent Characteristics

NAIL SALON TECHNICIANS

Gender	Age	Residence	Salon Location	Years in US	Years as Tech
F	20-30	San Gabriel, CA*	Whittier, CA	17	1
F	40-50	Dorchester, MA	Sciuate, MA	24	3-4
F	30-40	Malden, MA	Malden, MA	7	6
F	40-50	Gaithersburg, MD		7	6
F	30-40	Dorchester, MA		13	10

\*Pilot interview

NAIL SALON OWNERS

Gender	Age	Residence	Salon Location	Years in US	Years as Tech	Years as Owner
F	30-40	Rockland, MA	Rockland, MA	17	4	4
F	20-30	Dorchester, MA	Rhode Island	4	4	2
F	30-40		Baldwin Park, CA		12	12
F	30-40	El Monte, CA	Pasadena, CA	20	10	1
M	20-30		La Verne, CA	15	1	1
F	50-60	Dorchester, MA	Coastal MA	11	8	2
M	30-40	Baton Rouge, LA	National	19	0	7

### Arrival and First Jobs

In the group I interviewed, the number of years lived in the US ranged from 4 to 20 years and the median was 14 years. Three people have lived in the US for less than 10 years and eight people have lived in the US for more than 10 years. The median for all respondents in the UMass Lowell study is lower than in my study: 6 years. Only 38 percent of the nail technicians in the UMass Lowell sample arrived before 1995 compared to 72 percent in my sample. This variation may be due to my sample containing owners as well as technicians which selects people who have already been technicians for at least a few years. Also, I recruited participants using networks familiar to me and newer arrivals are less likely to be in my own social network. Finally, some of the respondents in my sample were from Los Angeles country where Vietnamese immigrants settled earlier than in Massachusetts. Still, among the eight who have lived in the US longer than 10 years, half were from Los Angeles and half from Boston.

Respondents who arrived in the second wave of immigrants, in the late 80's or early 90's, tended to have other jobs before becoming nail salon workers while those who came in the late 90's tended to begin nail salon work right away. In my study, 5 out of the 7 respondents who arrived in the US before 1995 worked in other jobs first whereas none of the 3 respondents who arrived after 1995 held other jobs before becoming nail technicians. For those who did work in other jobs, their first or early jobs included punching pricetags at a Filene's, being a personal cook, garment work, and assembly line work.

In the UMass Lowell survey, only 15 out of 63 (24 percent) held other jobs in the US before becoming nail technicians<sup>12</sup> and there was no clear relationship between having a job prior to nail salon work and being a newer arrival. Twenty-nine percent of immigrants who arrived before 1995 held at least one other job before working in nail salons, only slightly higher than the percentage of immigrants who arrived after 1995 and held other jobs (21 percent). A sample of jobs held by nail technicians before they entered the industry includes office work, dental assistance, landscaping, temporary work, cashier, housekeeping in nursing homes, garment work and factory work.<sup>13</sup>

### Mainstream Labor Market Barriers & Entry into Nail Salons

Whether the respondents had lived in the US for less than 5 years or more than 15, they appeared to have similar difficulties finding work in the mainstream labor market. But barriers to the mainstream market alone do not explain the growth in the number of nail salons or technicians. This growth is associated with high entry barriers into living wage jobs, low entry barriers to the salon industry, and a growing network of friends and family in the industry. Table 2.4 shows the reasons respondents in my survey entered the industry.<sup>14</sup>

Table 2.4: Reasons for Entering Nail Salon Industry

Reason	No. of Respondents	Percent
Money/Urgency to Earn Income	6	55%
Social Atmosphere/Chance to Learn English	5	45%
Easy to Enter/Easy Work	3	27%
Flexibility	2	18%
English "Not Good Enough"	2	18%
Difficulty Finding Other Work	2	18%

A few respondents described the hardship of other low-wage work, as machine operators or garment workers in factories: the pay was low, the work hard and there was no chance

<sup>12</sup>Three people had worked in Vietnam.

<sup>13</sup>Six of the fifteen, or 40 percent, of those who held other jobs in the US worked in factories, indicating manufacturing is one of the largest employers of new Vietnamese immigrants. Four of these immigrants worked for paper manufacturing companies.

<sup>14</sup>Respondents can give more than one reason for entering the industry.

to learn anything useful. Five out of 11 (45%) respondents cited the social environment and opportunity to learn English as an incentive to work in nail salons. Another benefit is flexibility of hours and the ability to pick up children from school or take a day off when needed.<sup>15</sup> The reason most often cited for entering the industry (55 percent) was money and the need for cash right away. Respondents say the money is not as good as in the past but it is still better than most jobs.

Respondents say entry into the nail salon industry is “easy” and made easier by short and affordable training requirements. Cosmetology schools are often Vietnamese-owned and operated and located in Vietnamese neighborhoods. In California, training to receive a manicurist license requires 400 hours of instruction, while in Massachusetts, the requirement is 100 hours. In California, the licensing exam is given in Vietnamese. Cosmetology schools are reported to be quite lax in teaching the curricula mandated by the state (in Massachusetts, the requirement is 25 hours of health and safety training).

While some respondents felt the work was easy to learn, others stated there is quite a bit of skill involved. When asked why she entered the nail salon industry, one respondent did not answer for herself but said that she believed Vietnamese people in general have the skills to do this work – they are detail-oriented and careful. Others expressed pride in their skills, despite feeling trapped by the lack of other opportunities. When asked what her greatest concerns were about this business, one owner responded:

My health, sitting her everyday breathing in the vapors. But I have no choice. I'm good at what I do....I need money for my family. I want to take care of my family. I want to see them grow up. Then I can retire.

In addition to the ease of entering the nail salon sector, particularly compared to entry into the mainstream labor market, most respondents used ties to family and friends to help them find their first nail salon jobs. Six out of nine (67%) respondents who answered this question described a family member helping them to get into the nail salon industry.

The main reason I do nail salon work is for the money. I did not want to work because I am old, but my daughters encouraged me to work. In California, I had friends who worked in nail salons, so I bought some supplies and got started by doing manicures out of my house.

My first job in the US was nails. My husband had helped someone to open a salon.

I studied hair styling in California but when I moved to Massachusetts, I wanted to work closer to home to be near my children, so I helped my husband run this salon.

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<sup>15</sup>This varied, however, as some respondents felt it was difficult to take time off.

Two women said a friend introduced her to the job. Only one respondent said she found her cosmetology school and first nail salon job by reading the local paper.<sup>16</sup>

### Length of Time in US & Length of Time in Industry

Table 2.5 implies the relationship between years lived in the US and years spent in the industry. Newer arrivals, those who have lived in the US for less than 15 years, have spent between 77 and 100 percent of their time in the US in the nail salon industry. Earlier arrivals, those who have lived in the US for 15 years or longer, have spent between 6 and 50 percent of their time in the industry. This observation mirrors the one made earlier that earlier arrivals were more likely to hold other jobs before working in nail salons.

Table 2.5: Percent Time in US Spent in Nail Salon Industry

Years in US	Year in Industry	Percent Time in US in Industry
4	4	100%
7	6	85%
7	6	85%
11	8	72%
13	10	77%
15	1	7%
17	1	6%
17	4	24%
20	10	50%
24	3-4	15%

### Location of Residence vs Location of Salon

An interesting pattern that emerged in this study was technicians and owners lived in urban and suburban areas with lower incomes than the communities in which their salons were located. Of the seven respondents for whom there is data on both the city of residence and the location of the salon, all seven worked in neighborhoods where the median household income was the same or higher than the median income of the neighborhoods where they resided.<sup>17</sup> Two respondents worked and lived in areas with comparable median household incomes. Two lived in a low-income suburban neighborhood and worked in a moderate income suburb. And three lived in a low-income urban neighborhood but worked a much higher income neighborhoods (two of them were coastal towns).

<sup>16</sup>Vietnamese language papers always contain a large number of ads for job openings in salons and salons for sale.

<sup>17</sup>Median household incomes for each city came from the 2000 US Census.

This is an important observation because it sets up possible connections technicians and owners will have with networks related to the business: customers, suppliers, and other owners. The more different the setting of the salon from the neighborhood where the technician or owner lives, the more weak ties the technician or owner may have. Also, location of the salon may determine, in part, the types of products and services a salon can offer which in turn affects the indoor air quality and working conditions of technicians and owners.





## Chapter 3

# Describing and Analyzing Vietnamese Networks

In the first part of this chapter, I present findings through the retelling of one complete story and a summary of key observations. The story is representative of others I have heard but it is distinctive in important ways. Beginning with one story provides a coherent introduction to the themes and issues proceeding the story. This part of the analysis is descriptive and contains information on network structure (who, how they know each other) and function (what type of interaction or exchange, how frequent).

In the second half of this chapter, I analyze these findings using the theoretical framework of social networks. I create a typology for network ties and their function and suggest a connection between type of ties and economic and health-related outcomes.

### A. Describing the Networks

The people, businesses and organizations that comprise the networks mapped in this study include 1) nail salon technicians and owners; 2) family and friends; 3) clients; 4) product retailers, or suppliers, and cosmetology schools; and 5) community institutions such as churches and social service providers. These players are part of what appear to be three subnetworks, one revolving around the family (and very close friends), one revolving around the industry, and one revolving around community institutions.

The following story of a technician, who is now an owner, is representative of several stories I heard during in my interviews. However, like each of those stories, there are some important variations which I will point out later.

## 1. Quynh's Story

Quynh is the young owner (29 years old) of a nail salon in a nice neighborhood in Rhode Island. She herself lives with two roommates in Dorchester, MA. In addition to the long hours she works at the salon, (10-12 hours each day), she also has a long commute that includes picking up and dropping off other technicians in her store.

Quynh arrived in the US in 2000. Her family had already moved to the area several years previously. In Vietnam she worked in a hair salon. When she arrived in the US, she needed to work right away and although she was taking English classes, it seemed the only jobs she could find were factory jobs. Luckily her family had owned a nail salon in Rhode Island for 15 years, so Quynh began working in the salon right away. Her aunt was the manager.

After working there for two years, Quynh took over as owner and manager for her aunt who was getting tired of working long hours and wanted to spend more time with her children. Quynh's aunt also had another business and did not want to care for both.

When she took over the salon, Quynh decided to upgrade the store, due to the heightened competition in the area. She needed about \$35,000, \$20,000 of which was for materials. She borrowed some of the money from family and most of it from a friend she knew in church, someone who had lived in the US for several years. She also got free or discounted labor from family and friends. Family and close friends continue to provide services at lowered cost: painting, fixing, and helping to maintain the store. Quynh's roommate, who works at the Protestant church they both attend, has been the greatest help of all. They upgraded and (re)started the salon together. Her roommate handles accounting for the store and helps manage it. Finally, her roommate seems to offer quite a bit of emotional support.

Quynh has great long-time clients, mostly Caucasian-American who are well-off. These are her steady clients; they come every couple weeks. Clients who are low-income, often people of color, do not come as regularly to the store. Her regular clients see the salon as a neighborhood hang-out. They will often come when they do not need their nails done, just to chat with Quynh or catch up with friends. They help Quynh with her English. Quynh feels interaction with these clients is a positive aspect of her work.

Her family, friends (from church), and clients offer the most support to Quynh. Although she has fairly close interaction with her workers, she does not mention them as people she turns to when she needs help with the store. Other owners do not often work together, share information or help each other out. Competition is high. The salons near her charge less than she does and subsequently, she surmises, they probably use lower quality products. She knows the products she buys are the more expensive ones on the market but she feels it is very important to protect her health and the health of her workers, in order to offer high quality service to the client and to make the salon environment

pleasant.<sup>1</sup>

There are two products of particular concern to her: the primer and liquid for acrylic nails. She describes two varieties of liquids, used for acrylic nails, one with a strong smell and one without. When the odorless one came on the market, she tried it. Unfortunately, the odorless liquid gave her rashes, eye irritation, and acne. She had to switch back to the smelly variety for a while. In the end, to please her customers, she decided to stick with the odorfree liquid. She went to a doctor for her skin and eye irritation and something he gave her for the rash seems to be working.<sup>2</sup> There are also two varieties of primer. One causes headaches and dizziness and makes her hands feel 'hot.' The better one is more expensive and never on sale, but is higher quality.

For ventilation, her salon opens doors or uses a very big ventilation system. It is very expensive and uses a lot of energy. Her electricity bill runs \$300-400/mo. (not including heat). In the summer, they just open the doors.

In addition to health risks, Quynh works with very thin margins. Every year since she started, her business has reported a loss. Her store grosses about \$80,000 annually. She has 4 employees, one of whom is her aunt who works part-time and who she pays about \$10,000. She pays the other 3 about \$16,000 each<sup>3</sup>. Quynh's labor costs therefore total \$58,000. She also must spend \$15,000 on supplies (about \$300 per week and \$3600 on utilities, not including heat.<sup>4</sup> This rough estimate of expenses totals \$76,600. Quynh reports she makes less than her technicians do.

Quynh reveals one of the biggest problems she faces is unreported wages by her employees. Quynh loses money because she pays her technicians in cash. Since she herself fully reports and pays taxes, she loses money when her employees refuse to accept payments by check or to pay for their portion of tax. Her roommate, who helps her run the store, has asked the technicians many times to change this arrangement but they do not agree. Quynh feels she does not have the power to change this situation, perhaps because she is younger than some of her technicians.

Quynh's greatest concerns are her health and future. She wonders what she will do after she gets out of the salon business. She does not plan to work in this sector for very much longer. She wants to start a different business but does not know what it will be. She is currently trying to learn more English. As for health interventions, Quynh is willing to take actions to further minimize health

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<sup>1</sup>She chooses products mostly by sampling. She tries them out on the clients who trust her the most to see how well they work. The supply store she buys from is a big one. She likes their selection and feels the products are higher quality there.

<sup>2</sup>Though she did not mention the powder used for acrylic nails as being of particular concern, she did explain that there are also 2 kinds of powder. One costs \$50 and the other, which comes in smaller bottles, costs \$110. The latter is made by OPI.

<sup>3</sup>Quynh reports that she pays them a salary during the winter months of about \$500 a week. In the summer, she pays them the 60/40 arrangement and they make about \$800 with tips [CHECK]. Quynh says they can earn about \$24,000 each. Since some of this money is retained by the store, I have estimated that she pays out \$16,000.

<sup>4</sup>I was not able to ask how much she paid in rent.

risks in her salon and she is interested in switching to safer products but warns this will be difficult.

Quynh is not involved in any other social institutions and has not participated in public meetings, demonstrations, or donated money to candidates.

Figure 3-1 graphically represents Quynh's networks as a path. It shows the most important people (represented by circles) and businesses or institutions (represented by boxes) shaping her work experience. I have included Viet-AID because she was the only respondent with a connection to a community institution other than church. Unfortunately, her connection to Viet-AID is not direct (hence the dotted line) – her roommate works with Viet-AID staff.

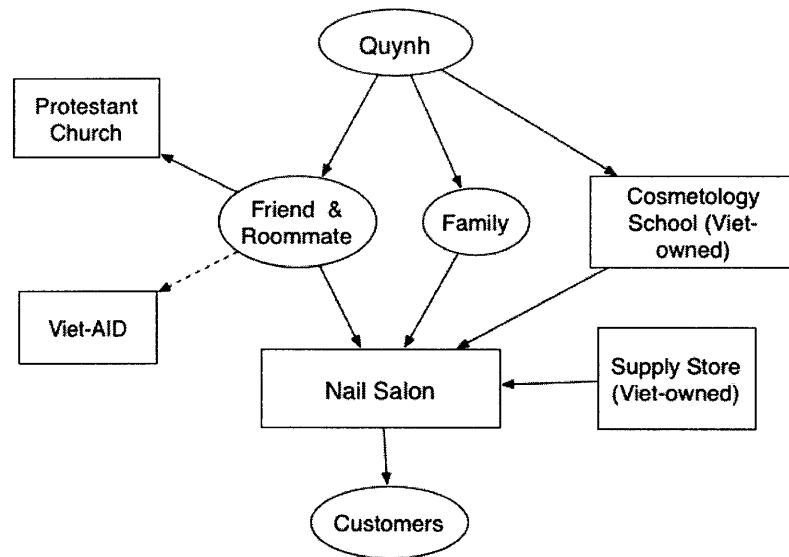


Figure 3-1: Quynh's Network and Path to Ownership.

## 2. Key Observations

From Quynh's story, I will pull out and summarize the observations relevant for the network analysis in the next section. I discuss the common themes and important variations within different networks and sets of relationships. The discussion flows from family networks to industrial networks and finally to community networks.

### Entry into Industry through Family Ties

As mentioned earlier, most respondents (67%) entered the industry with the active help of family members. This assistance came in the form of spouses, siblings, or parents and

children starting businesses together. Other times family members would provide crucial referrals carrying weight from prior favors or relationships. Family members often own salons where technicians get their first jobs. And family members encourage each other to find work in areas where they know others have successfully earned living wages.

Because newer arrivals are more likely to enter the industry right away, it is possible the networks, industrial and social, associated with this sector were built prior to their arrival. The network has become so extensive that newer arrivals merely link into it.<sup>5</sup>

### Financing the Start-Up with Family Resources

Five of the salon owners I interviewed described how they financed their businesses. The CEO of Regal Nails, who started out as a salon supply store owner also described how he financed this first store. These six respondents used a combination of methods to raise capital: 5 raised equity or borrowed money from family, 3 borrowed from close friends, 2 used their own savings and 1 borrowed from a bank. Table 3.1 shows the percentage who used each source (they could use more than one source). The amounts they needed to raise ranged from \$15,000 to \$35,000. Unfortunately, I do not have data on how much each source contributed toward the needed start-up funds.

Table 3.1: Sources of Capital, n=6\*

Source(s)	Percentage
Equity or Loan from Family	83%
Loan from Friends	50%
Own Savings	33%
Bank Loan	17%

\*More than 1 response per respondent allowed and counted.

Two owners used one source exclusively: the owner who used the bank loan and one of the owners who used her own savings. The owner who took out a bank loan had lived in the US for 15 years and finished college in the US. Unable to find a job, he and his family started the salon together, doing it "pretty much on [their] own." They found the location in the Vietnamese newspaper. The owner who used her savings exclusively to start her salon needed \$20,000. Remarkably, she had saved this amount through six prior years of work as a nail technician. Though she was raising three children, her husband also worked and she saved the money by being disciplined about spending.

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<sup>5</sup>It is interesting to note that although almost all respondents entered the industry through family connections, only one person explicitly mentioned the influence of family on their choice to enter the industry. This raises the question of whether respondents recognize or value their social assets.

On the whole, family and kin were the most common source of capital. Quynh was unusual in that she borrowed a large sum of money from a friend she knew through a community institution, her church. Still, for her and the owner who borrowed from a bank, their families played a large role in helping them start businesses.

### Support Structure

Technicians and owners were asked how frequently they received help with child care and transportation. All respondents who had children said they could find someone they trusted to care for their children; two women said this was possible all the time. Two women said this help usually came from other family members so that children did not have to leave the home. Transportation help was slightly common but more technicians than not said they could usually find a ride. One respondent explained this help often came from a co-worker.

Table 3.2: Frequency of Mutual Help with Child Care and Transportation to Work, n=4

Frequency	Help w/Child Care	Help w/Transport
Never	0	20%
Rarely	0	0
Sometimes	25%	0
Usually	25%	50%
All the time	50%	25%

When technicians were asked who assisted with them with problems at work and how often, the response rate was low. One technicians said, "Sometimes, other workers or the owner." Another worker said:

This is very difficult. You need time and someone you can trust. It's possible, but hard to find.

When owners were asked who helped them with problems at work and how often, the few responses were "usually my roommate", "usually other members of the salon," and "family."

When asked if they would seek third party assistance regarding problems in the salon, technicians responded, "I don't know," "I rely on the supply shop" and "I have to be patient, endure." The latter two responses pertain specifically to health concerns. The last response is interesting but it is unknown whether she feels there is no one who would know how to help, no one available to help, or no one whom she trusts.

When they have to be absent from the salon, half the technicians in this sample said they relied on the owner to cover them or to arrange for someone else to cover for them. One worker said the salon allows one to two days of absence. One worker implied owners frown upon absences and she tried to give plenty of notice when she needed to be absent.

## Technician Relationships with Other Technicians and Owners

The data imply some level of camaraderie between technicians in a store and beyond the store, but not for all respondents. Among the five technicians in the study who were not owners, 60 percent said they had informal interaction with other technicians at work "all the time". This included sharing stories, eating lunch together and so on. All respondents had some informal interaction with their co-workers. Outside of work, this interaction dropped and ranged from Never to Usually, with 40 percent saying Sometimes. Activities mainly consisted of dinners or parties at each other's homes.

When asked if they knew technicians who worked in other salons, 3 out of 5 technicians in the sample said they knew other workers, either through previous jobs, cosmetology school, or other networks. One respondent said she knew of other workers but rarely did activities with them, though she occasionally ran into them at parties.

Table 3.3: Frequency of Informal Activity Among Workers, n=5

Frequency	Informal interaction at work	Informal activities outside work
Never	0	20%
Rarely	0	20%
Sometimes	20%	40%
Usually	20%	20%
All the time	60%	0

Contrary to what I expected to find, workers do approach owners about problems in the store, including problems with certain products. Three out of the four technicians who answered this question say they have approached the owner about a problem. One problem was an owner requiring the technician to work too fast – the owner and technician were sisters and the result of the "fight" was the technician leaving the job. Another problem involved relations with customers. The technician did not like how the owner wanted her to "suffer" customers more. Only one technician approached the owner (regularly) about products. She speaks up when the owner has bought the "wrong" product. I am not sure whether she means the product is ineffective or hazardous to her health.

The one technician who had not approached the owner about a problem had very strong feelings about owner-worker relationships. Thuy, 55, was the oldest nail technician I interviewed and she had the most negative opinion of the power dynamic between owners and technicians. She felt owners did not care about workers' views concerning conditions in the salon. She herself had never approached an owner about an issue in the salon, possibly because she had witnessed other workers doing this to no avail. Thuy's comments are particularly interesting because the owner of the salon she currently works for is her daughter's sister-in-law.

Thuy also expressed the greatest anxiety about her job. If she needed to call in sick, the owner would probe her for a reason. She had to be very diligent about notifying her manager

about doctor's appointments and absences. She seemed very concerned about the ease at which she could lose her job. She indicated there were always other workers interested in taking her clients.

The technician who did not respond to this question did respond to the next question about collectively approaching an owner about problems: "Usually, workers approach the owner as a group." Two other technicians concurred with this assessment.

### **Owner Relationships with Other Owners and Workers**

Unlike technicians, salon owners share very little interaction or cooperation. Four of the owners in the sample explained there is no business association for salon owners, though one respondent believed there was one in California and one said there are purchasing cooperatives but only if you are very close, "like siblings."

When asked if owners ever market their business together, four owners said Rarely and Never. When asked if owners purchase products together, one respondent said occasionally owners will talk about products and go to cosmetology trade shows to sample new products. Two respondents said Rarely. When asked if owners get together with others in their industry for activities outside work, only two owners responded and both said Rarely.

The respondents who answered these questions about collaboration or cooperation between owners sometimes elaborated on the competitive nature of Vietnamese in business. "There's no sense of community" one respondent explained.

There is little other data on owner relationships with their technicians aside from Quynh's remarks. She was the only owner who drove her workers to work and home everyday. And she had problems with workers not reporting their wages. It is interesting to note, however, that another owner, the only male owner in the sample, was able to require his technicians to pay a percentage of their earnings in checks.

### **Cosmetology Schools, Supply Retailers and Manufacturers**

In this study, workers and owners were asked how they chose cosmetology schools and supply retailers. In particular, they were asked who referred them to the cosmetology schools and whether the schools or suppliers were Vietnamese-owned. Unfortunately, they were not asked to elaborate on their relationship with these business owners.

Still, by looking at how schools were chosen, it is possible to make the case that the connection between technician and school is fairly weak. Among the eight respondents who answered this question on cosmetology schools, seven out of eight (87.5%) attended Vietnamese-owned schools. However, only one woman, who lives and works in the Boston area, said she specifically chose a school in California where classes are taught in Vietnamese



and the test can be administered in Vietnamese.<sup>6</sup> Four out of eight (50%) respondents chose schools based on their location, specifically their proximity to their homes. Two respondents were referred by friends or saw other people attending a particular school and two other respondents found their schools in the local Vietnamese language paper. Maintaining contact with technicians who attended the same school did not appear to be common.

Table 3.4: Choice of Cosmetology School, n=8\*

<b>How Did You Choose?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Location ("close to home")	50%
Referral by Friend or Seeing Other People Attend	25%
Read Local Vietnamese Language Paper	20%
Instruction in Vietnamese	12.5%

Owners were asked how they chose supply retailers and workers were asked if they knew how their owners chose them. Among the nine who responded, eight said they bought from Vietnamese-owned supply stores almost exclusively. One owner said she bought from both Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese-owned stores. Five of the nine (56%) chose retailers based on location or convenience. Five respondents also chose based on selection or quality of products. Three chose based on price. One technician reported that the owner of her store and the owner of the supply store exchanged information on which products were good. One owner also said she trusted the product recommendations of supply stores.

It is interesting that no owners mentioned retailers offering credit. In fact, when owners were asked whether they ever purchase products in bulk, two said it depended on how much cash they had that week.

Table 3.5: Choice of Supply Retailer, n=9\*

<b>How Did You Choose?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Location/Convenience	56%
Selection/Quality	56%
Price	33%

\*More than 1 response per respondent allowed and counted.

Though the industrial network is clearly co-ethnic and integrated, bonds in this network appear to be weak. Schools and supply stores are chosen largely for their locations. There

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<sup>6</sup>This technician also knew the required number of hours of instruction were 100 in Massachusetts and 400 in California. She also said you did not need a license to practice, just the required hours of instruction.

does appear to be some exchange of information between salon owners and retailers, but again it is difficult to assess the intensity of interaction between salon owners and retailers. Salons, supply stores and cosmetology schools do appear to be located in the same neighborhoods, most likely the neighborhoods where technicians and owners live.

I did not ask about relationships to manufacturers, though I did ask how products were chosen. Four out of ten respondents who answered this question said they chose the brands that were the most popular, to please customers. OPI was the brand most often mentioned. Nine out of the ten chose based on quality. Four chose based on price.

I am not sure how close retailers are to manufacturers though suppliers acted as intermediaries between owners and manufacturers. The most interesting information I gained regarding manufacturers was from my interview with the Regal Nails franchise owner, Quy Ton. He started out as a supply store owner. Now his supplies company, Alfalfa, distributes products to all 700 Regal Nails franchisees. Alfalfa manufactures furniture and other salon equipment, like foot baths, but does not manufacture chemicals.<sup>7</sup> Mr. Ton explained that he refuses to distribute products for one particular manufacturer because he believes this manufacturer tried to undermine the success of the Vietnamese nail salon industry. At one time, this company bought test kits and distributed them to state cosmetology boards. The kits were recalled months later because they gave inaccurate readings, but many salons had already been fined and did not challenge the fines. Mr. Ton explains: "We are Vietnamese, and I do my best in supporting our community. We educated and showed them new ideas."

### **Interaction with Customers**

One technician mentioned issues with customers as a source of tension for owners and workers. Two owners cite "getting enough customers" as their greatest concern. But the most interesting finding related to customers has to do with the perspective of two owners whose salons were located in neighborhoods with much higher median incomes than their neighborhoods of residence. One woman clearly articulated good customer service as one of three ingredients for nail salon success (the other two were hygiene and skilled workers). Both women saw satisfied customers as a way to increase business. One owner, Quynh, considers relationships with her clients to be an asset.

### **Lack of Ties to Community Organizations other than Churches**

Membership in community organizations was limited to churches. I asked technicians and owners if they belonged to any social, cultural or political organizations and as examples, I listed Viet-AID, VACA, and churches. Five out of nine participants who responded to this

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<sup>7</sup>Mr. Ton explained that product manufacturing was too capital intensive.

question were members of churches. They did not belong to any other organizations and no other associations or organizations were mentioned.<sup>8</sup>

Among the five respondents who were members of churches, one attended a non-Vietnamese church. This technician said the value of church was the “social aspect” though there would be a greater sense of community for her if the congregation were Vietnamese. Two of the respondents who attended church said they attended weekly and the value for them was the mutual support or assistance and community.

### **Other Public Regarding Behavior**

There were two questions intended to measure outward orientation or public regarding behavior. One question asked if workers and owners if they had ever attended a public meeting, rally or demonstration. None of the five respondents who answered this question had ever attended such an event. The second question asked if workers or owners had ever donated funds toward a political candidate. Again, none of the five respondents had donated money for this purpose. Two respondents did mention they had donated money to charitable causes, to support homeless people and through the church.

Responses to these questions indicate that although respondents may not have had the time, inclination or information to participate in public events or processes, they were concerned about improving the lives of other people. A charitable spirit is common among Vietnamese but civic participation may not be. Further research is needed to confirm this tendency and its significance.

### **Perception of Opportunities for Improving Occupational Health**

Workers were asked, if they had information about the health risk associated with products, what would they do to substitute for those products. Three responses indicated barriers to action: “there’s no choice,” “it’s very difficult,” and “the odorless products are good but expensive and do not fit the price environment here.” Two responses indicated opportunities: “talk to the owner” and “it is standard practice to try out new products and choose the best one.” A similar question was asked about ventilation and the two responses were optimistic. One respondent suggested trying downdraft ventilation tables that expelled air to the outside. Another said this would only be possible if the cost were not prohibitive.

Owners were asked, if the chemicals in the salon were known to be hazardous, would they be interested in a) switching to a less toxic products, b) upgrading your ventilation system, or

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<sup>8</sup>This question was not intended to collect data on the social service providers utilized by technicians and owners. In hindsight, it would have been useful to know these affiliations. Perhaps Vietnamese workers and entrepreneurs are well connected to service agencies because these agencies are more effective or more extensive in their outreach, perhaps Vietnamese immigrants access services most needed at the moment, or perhaps Vietnamese immigrants value some services over others.

c) working with other owners to do a or b at lower cost. Unfortunately, when the interviews moved onto the topic of health issues and ways to change the salon, the conversations were stalled or sidetracked. Several owners did not see products or ventilation as problems and therefore it was difficult to ask what they would do to change. Only two owners responded to this question. One, a franchisee of Regal Nails said she was willing to change if there were actually safer products. The other respondent, Quynh, said she would switch products and work with other owners, thought this would be difficult.<sup>9</sup>

## B. Analyzing the Networks

Given the above observations, this next section maps the data to the theoretical framework provided by the network literature.

### 1. Orientation and Strength of Ties

Building on Granovetter's work on weak ties and Brigg's classification system for social capital, I create three categories that help clarify the relationships in the networks observed. Strong-bonding ties are close relationships between people with similar characteristics and occurred largely with family members and close friends. These were prevalent among workers and owners alike. These ties tended to reside mainly in the family sub-network.

The significance of family dominance in this industry depends on our understanding of Vietnamese culture and family dynamics. Traditionally the family as a unit is considered more important than the individual members. Within the family, there is a clear hierarchy with the father at the highest position. Older members are shown great respect and have authority over younger members. However, the dynamics of age and gender were not fully fleshed out in this study, so it is difficult to comment here. One dynamic that did seem to be at work was the strong sense of solidarity and willingness to make sacrifices for the good of the family.

Weak-bonding ties are less intimate ties between people or groups with similar characteristics. In this case, they reside in the industrial network, among workers, owners, and suppliers, with owners more likely to have connections to suppliers and both workers and owners have ties to cosmetology schools.

Weak-bonding ties are more prevalent among workers and some workers have experience solving problems together, so the opportunity to organize workers exists. The complication is the co-ethnic and sometimes co-familial connection between workers and owners. Ties between owners are less prevalent and carry less trust, making strategies involving cooperation between owners even more challenging.

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<sup>9</sup>The research instrument contained more questions on barriers to change, but unfortunately the interviews did not get that far.

Ties to community institutions were mainly weak-bonding ties to co-ethnic churches. Faith-based organizing is not common in Vietnamese communities. When working with a Vietnamese high-risk youth organizing initiative, I was told it is difficult to organize through Vietnamese congregations. However, the potential exists and warrants further investigation.

Weak-bridging ties are less intimate ties between dissimilar groups. These include ties to customers of different races or ethnicities. Though interaction with customers of different races and ethnicities is common, meaningful connections are rare. Equally rare are connection to potential resources like the property manager in the Regal Nails case.

Table 3.6: Types of Ties in Vietnamese Nail Salon Networks

<b>Strong-Bonding</b>	<b>Weak-Bonding</b>	<b>Weak-Bridging</b>
family	other workers	customers
close friends	other owners	property managers
	suppliers	Viet-AID
	cosmetology schools	
	church members	

## 2. Mobility Effects

Recalling that getting by has been defined as maintaining the opportunity structure and quality of life whereas getting ahead means changing the opportunity structure (increasing the number and type of economic opportunities) and improving quality of life. The findings in this case challenge us to refine our model. Some behavior has clear getting by effects (even when they enable people in crucial ways): childcare, transportation, maintenance using discounted labor, support with problems in the workplace.

However, getting ahead effects are more difficult to evaluate. Considerations include the point of reference, the unit of reference, and qualitative difference. Strong-bonding ties, for instance, have helped Vietnamese women secure jobs, raise capital, and start businesses. Compared to opportunities available to them in the mainstream labor market and compared to previous financial returns, nail salon work can be a step up. For workers who become owners, there is increased freedom and the possibility of other business opportunities. So, the opportunity structure has changed, however slightly.

Some workers and owners are able to save quite a bit of money and they are able to provide their children with stable homes and educational opportunities. Though the unit benefiting from the network behavior is still the family, the effects are felt over generations. Some would consider this to be getting ahead despite the slight increase in wage or opportunity in the ethnic economy.

But getting ahead as defined in this study includes qualitative improvements. Here again, one might say that workers in nail salons are better off than they would be in other jobs.

However, given the short-term health problems, uncertain long-term health effects, and long hours, one could argue their quality of life is similarly undermined by their economic position. With these qualifications, the effect of strong-bonding ties is getting by and getting ahead economically if not qualitatively.

Weak-bonding ties were used to sustain the ethnic economy through vertical integration of cosmetology schools, suppliers and salons. These ties were also used by co-workers and members of churches to provide a mutual support structure. The mobility effects are similar to use the strong-bonding ties: getting by and getting ahead without much qualitative improvement.

Weak-bridging ties, in the rare cases they were used, opened up new opportunities and facilitated action on the part of owners to improve working conditions. Vietnamese owners who used these ties outside of the ethnic community were more likely to enjoy economic gains or were more likely to improve their situations qualitatively by choosing safer products or installing more effective ventilation. The significance of weak-bridging ties and the link between this type of tie and outcomes is explored next.

### **3. Outcomes: Approach to Health Risks and Economic Success**

Salon owners' approaches to potential health risks in their working environment were consistently passive except for two owners who possessed weak-bridging ties. Of the passive owners, two did not think the work environment posed any problems. One respondent expressed concern about her health but said she did not know what to do and in the end, she trusted federal agencies to ensure the safety of products on the market. Another respondent said there are a lot of different products advertised, so he just trusts the supply store.

The two owners who stand out in their perspectives and actions around health risks are the ones whose ties extend beyond the primary groups in which they are members: their families and the ethnic economy. Quynh's weak-bonding ties at church helped her to finance the store. The loyalty of her customers makes it possible for her to compete on quality, not price. Among owners, she was the only one who stated she was committed to protecting her health and the health of her workers. When possible, she picked products that were more expensive but less hazardous to health. Still, it is difficult to tease out how much of her commitment comes from personal values and how much from the information and values transmitted through her network. Also, though she may run a healthier salon, her business does not seem financially viable.

The one case where weak-bridging ties clearly facilitated success is Regal Nails. The weak-bridging tie to a non-Vietnamese property manager was the key to obtaining the contract with Wal-Mart. Other key management staff are non-Vietnamese. The staff members who are Vietnamese have higher education levels than the owners of most nail salons. Being a college graduate himself, it is possible Mr. Ton's social network contains people with more human capital (most of the Vietnamese staff were recruited through personal contacts).

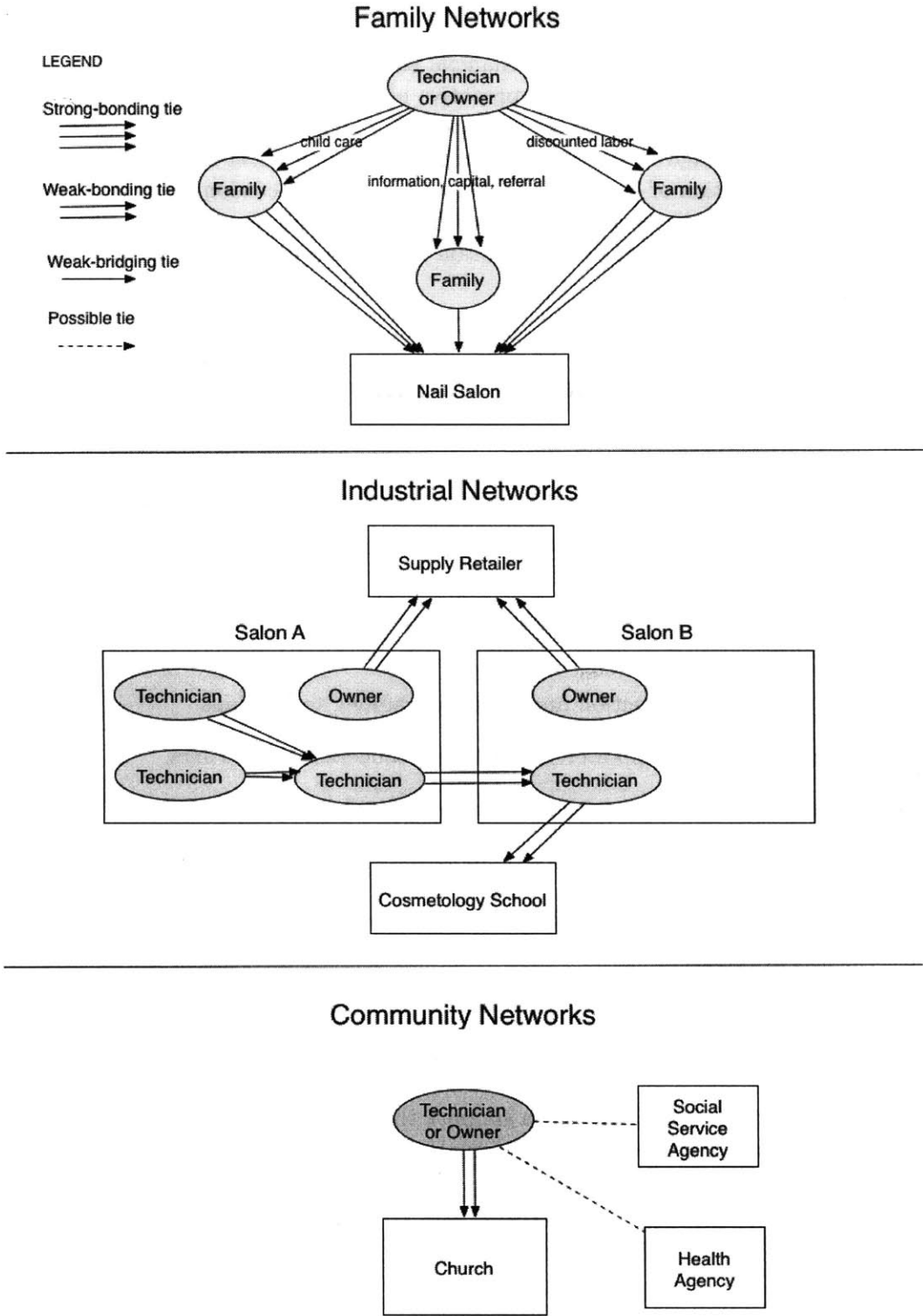


Figure 3-2: Types of Networks

This network of weak-bonding and weak-bridging ties appears to have contributed to the success of the franchise.

Regal Nails stands out not only for its financial success but for its approach to managing health risks in the salon. Regal Nails is proactive about ventilation. CEO Quy informs me they have a system that evacuates air at a rate of 12,000 cubic feet per minute. He has calculated that the average store is 4000 cubic feet (400 square feet floor area by 10 ft high) so it would take a fraction of a minute to clear all the air in the salon. Though it is difficult to discern whether Regal's practices successfully reduce toxic exposures in the salon, the CEO did appear to have given some attention to the matter, for the sake of customers, workers or both.

## C. Summary of Significant Findings and Conclusion

This analysis shows networks of Vietnamese nail salon technicians and owners are richly supplied with strong-bonding ties and weak-bonding ties but lacking in weak-bridging ties. Key characteristics include:

- Heavy reliance on family networks for basic needs (referrals, jobs, startup capital, maintenance).
- Frequent informal interaction and solidarity among technicians.
- Some workers feeling empowered to address concerns with owners.
- An industry network that mainly serves to pass along information.
- Under-developed trust and norms of cooperation, particularly between owners.
- Lack of participation in formal community organizations.

Two particularly promising strategies for using social networks to address occupational health are 1) supporting workers to voice concerns collectively and 2) helping salon owners and workers build bridging ties to people and organizations outside their ethnic networks.

The social networks in this ethnic niche support the current structure and system well by providing a constant stream of labor and capital, but barriers to change do not appear to be embedded in the networks themselves. Rather, the lack of sound alternatives and information may be at fault. This analysis of how the networks connect people and support action reveals useful opportunities for improving the nail salon work environment.



## Chapter 4

# Implications and Recommendations

First, I review the opportunities and challenges that emerge from the analysis and discuss the possible implications for practice of each. Though I separate the opportunities and challenges, several elements of Vietnamese networks have positive and negative elements. Then, I offer specific programmatic recommendations for DOHI.

### A. Opportunities

#### **Family**

Understanding the heavy reliance on family-based networks is valuable but acting on this information requires careful thought. In some ways, changes to the business may seem threatening to a family's livelihood and the response to intervention may be a retreat from public scrutiny. Responses to outreach or intervention may depend on which family member is approached and what authority structures might be challenged.

On the other hand, making contact with technicians and owners through family networks can be highly effective. Already, with the DOHI project, I have recruited a hardwood floor sanding owner to join the steering committee – he is the younger brother of a Viet-AID board member. Also, concern for the health and well-being of family members (as well as interest in economic success for the family) can be a motivating force for participation in a program of intervention.

#### **(Ethnic) Solidarity**

The extent of solidarity indicates potential for workers, owners and other members of their networks to work together to address a problem that has community-wide impacts. How-

ever, the strength of solidarity varies. Workers show some solidarity in referring each other to jobs, working together to approach an owner about a problem, and substituting for one another. Though it is likely some workers are more interested in their own outcomes than those of their fellow workers, solidarity among workers exists and show some potential for mobilization.

Owners show some degree of solidarity to workers and other Vietnamese entrepreneurs by favoring their employment and business services. Quy Ton, CEO of Regal Nails, says 99.5% of his franchises are owned by Vietnamese. He has one Korean franchisee and a few Malaysian but he wants to help his own people and therefore has favored Vietnamese owners.

However, the solidarity between owners and workers has a negative side also. Owners pay workers partially or entirely in cash. Workers believe they benefit from this arrangement because they avoid paying taxes. At the same time, owners like Quynh feel workers are taking advantage of the co-ethnic relationship.

On the other hand, ethnic solidarity or inward orientation have been bolstered by external threats to the industry. Some respondents mentioned they believed American salons or product manufacturers have been intent on undermining Vietnamese salons. Owners have also claimed Vietnamese workers are more skilled than American workers and this is the reason why Vietnamese salons do better (Viet-AID Focus Group, 2004). Viet-AID and New Ecology have been mindful of how their interventions could be perceived as threatening. One way to become even more credible in this regard is to facilitate the mobilization of workers and/or owners so that interventions come from within the industry.

### **Widespread Information Sharing and Distribution**

The standardization of practice and common threads of knowledge throughout the industry reveal the highly efficient and far-reaching sharing and distribution of information. News travels quickly within the neighborhood, as those who work at Viet-AID have observed, but I was surprised to find that technicians and owners knew about licensing requirements and regulations in neighboring states and in California. One woman living and working in Boston knew of the Vietnamese nail association in California. It is possible that if effective interventions could be developed in one part of the industry, best practice information would then spread rapidly.

Regal Nails could be useful in spreading information. Quy explained that Vietnamese entrepreneurs can find salons for sale on the Regal Nails website. Licensed manicurists looking for jobs can also find out salons that are hiring. If his site is used frequently, this would be a useful place to distribute health and safety information. Of course, if Regal Nails were to change its practices, this would also create widespread change throughout the chain.

Retailers and cosmetology schools also are important links for information distribution. Vertical integration has created a potentially efficient system for addressing occupational

health, except where individual interests begin to take advantage of solidarity at the expense of collective interests.

### **Location in Higher-Income Neighborhoods**

Practitioners will want to consider the difference between interventions with salons in urban versus suburban areas. If workers and owners are spending 8-10 hrs a day, 6 days a week in the suburbs, they will have little time to come to meetings downtown. Though interaction between suburban salons and surrounding neighborhoods seems limited (except for customers in rare cases), it is possible that local merchant associations, chambers of commerce or local community institutions are in a better position to work with these groups than Viet-AID. Viet-AID could form partnerships with such groups or share their experiences working with this population.

### **Community Institutions**

As churches are currently the only community venues for many Vietnamese, faith-based organizing or outreach should also be explored as an option. This is likely a fairly new approach in the Vietnamese community. Another option is to look at why other community-based organizations, such as VACA or Viet-AID, are not attracting participation for more public regarding activities? How can these organizations address barriers to participation? Is it the focus of their programming or the way their programs are developed that forms relatively few ties with residents?

## **B. Challenges**

### **Isolation**

Salon workers and owners are isolated within the larger economy and society. Their networks are inward-oriented and for some people their networks do not extend far outside the family unit. Despite working in locations outside the ethnic economy and having frequent interaction with customers of different races and ethnicities, there are few bonds currently available that would be useful for addressing problems. Vertical integration across cosmetology schools, supply stores and salons facilitates the growth of the industry and is advantageous in the short term for immigrants with limited English skills. But, in the long term, this insulation keeps wages down and limits opportunities.

Technicians and owners work so many hours, often away from the residential community, that they have little time to participate in community institutions or public events. So even within the Vietnamese community, technicians and owners are isolated. However, it is possible they receive services from Vietnamese-staffed community health centers in their

neighborhoods and other Vietnamese service providers. Viet-AID has experience utilizing these ties in the network to recruit participants for the UMass Lowell survey.

### **Under-Developed Trust Inside and Outside the Networks**

Technicians and owners do not seek assistance from third parties because they are not sure who can help them and who they can trust. The cash basis of the salon business may make workers and owners feel wary of public exposure. But under-reporting workers often qualify for public benefits which increases the tendency toward being invisible. Establishing trust will be one of the most important steps for practitioners concerned about this population, but it is also one of the most difficult things to do.

Trust appears to be low within the network as well. Respondents often think of other Vietnamese people as generally competitive. It will be important for workers and owners to overcome feelings of distrust for one another.

### **Inexperience with Cooperation**

Experience in cooperating to solve problems is limited within salons and rare across salons. It will be challenging to implement interventions involving owner cooperation, such as the purchasing cooperatives New Ecology envisions. However, worker-owner cooperation holds some promise.

## **C. Specific Programmatic Recommendations for DOHI**

These recommendations in general address the need to build bridging ties and to foster greater cooperation within Vietnamese networks.

### **Build Trust and Capitalize on Trust**

Practitioners developing interventions in occupational health should work with technicians and owners as colleagues, not only as informants or clients. DOHI has begun to do this by recruiting business owners to join their steering committee.

Allowing leaders to emerge from within the industry could be useful. New Ecology has considered finding owners interested in being industry leaders and creating model salons to show there can be a green competitive advantage. However, as Quynh's salon shows, even conscientious owners have a difficult time finding products that are actually safer or less irritating and social aspects of the salon prevent her from benefiting from any green premiums. The social aspects are very difficult to overcome. However, Quynh would probably allow

Viet-AID and New Ecology to do an assessment of exposures in her salon given current practices. If these exposure levels are high (which is not easy to determine), VA and NEI could help Quynh finance any purchases she would have to make to test exposure-limiting measures such as different kinds of gloves, ventilation systems or alternative products, where possible. The same may be possible with Quy Ton.

Quynh or Quy could be the spokespeople for outreach efforts. If the occupational health problem could be characterized from within the community and solutions advocated by industry representatives, the messages may reach more people. Owners of supply stores and cosmetology schools should be brought into the development process also. Again, they are key training grounds and links to products and information.

## **Outreach**

Similar to the strategies for building trust, those who do outreach or act as intermediaries should be even more embedded in the community than Viet-AID may be. Experience administering the UMass Lowell survey shows using health service providers was effective in reaching some workers, though even these intermediaries had difficulty establishing trust.

It may be possible to draw upon family networks and concerns for health within the family when outreaching to technicians and owners. However, a fine balance must be found between alarming workers and enabling them to act. Information on health risks should be accompanied by affordable strategies for limiting exposure and ways to talk to owners about implementing the new practice.

## **Peer-to-Peer Education**

Viet-AID has already begun to think about this. Trainings should be developed with workers and owners. VA and NEI might consider the effectiveness of delivering the trainings at salons or at informal gathering using peers as trainers.

## **Go up the Supply Chain: Suppliers and Manufacturers**

Here is where cooperation among owners and trust for outside organizations could be crucial. Though Vietnamese immigrants have been successful in vertically integrating part of this sector, they do not control the top of the supply chain. That is, they do not control the manufacturing of nail salon products. However, they form one of the largest markets for the sale of these products. If the users of products and the distributors align their interests around occupational health, they could potentially influence change in the types of products available or vertically integrate the top level by supporting the startup of a Vietnamese product manufacturer.

Mr. Ton has already hinted at the power exerted by one major manufacturer of nail salon products and his desire to use products made by a manufacturer interested in supporting the Vietnamese community. Since Regal Nails can influence the purchasing of over 700 salons and Alfalfa already has a relationship with a favored manufacturer, there is potential for some hefty leverage. It may be possible for Alfalfa to encourage their current manufacturer to develop safer alternatives. However, if this manufacturer sees little opportunity cost for not innovating (that is, if Alfalfa and Regal Nails do not have an alternative seller), more buying power may need to be leveraged and greater cooperation among Vietnamese firms may be needed.

# Chapter 5

## Conclusions

### A. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to understand the use of social networks in addressing occupational health issues in an ethnic niche. Using in-depth interviews to map out relationships and drawing upon network literature, I developed three types of network relationships: strong-bonding, weak-bonding, and weak-bridging. Strong-bonding and weak-bonding were found to create some upward mobility but mostly were used to support the entry of new immigrants into an alternative labor market with slightly fewer disadvantages than the general labor market. Few technicians or owners had weak-bridging ties. Those who did appeared to have greater opportunities for improving the work environment and succeeding financially.

Opportunities and challenges for tapping into the resources in these networks were identified. Parts of the networks are indeed useful for spreading information, pooling financial resources and supporting the interests of Vietnamese workers and owners. However, bridging ties need to be built in order to access resources not found in the community. Norms of cooperation within the community should also be strengthened in order to take advantage of opportunities to organize or collectively leverage economic power.

### B. Areas for Further Research

My study reveals social networks are efficient at maintaining economic infrastructure, but do not necessarily constrain action that could improve collective outcomes. Further research is needed to fully understand opportunities for change:

- *Community networks and participation.* This study was unable to fully map the extent of community connections. Though the finding of church involvement as the

sole community activity for most people may be valid, it would be useful to also have a map of other services Vietnamese immigrants use and other relationships within neighborhoods.

- *Faith-based organizing.* The usefulness of church affiliation for collective action requires further research. One study on social capital found the effects of religious involvement varied for the building of bridging ties [de Souza Briggs, 2003]. However, since churches are an important social resource for Vietnamese immigrants, closer inspection is warranted.
- *Industry supply chain.* This study revealed the need to better understand the role of manufacturers and the willingness of retailers and cosmetology schools to work with salon owners and technicians. This was one area where networks were both a constraint (many vested interests) and an opportunity.
- *Barriers to building trust.* The findings suggest that trust could be stronger within the community and with external groups. Given this, what are the barriers to building trust in Vietnamese community? Is the experience of other ethnic groups different?
- *Barriers to thinking about collective strategies beyond the family.* Though network analysis shows efficient problem-solving within families and possibly salons, few social resources were directed toward collective outcomes involving larger groups of Vietnamese. Why, for instance, do Vietnamese immigrants not pool financial resources beyond the family unit to form larger firms which may be more stable and produce larger returns?



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# Appendix A

## Interview Protocol

1. Statement of Research and Confidentiality
2. Interview Questions for Technicians
3. Interview Questions for Owners



## Statement of Research and Confidentiality

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am a graduate student at MIT. This research aims to improve working conditions and economic opportunities for the Vietnamese community. Your identity will be kept confidential and your responses will mostly be grouped with other responses.

Thank you for your time,  
Tam Doan  
Student, MIT

Quý Ông/Bà Thân mến,

Tâm là một sinh viên cao học của MIT. Cuộc nghiên cứu này sẽ giúp cải tiến điều kiện làm việc cho người đang làm việc và gia tăng thêm nhiều cơ hội tốt đẹp cho nền kinh tế. Tất cả những chi tiết có liên quan đến Ông/Bà sẽ được chúng tôi giữ kín và những ý kiến của Ông/Bà giúp đỡ khi được viết trong bản phúc trình chúng tôi sẽ họp lại tất cả theo từng thứ tự câu trả lời cần thiết.

Xin thành thật cảm ơn thì giờ quý báu của Ông/Bà.

Tâm Đoàn  
Sinh Viên, MIT





**FOR WORKERS**

**Cho Người Thọ**

ID # \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Start time \_\_\_\_\_ Stop time \_\_\_\_\_

M \_\_ F \_\_ Age \_\_\_ Neighborhood of Residence \_\_\_\_\_

1. When did you come to the US?

Anh/Chị đến Mỹ vào năm nào?

2. What was your occupation in Vietnam?

Khi còn ở Việt Nam Anh/Chị làm nghề gì?

3. When you came to the US, what was your first job? How did you find it?

Khi Anh/Chị đến nước Mỹ, việc làm đầu tiên của Anh/Chị là việc gì? Làm sao Anh/Chị tìm được việc đó?

4. How long have you been a nail technician? How did you decide to become a nail technician?

Anh/Chị làm việc móng tay bao nhiêu năm? Lý do nào Anh/Chị quyết định chọn công việc làm móng tay?

5. How did you choose a cosmetology school? Was the school Vietnamese-owned?

Làm sao Anh/Chị chọn trường dạy làm móng tay của Anh/Chị? Phải người chủ của trường là người Việt không?

6. How did you find your first nail salon job? If different, how did you find your current nail salon job?

Làm sao Anh/Chị tìm được việc móng tay đầu tiên? Nếu khác, làm sao Anh/Chị tìm được việc ở tiệm Anh/Chị đang làm.

7. What issues in the workplaces concern you the most?

Vấn đề nào trong tiệm làm khó khăn nhất cho Anh/Chị?

7A. When you encounter problems or difficulties working in the salon you can find someone to help me. If so, who? Please describe more your relationship. For example, how long have you known this person, how do you know this person?

Khi Anh/Chị gặp vấn đề khó khăn trong tiệm, Anh/Chị có thể tìm được người giúp không?

-- Không bao giờ

-- Rất khó

-- Đôi khi

-- Thường thường

-- Luôn luôn

Nếu có thì ai sẽ giúp? Anh/Chị biết người này lâu chưa? Và làm sao Anh/Chị biết họ được?

8. Do you know where your salon buy supplies? Is the supply store Vietnamese-owned? Do you know how this supplier was chosen?

- location
- price
- selection
- other -----

Anh/Chị biết tiệm của Anh/Chị thường mua sản phẩm ở đâu không? Có phải chủ tiệm là người Việt? Tiệm của Anh/Chị chọn tiệm để mua sản phẩm vì:

- Gần trong vùng
- Giá cả tốt
- Hàng tốt
- Lý do khác

9. Do you know how your salon chooses products?

- price
- quality
- convenience
- other -----

Anh/Chị biết tiệm của Anh/Chị chọn sản phẩm như thế nào không?

- Tùy theo giá cả
- Theo phẩm chất
- Tiện lợi
- Lý do khác

10. Are there any products that concern you regarding their impact on your health?

Có sản phẩm nào làm cho Anh/Chị lo lắng về sức khoẻ không?

10A. For the products you are concerned about, are there alternatives you believe could be safer? How do you know a product is safer?

Cho những sản phẩm Anh/Chị có lo lắng, có sản phẩm thay đổi nào mà Anh/Chị tin tưởng an toàn hơn không? Sao Anh/Chị biết là nó an toàn hơn.

11. How often do you get together with other workers to have lunch or talk about work-related issues?

- Never
- Rarely (once a year or less often)
- Occasionally (once every 3 months or less often)
- Frequently (once a month or more often)

Anh/Chị có thường hay gặp những người thợ để ăn trưa với nhau hay trao đổi với nhau những vấn đề có liên quan đến công việc làm không?

- Không bao giờ
- Ít khi (một lần mỗi năm hay ít hơn)
- Thỉnh thoảng (một lần mỗi 3 tháng hay ít hơn)
- Thường xuyên (một lần mỗi tháng hay nhiều hơn)

11A. How often do you get together with other workers to do activities outside of work?  
Ông/Bà có thường hay gặp những người thợ để sinh hoạt ngoài công việc không?

- Không bao giờ
- Ít khi (một lần mỗi năm hay ít hơn)
- Thỉnh thoảng (một lần mỗi 3 tháng hay ít hơn)
- Thường xuyên (một lần mỗi tháng hay nhiều hơn)

12. Do you know other technicians who do not work in your store?

- Never
- Rarely (once a year or less often)
- Occasionally (once every 3 months or less often)
- Frequently (once a month or more often)

If so, how do you know each other?

Anh/Chị có quen biết với những người thợ không cũng làm việc chung trong chỗ làm việc của Anh/Chị không?

- Không bao giờ
- Ít khi (một lần mỗi năm hay ít hơn)
- Thỉnh thoảng (một lần mỗi 3 tháng hay ít hơn)
- Thường xuyên (một lần mỗi tháng hay nhiều hơn)

13. Do you have young children? If so, when you need childcare, can you find someone you trust to watch my child?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Usually
- All the time

Anh/Chị có đưa con trẻ không? Nếu có, khi Anh/Chị cần gửi trẻ Anh/Chị tìm được người tin tưởng để gửi không?

- Không bao giờ
- Rất khó
- Đôi khi
- Thườn thường
- Luôn luôn

14. When your car breaks down, can you find someone to take you to work or lend you a car?  
Khi xe của Anh/Chị bị hư, Anh/Chị có thể tìm được người nào cho mượn xe hoặc mang đi làm không?

- Không bao giờ
- Rất khó
- Đôi khi
- Thườn thường

-- Luôn luôn

15. If you could not come to work, is there someone you can call to cover you?  
Nếu Anh/Chị không thể đến làm việc được, ai là người Anh/Chị có thể gọi để đi làm thế được?

16. Can you remember a time when you have talked to the owner about an issue in your salon?  
Please describe the situation. For example, what was the problem, what was the owner's response?

Có khi nào Anh/Chị nói chuyện với người chủ về những vấn đề ở tiệm không? Xin kể cho biết vấn đề gì.

Người chủ trả lời như thế nào?

17. Have you ever worked with another technician to approach the owner about an issue in the salon?

Có khi nào Anh/Chị làm việc với những người thợ khác để bàn luận về những vấn đề trong tiệm không?

18. If you had information that some products you use are hazardous to your health, what ways do you think there could be to change those products?

Nếu Anh/Chị biết được những sản phẩm Anh/Chị đang dùng có ảnh hưởng không tốt đến sức khoẻ, Anh/Chị nghĩ có cách nào thay đổi sản phẩm đó không?

19. What kind of ventilation system does your store?

Tiệm của Anh/Chị dùng hệ thống thoáng khí nào?

20. Are you a member of any of the following?

-- Churches

-- VACA

-- Viet-AID

-- Other social, cultural or political organizations

Anh/Chị có là hội viên của:

-- Nhà thờ

-- VACA

-- Viet-AID

-- Tổ chức xã hội, văn hoá hay chính trị

21. Have you ever participated in a public meeting or demonstration? What kind of demonstration was it (for example: rally, march, protest) and for what issue?

Có khi nào Anh/Chị tham dự một cuộc hội họp hoặc biểu tình không?

Biểu tình cho công cuộc gì

-- Làm ngăn chặn

-- Diễn hành

-- Chống đối

Cho vấn đề gì?

22. Have you contributed funds to a candidate for public office?

Anh/Chị có đóng góp gây quỹ cho một cuộc ứng cử công nào không?



**FOR OWNERS**

ID # \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Start time \_\_\_\_\_ Stop time \_\_\_\_\_

M \_\_ F \_\_ Age \_\_\_\_

Neighborhood of Residence \_\_\_\_\_

1. When did you come to the US?

Anh/Chị đến Mỹ vào năm nào?

2. What was your occupation in Vietnam?

Khi còn ở Việt Nam Anh/Chị làm nghề gì?

3. When you came to the US, what was your first job? How did you find it?

Khi Anh/Chị đến nước Mỹ, việc làm đầu tiên của Anh/Chị là việc gì? Làm sao Anh/Chị tìm được việc đó?

4. How did you decide to become a nail technician?

Anh/Chị làm việc móng tay bao nhiêu năm? Lý do nào Anh/Chị quyết định chọn công việc làm móng tay?

5. How did you get information about getting a manicuring license?

Làm sao Anh/Chị biết cách xin giấy phép cho làm móng tay?

6. How did you choose a cosmetology school? Was the school Vietnamese-owned?

Làm sao Anh/Chị chọn trường dạy làm móng tay của Anh/Chị? Phải người chủ của trường là người Việt không?

7. Why did you decide to start a nail salon? From whom did you get information about starting a salon?

Lý do nào Anh/Chị quyết định mở tiệm móng tay? Ai giúp hướng dẫn Anh/Chị bắt đầu?

8. When did you start owning a nail salon?

Anh/Chị bắt đầu mở tiệm lúc nào?

9. Do you own more than one salon?

Anh/Chị làm chủ bao nhiêu tiệm tất cả?

10. Did you buy the salon from a previous Vietnamese owner?

Có phải Anh/Chị mua tiệm này từ người chủ trước là người Việt nam không?

11. Where do you currently buy supplies from? Is the store owner Vietnamese? How do you choose a supply store?

-- location

-- price

-- selection

-- other \_\_\_\_\_

Anh/Chị thường mua sản phẩm ở đâu? Có phải chủ tiệm là người Việt? Anh/Chị chọn tiệm để mua sản

phẩm vì:

- Gần trong vùng
- Giá cả tốt
- Hàng tốt
- Lý do khác

12. How do you choose products?

- price
- quality
- convenience
- other ----

Anh/Chị chọn sản phẩm như thế nào?

- Tùy theo giá cả
- Theo phẩm chất
- Tiện lợi
- Lý do khác

13. Do you buy supplies in bulk or small sizes?

Mỗi lần mua sản phẩm Anh/Chị mua với số nhiều hay ít?

14. How often do you buy supplies?

Khoảng bao nhiêu lâu thì Anh/Chị mua sản phẩm một lần.

15. Do supplies you buy come with product safety information?

Những sản phẩm mà Anh/Chị mua ó ngoài nhãn hiệu có ghi phần safety hai không?

16. Are there any products that concern you regarding their impact on your health?

Có sản phẩm nào làm Anh/Chị lo lắng về sức khỏe không?

17. For the products you are concerned about, are there alternatives you believe could be safer? How do you know a product is safer?

Cho những sản phẩm Anh/Chị có lo lắng, có sản phẩm thay đổi nào mà Anh/Chị tin tưởng an toàn hơn không? Sao Anh/Chị biết là nó an toàn hơn.

18. What kind of ventilation system does your store?

Tiệm của Anh/Chị dùng hệ thống thoáng khí nào.

19. For salons that do have good ventilation, how did they finance the system and work with the landlord.

Nếu Anh/Chị mua hệ thống thoáng khí cho tiệm của Anh/Chị tốt hơn của người landlord có sẵn thì Anh/Chị phải làm sao?

20. If the chemicals used in your salon were known to be hazardous to your health, would you be interested in

- A. Switching to a less toxic product
- B. Upgrading your ventilation system
- C. Working with other owners to do A or B at a lower cost

Nếu những chất hóa học dùng trong tiệm làm hại sức khỏe, Anh/Chị có muốn:

- A. Thay đổi sản phẩm ít chất độc
- B. Thay hệ thống gió tốt hơn
- C. Bàn lại với người chủ tiệm khác cho đổi sản phẩm cho giá tốt



21. What could get in the way of using alternative products?  
Điều gì làm khó cho Anh/Chị thay đổi sản phẩm?

22. What could get in the way of upgrading your ventilation system?  
Điều gì làm khó cho Anh/Chị thay đổi hệ thống gió?

23. What could get in the way of forming a purchasing coop?  
Điều gì làm khó cho Anh/Chị bàn lại với người chủ tiệm khác cho mua sản phẩm tốt cho giá tốt?

24. Would you approach a third party to try to get safer products or better ventilation?  
Anh/Chị có thể tìm tới người nào khác cho giúp Anh/Chị đổi sản phẩm hoặc hệ thống?

25. How did you raise the money needed to start your (first) nail salon?

- From friend
- From family member
- From business partner, other than family or friend
- My own savings
- From a business association
- From a non-profit or government organization

Cho tiệm đầu tiên Anh/Chị bắt đầu với vấn đề tiền bạc như thế nào?

- Từ bạn bè
- Từ gia đình
- Từ người hợp tác
- Từ tiền dành dụm
- Từ công ty kết hợp
- Từ các tổ chức -----

26. Have you ever participated in a business association?

If yes, what kind of association?

- Rotating credit association (hội)
- Nail or Cosmetology Association
- Chamber of Commerce
- Other ---

Có khi nào Anh/Chị tham dự vào một công ty kết hợp? Nếu có, công ty đó làm gì?

- Hụi
- Làm móng tay hay thẩm mỹ
- Phòng thương mại
- Việc gì khác -----

26A. How have you participated in this association?

- Obtained a loan or grant
- Strengthened business relationships
- Found suppliers
- Obtained information (please specify -----).
- Obtained training
- Obtained services at reduced cost

Anh/Chị tham dự vào các đoàn thể như:

- Cho vay hay chủ quyền
- Kiếm được sự chỉ dẫn
- Cung cấp sản phẩm
- Kiếm được nơi huấn luyện
- Tìm được sản phẩm tốt giá rẻ
- Tìm được service tốt

26B. How often do you attend activities (including meetings) of this association?

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Annually

Anh/Chị có thường hay có mặt trong các tổ chức này?

- Hằng tuần
- Hằng tháng
- 3 tháng một lần
- Bất thường

27. How often do you work with other owners to market your businesses together?

- Never
- Rarely (once a year or less often)
- Occasionally (once every 3 months or less often)
- Frequently (once a month or more often)

Anh/Chị có thường hay gặp và làm việc với những chủ tiệm khác để quảng cáo không?

- Không bao giờ
- Ít khi (một lần mỗi năm hay ít hơn)
- Thỉnh thoảng (một lần mỗi 3 tháng hay ít hơn)
- Thường xuyên (một lần mỗi tháng hay nhiều hơn)

28. How often do you work with other owners to purchase products together?

- Never
- Rarely (once a year or less often)
- Occasionally (once every 3 months or less often)
- Frequently (once a month or more often)

Anh/Chị có thường hay gặp những người chủ khác để mua sản phẩm không?

- Không bao giờ
- Ít khi (một lần mỗi năm hay ít hơn)
- Thỉnh thoảng (một lần mỗi 3 tháng hay ít hơn)
- Thường xuyên (một lần mỗi tháng hay nhiều hơn)

29. How often do you get together with other owners to do activities outside of work? What kinds of activities?

- Never
- Rarely (once a year or less often)
- Occasionally (once every 3 months or less often)
- Frequently (once a month or more often)

Anh/Chị có thường hay gặp những người chủ khác để sinh hoạt với nhau ngoài giờ làm việc không? Sinh hoạt như thế nào?

- Không bao giờ
- Ít khi (một lần mỗi năm hay ít hơn)
- Thỉnh thoảng (một lần mỗi 3 tháng hay ít hơn)
- Thường xuyên (một lần mỗi tháng hay nhiều hơn)

30. Do you have young children? When you need childcare, you can find someone you trust to watch my child...

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes

- Usually
- All the time

Anh/Chị có đưa con trẻ không? Khi Anh/Chị cần gửi trẻ tìm được người tin tưởng để gửi không?

- Không bao giờ
- Rất khó
- Đôi khi
- Thường thường
- Luôn luôn

31. When your car breaks down, you can find someone to take you to work or lend you a car...

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Usually
- All the time

Khi xe của Anh/Chị bị hư, Anh/Chị có thể tìm được người nào cho mượn xe hoặc mang đi làm không?

- Không bao giờ
- Rất khó
- Đôi khi
- Thường thường
- Luôn luôn

32. When you encounter problems or difficulties managing the salon you can find someone to help me.

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Usually
- All the time

If so, who? Please describe more your relationship, for example, how long have you known this person, how do you know this person?

Khi Anh/Chị gặp vấn đề khó khăn trong việc quản trị, Anh/Chị có thể tìm được người giúp.

- Không bao giờ
- Rất khó
- Đôi khi
- Thường thường
- Luôn luôn

Nếu có thì ai sẽ giúp? Xin cho biết một thí dụ. Anh/Chị biết người này lâu chưa? Và làm sao Anh/Chị biết họ được?

33. From whom do you receive help filling out tax forms, licenses, or other types of government requirements for business?

Ai giúp Anh/Chị điền đơn để khai thuế, và những giấy tờ của chính phủ đòi hỏi cho cơ sở thương mại của Anh/Chị?

34. Who supervises your store when you have to be absent?

Ai thay thế trông coi khi Anh/Chị cần vắng mặt tiệm?

35. Are you a member of any of the following?

- Churches
- VACA
- Viet-AID
- Other social, cultural or political organizations

How often do you attend meetings or participate in activities?

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Annually

Anh/Chị có là hội viên của:

- Nhà thờ
- VACA
- Viet-AID
- Tổ chức xã hội, văn hoá hay chính trị

Anh/Chị có thường khi hội họp với các tổ chức này không?

- Hằng tuần
- Hằng tháng
- 3 tháng một lần
- Bất thường

36. Have you ever participated in a public meeting or demonstration? What kind of demonstration was (rally, march, protest) and for what issue?

Có khi nào Anh/Chị tham dự một cuộc tụ tập hay biểu tình không?

Biểu tình cho công cuộc gì

- Làm ngăn chặn
- Diễn hành
- Chống đối

Cho vấn đề gì -----

37. Have you ever contributed funds to a candidate for public office?

Anh/Chị có đóng góp gây quỹ cho một cuộc ứng cử công nào không?