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"Not Liberating Women Means The Building Of A Socialist Society Is Only Half-Way Done": A Feminist Analysis Of Ho Chi Minh'S Advocacy For The First Law On Marriage And Family In 1959 Vietnam

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"NOT LIBERATING WOMEN MEANS THE BUILDING OF A SOCIALIST SOCIETY IS ONLY HALF-WAY DONE": A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF HO CHI MINH'S ADVOCACY FOR THE FIRST LAW ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY IN 1959 VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

In October 1959, Ho Chi Minh attended and spoke before the North Vietnamese National Assembly at the "Meeting to Discuss the Draft of the Law on Marriage and Family." The purpose of this study is to provide a feminist rhetorical analysis of this address to explicate the rhetorical strategies Ho employed to advocate for this law. I argue that Ho reframed the Marriage and Family Law into a policy that corresponded to the needs and demands of the National Assembly through methods of dissociation, association, and strategic repetition. I also found that Ho employed a dual leader/uncle first persona to assist his reframing efforts. These findings reveal the complicated legacy of Ho Chi Minh in championing for women's rights in Vietnam. On the one hand, he successfully pushed for the implementation of the first law to protect women in their private lives. On the other hand, the Draft Meeting Address portrayed this law as important only because it contributed to the socialist revolution, rather than because it addressed sexism in the contemporary North Vietnamese family.

Keywords: Ho Chi Minh, Law on Marriage and Family, feminist criticism

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The first sparks of inspiration for this yearlong study came from my encounter with a peculiar book published in Vietnam. On its cover, the book sports a pronounced magenta pink background and features an antique photo of an older man surrounded by a group of women in ethnic clothing (see fig. 1). Interestingly, the editors cropped this photo into an oval shape and blurred its border in a way that centers the man while smudging out some women in the corners, suggesting that the book is catered to women but "centered" around the man. For readers who are unfamiliar with Vietnam's history, these observations might instigate a series of questions: Who is the man in the picture? What do the women in the photo think of him? What has he done for these women that the book finds so inspiring?

The general Vietnamese audience, however, might have no difficulty in recognizing the "centered" man. The photo captures Ho Chi Minh—the iconic Communist leader of the twentieth century, the first president of socialist Vietnam, as well as the subject of the nation's ongoing personality cult (Duiker 562-575)—as he was standing with women delegates from minority ethnic communities at Vietnam's 2nd National Women's Congress in 1956[1] (Thu Hiền). This image illustrates the content of the book, entitled *Uncle Ho with Vietnamese Women* (*Bác Hồ với Phụ Nữ Việt Nam*), of which chapters include more photos of Ho with diverse Vietnamese women, a collection of his writings and addresses on women's issues, as well as legal documents implemented to advance women's rights in the country from 2007-2016.

[1] During this meeting, the Women's Congress denoted five programs for the Vietnam Women's Union in the 1956-1961 term of office: unite women in all parts of the country to collectively build a peaceful, unified, independent, democratic, and powerful Vietnam; accomplish equality of the sexes, completely liberate women; advance women's political and cultural knowledge; extend social programs to improve the lives of women and children; and advocate for world peace ("Đại Hội").

Fig. 1. Front cover of the *Uncle Ho and Vietnamese Women* book, compiled by Quí Lâm.

I found this book to be a strong source of academic interest. Growing up in Vietnam, I have only known of Ho Chi Minh as the revolutionary leader who brought about the nation's independence from France's colonialism (Duiker 2-3; Neville 1-2). Seldom did I hear of his advocacy for women's rights nor was I made aware that women in Vietnam enjoy a government with the highest percentage of female legislative representatives among Southeast Asian countries (Long Hồ). Ho Chi Minh's political career was a driving force in the progression towards women's equal rights, which inspired my eagerness to unearth the historical and rhetorical scholarship relating to his advocacy. In the following sections, I will provide the purpose, rationales, key definitions, and methods for this research.

Purpose

In 1959, the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) held a meeting to discuss and edit the first draft of the Law on Marriage and Family (Family Law)—a legal document that would guarantee the protection of women in their private lives (Mai and Le 219-220). Ho Chi Minh attended and gave a speech at this meeting to advocate for the passage of the law. In this study, my purpose is to examine the rhetorical strategies Ho employed in this address to challenge opposition to the Family Law and disrupt predominant ideals on the family and women's liberation.

Rationales

This study should prove useful for several reasons. First, few rhetorical scholars have examined Ho Chi Minh—a significant political figure in Vietnam and the world. Leading the Vietnamese communist party to victory in the Resistance War against French colonizers, Ho played a major role in liberating the country from colonization, establishing a socialist republic in North Vietnam, and advancing the international Communist movement (Duiker 2). One

element that contributed to Ho's success besides his impressive political knowledge and outstanding personality was his mastery of rhetoric that allowed him to identify with and gain support from the majority of Vietnamese peasants (Lacouture 229; Hoang 33-34). Despite Ho's immense rhetorical power, only two studies thus far have provided in-depth analysis of his writings (DeCaro 2; Dinh 142). Studies examining his advocacy for women's rights are even more scarce due to lack of access to less well-known texts (Steward 503; Taylor 13). This analysis aspires not only to fill the gap in rhetorical scholarship of Ho Chi Minh but also to shed light on an aspect of Ho's political life that is almost hidden in Western academia.

Second, this study adds diversity to the scholarship on presidential rhetoric. Past studies in this field predominantly examined the rhetoric of US presidents such as Richard Nixon (e.g., Klumpp and Lukehart 116), Barack Obama (e.g., Bostdorff and Goldzwig 107), and Donald Trump (e.g., Kelly 2). Studies on non-US leaders, while much less extensive, have undertaken critical examination of unique rhetorical traditions, extending our understanding of public persuasion (Lu, "Rhetorical Constructions" 74; Ornatowski 155). This study, therefore, advances the field of presidential rhetoric to be less US-centric and diversifies the rhetorical study of national leaders.

Finally, this study contributes to making rhetorical criticism more inclusive through providing analysis of feminism in a non-Western context. Royster and Kirsch recognized a need for change in the field of feminist rhetorical studies:

> Feminist rhetorical scholars are actively engaging in the push toward better-informed perspectives of rhetoric and writing as global enterprises, addressing various practices in other geographical locations through feminist-informed lenses… and participating in the

> effort to recast perspectives of rhetoric as a transnational, global phenomenon rather than a Western one." (25)

In other words, the practice of feminist rhetorical analysis has primarily been focusing on Western women's movements and persuasive modes. By providing a feminist reading of a Vietnamese political text, this study offers an exemplar of how feminist lenses, combined with historically and culturally informed research, can extend the breadth and depth of communication scholarship to encompass movements outside of the West. "In our postimperial world," Royster and Kirsch reasoned, "we are pressed to acknowledge the presence of others globally and to find ways to treat globality as a core analytic by which we interrogate rhetorical performance and accomplishment" (110). Hence, examining texts from diverse cultures is one way to advance the study of rhetoric and persuasion, which is what this study attempts to do.

Definitions

Definitions of *Indochina* and *revolution* are important to contextualize this study. In 1887, France officially established Indochina as "a colonial creation linking countries with different traditions," including Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam (Dalloz 2). This system remained in power until the Geneva Accords of 1954 demanded the French to withdraw from Vietnam, but colonial norms remained intact, "either as objects of unconscious assimilations or as negativities to be rooted out and eradicated" (Pelley 5). The term "Indochina Vietnam" in this study, therefore, refers to the country under France's direct colonization.

Examining revolution in the Vietnamese context, Tonnesson provided a helpful definition as follows, "A revolution is a general insurrection involving a reconstitution of the state and leading to radical social change" (5). A major event in Vietnam, which also serves as an example for this definition, is the August Revolution of 1945. During this event, Ho Chi Minh's party

seized control over the country against immediate colonial forces through a violent insurgency movement, formed a newly independent and democratic republic, and implemented social reforms that radically changed the country (Tonnesson 2). While this study is concerned with Ho Chi Minh's rhetoric after this event, many characteristics of Ho's rhetoric were still embedded with revolutionary ideals.

Method

I draw upon the method of feminist criticism for this study. According to Foss, the goal of feminist criticism is "to identify and explicate strategies that disrupt established hegemonies and, in turn, create new ways of thinking, acting, and being" (147). This study, therefore, aim to shed light on the ways in which Ho Chi Minh disrupted predominant ideals of the family and women's liberation to encourage positive perceptions of the Family Law.

Conclusion

Ho Chi Minh's legacy remains a contentious subject because many aspects of his life are still unknown, and others mystified (Duiker 562-575). His connection with the fight for gender equality in Vietnam deserves further investigation to situate his rhetoric among that of other global leaders and to enrich the field of feminist rhetorical studies by incorporating a Southeast Asian perspective. Under the methodological framework of feminist criticism, I analyze Ho's address at the "Meeting to Discuss the Draft of the Marriage and Family Law" (Appendix A). In the next chapter, I provide a review of literature that builds the foundation for my analysis.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to understand a message that is imbued with historical context, we must first unpack its history and contextual significance. In this section, I illuminate key information relevant to my feminist rhetorical analysis of Ho Chi Minh's advocacy for women's rights, including feminism and feminist criticism, Marx and Lenin's views on women's emancipation, the evolving status of women in pre-revolutionary Vietnam, and the advocacy for women's rights in Indochina Vietnam. I then provide a short biographical account of Ho Chi Minh, followed by a description of the Law on Marriage and Family of 1959.

International Feminism and Feminist Theories

This study has theoretical foundations in feminist ideals. According to Sonja K. Foss, "feminism" is generally understood as a social and political movement to demand equal rights for women and challenge existing patriarchal systems (141). Feminist theories, therefore, offer criticism of women's subordination in contemporary societies and seek to eradicate gender inequity in different aspects of life. This section reviews relevant literature, relating to the international feminist movement and feminist rhetorical criticism.

Brief History of the International Feminist Movement

Most literature recognizes the Western suffrage movement of the late 19th century as the start of the international feminist movement, when works such as Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) were translated and published in different countries (Rupp 14). Concurrently, feminists in the United States were organizing political groups, marches, and lectures to argue for their right to vote. Through networks of women travelers, immigrants, missionaries, and writers, this suffrage movement spread around the world and led to the establishment of the International Council of Women—the first multipurpose transnational

women's organization (Rupp 14-15). The Council was a steppingstone for the proliferation of international women's coalitions in later years.

The international feminist movement reached new heights in the 1920s as women in various countries participated in their local politics to fight for gender equality and demand protection of women's rights (DuBois and Oliviero 1; Rupp 15). For instance, Russian feminists won women's rights to vote and run for office in 1917 (Ruthchild 100). Their advocacy also brought about women's access to higher education, founded shelters for battered women, and opened doors for women to practice medicine. Another example is the work of Indonesian feminists when they united all existing women's organizations in a federation named "Perikatan Perkumpulan Perempuan Indonesia" (Indonesian Women's Association) in 1928, marking the start of the Indonesian feminist movement (Sumbung 319). During this time, delegates from international women's organizations also travelled to different parts of the world. These women representatives introduced and/or supported gender equality campaigns in the countries they visited with the goal of liberating women from the global patriarchy (Siegel 661). This transnational movement might have influenced later feminist critiques that aim to decolonize the originally Western-centric traditions of feminist scholarship. Women's international activities came to a temporary halt from the late 1930s to mid-1940s due to the devasting impacts of the Second World War. The groups that remained active in the late 1940s went through periods of structural remodeling as the world then was shaped by increasing polarization and decolonization (Rupp 47). To this day, the international feminist movement continues to advance gender equality rights and promote protection of women and children in different parts of the globe.

Feminist Criticism

Feminism transformed the field of rhetorical studies through the incorporation of feminist scholarship into textual analysis to form a method known as feminist criticism. The main goal of this method is to identify communication strategies that disrupt normalized thinking behaviors and suggest rhetorical alternatives to "produc[e] a different hearing and a renewed viewing" (Trinh 21). For instance, feminist rereading of women's representation on films reveals how the American media proliferated ideals of the "married, loyal, and family-oriented" women while punishing working women and single mothers (Thomas 89-90). From understanding these portrayals, rhetorical critics can further explore the implications of such harmful rhetoric on women's experiences, arguing for better representation of women and their roles in society. Of even greater interest, feminist rhetorical analysis often illuminates the ways through which an orator or a mediated artifact questions oppressive modes of thinking and urges the audience to adopt nondominant perspectives on a variety of issues. Gibson's criticism of the US High Court's rhetoric about women's rights during the 1996 case of *United States v. Virginia*, for example, revealed how Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg utilized narratives of progress to disrupt the Court's traditional sameness/difference approach when handling issues of gender equality (134). Feminist criticism, thus, brings about transformative analyses to the study of rhetoric and reorients the field to include examinations of rhetoric by women and marginalized communities.

A major development for not only feminist rhetorical criticism but also for women's studies in general is the conceptualization of intersectionality. First delineated in Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw's 1991 essay, intersectionality denotes "the various ways in which race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against women of color" (1244). Many of these women find themselves restrained by not only gender

expectations but also racial discrimination. Previous feminist theories that exclusively focused on gender, hence, are inadequate to explain the dimensions of oppression that women of color face and exclude these women from feminist scholarship. Intersectionality is an important aspect of feminist criticism as feminists engaged with more complex texts from diverse cultures and needed better lenses to fully capture the nuances of such rhetoric.

Marx and Lenin on Women's Oppression and Liberation

Writings of Marx and Lenin had a great impact on Ho Chi Minh's political ideology and potentially his conceptualization of women's liberation (Marr 132). Both Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Vladimir Lenin (1870–1927) were prominent communist figures whose writings provided foundational principles for the Soviet Union, as well as modern-day governments such as Laos, socialist Cuba, and Vietnam (Morgan 660). In collaboration with Engels, Marx developed a system of thoughts, now known as Marxism, to conceptualize historical materialism and critique contemporary capitalist society (Wolff and Leopold). Lenin was the leader of the Russian Revolution, the first head of the Soviet State, the founder of the Comintern (Communist International), as well as the successor of Marx's ideals (Westad 517). While these political figures are famous for their theorization of class oppression and critique of capitalism, Marx and Lenin additionally commented the oppression of women, which might have influenced Ho Chi Minh's rhetoric on women's liberation.

Marx's writings on women were both minimal and controversial for modern feminists. For Marx, women's oppression was symbolic of capitalist exploitation as he wrote in *Das Kapital* (1867): "The labor of women and children was, therefore, the first thing sought for by capitalists who used machinery" (qtd. in "Women Question" 28). Marx's description, while

recognizing the injustices that female workers faced during this time, casts women as helpless victims of capitalist systems. Interpreting Marx's works, Coole provides that:

> The role of women as passive indicators of historical development is illustrated when young Marx uses their degradation to demonstrate the dehumanizing aspects of private property…Here, the woman is more than *symbolic* of the historical level: she quite literally *reflects* it because as property herself she is treated as it is. Again, it is man's treatment *of* her, rather than any dialectical relationship *with* her, that is significant. Where property (the historical form taken by nature) is jealously possessed, violently claimed[,] and universally desired, then woman suffers its fate. Communism liberates her because it abolishes the property relationship and restores the species to a proper reciprocity with nature. (188-189)

Marx's theorization, therefore, only contends with women's emancipation as an abstraction for communism's triumph over capitalism. However, some aspects of Marxism provide an analytical framework for feminist scholars to critique intersecting issues of gender and class (Gimenez 26). At least one study employs Marxist feminist theories to analyze the materialistic link between social movements and capitalism (see, e.g., Elerding 163). While Marx did not advocate much for women's liberation, his theories served as a solid foundation for interpretation of feminist issues in the political economy.

Lenin shared many views with Marx on the causes of women's suffering (i.e., capitalism) but provided more practical guidelines for the Soviet Republic to accomplish female liberation. Writing for International Women's Day in 1921, Lenin asserted,

> The working woman and peasant woman are oppressed by capital; but in addition to that, even in the most democratic of bourgeois republics, they are, firstly, in an inferior

> position because the law denies them equality with men, and secondly, and this is most important, they are "in domestic slavery;" they are "domestic slaves," crushed by the most petty, most menial, most arduous, and most stultifying work of the kitchen, and by isolated domestic, family economy in general. (qtd. in "Women Question" 45-46)

Similar to Marx, Lenin argued that capitalism facilitates overt inequality between the sexes and endorses the mistreatment of women in both legislation and domestic life; thus, only through emancipation from capitalist systems and integration into socialist regimes can women be free from oppression. The Soviet leader differed from Marx, however, in how he applied these ideals to actual advocacy for women's participation in government. He believed, "the success of a revolution depends on the extent to which women take part in it," and called upon the Soviet government to "elect more women workers" (qtd. in "Women Question" 43, 62). These efforts were instrumental to the massive increase of women's involvement in all sectors of the USSR's economy, though critics questioned whether political liberation equates to complete liberation without accounting for women's social and personal constraints (Bryson 134; Schuster 260). Nevertheless, Marxist-Leninist conceptualizations of women's oppression provided insights into Ho Chi Minh's advocacy for women's rights in socialist Vietnam.

Evolving Status of Vietnamese Women in Pre-Revolutionary Times

Before the 1945 August Revolution, women in Vietnam were navigating oppressive forces of not only immediate French imperialism but also lingering Chinese domination. According to Do and Brennan, "the clashes of Confucianism, feudalism, colonialism, socialism and historical matriarchy resulted in an ambivalent and contradictory set of Vietnamese femininities" (276). Within this context, Ho faced unique challenges in reaching the intended audience to address issues of gender equality in Vietnam. This section elaborates on the status of

Vietnamese women from ancient to pre-revolutionary times, which informed Ho's promotion of gender equality policies.

Originally, women in Vietnam were respected as both homemakers and warriors with evidence from folk literature[2] suggesting the existence of a matriarchal hierarchy (Chiricosta 125; Do and Brennan 275). David Marr provides, "Vietnamese women had never been reduced to cremating themselves along with their husbands as in India or in Champa. They had never worn a veil as in Islamic countries, nor bound their feet [as] in China" (191). In other words, Vietnamese women have historically thrived amid neighboring patriarchies—a distinctive characteristic of the Vietnamese culture. Ideals of this ancient matriarchal hierarchy persisted to counter and reshape outside forces that aimed to subvert women's power.

The traditionally remarkable status of Vietnamese women endured significant changes when it collided with ideals of Confucianism. Vietnam first encountered Confucianism when the nation was under China's rule from 111 BC to 939 AD. Summarizing foundational ideas of Confucianism, Nyitray explains, "At its core, Confucian thought defines an interlocking social system of role-based responsibilities and obligations in which reciprocal interactions are to be guided by role-specific virtues. Anchoring the social system are 'three bonds' (*sangang*): the relationships of ruler–minister, father–son, and husband–wife" (239). In other words, Confucianism imposed strict regulations of people-to-people relations to form rigid social hierarchies. This system of thoughts had major influences in East Asian societies, such that even after gaining independence from China, the dynastic Vietnamese government continued to study

[2] A prominent example is the Vietnamese creation myth that describes an immortal fairy named Au Co. According to this legend, Au Co married the Lord of sea dragons and gave birth to ancestors of the Vietnamese people. Unable to live with her husband as they belonged to different species, Au Co brought half of her children to the mountains to raise them independently, from which rose the first monarch of ancient Vietnam. This folktale hints at the matriarchal nature of early Vietnamese civilization where a goddess represented and protected society instead of her husband (Duong 208-210).

and practice Confucian ideals. The Le dynasty in 1428 eventually implemented Confucianism as the nation's primary political, social, and ethical system (Nguyen 39), which complicated the position of Vietnamese women in society.

Women, whom Confucius believed were "difficult to deal with" (qtd. in Nyitray 241), were vulnerable to their male counterparts in 15th century Vietnam. Confucian texts attempted to subjugate women under the "three submissions" (*tam tòng*) doctrine: A woman has to obey her father during childhood, her husband during marriage, and her eldest son during widowhood (*tại gia tòng phụ, xuất giá tòng phu, phu tử tòng tử*). In addition, women had to comport with a list of feminine values, known as the "four virtues" (*tứ đức*), which denote that an acceptable woman must perfect herself in labor (*công*), physical appearance (*dung*), appropriate speech (*ngôn*), and proper behavior (*hạnh*) (Marr 192; Tai 92-93). Such strictures not only placed the women beneath their male counterparts in all aspects of life but also raised expectations of femininity to unrealistic standards. Societal perceptions towards women were also skewed as per an old Sino-Vietnamese saying, "*Nhất nam viết hữu, thập nữ viết vô*," meaning "One boy and you can inscribe a descendant; ten girls and you can write nil" (Marr 192). Many households had strong preference for sons due to the belief that boys were able to carry the family's ancestry as opposed to girls, who had to change their last names and live with their husbands after marriage. These examples demonstrate how Confucian platitudes subverted the originally powerful status of women and constructed a patriarchal hegemony in bourgeois Vietnam—sentiments that many writers, poets, and revolutionary leaders later challenged.

Confucianism in Vietnam, however, was unable to completely eliminate traces of the historical matriarchy. One example of women's respectability despite Confucian influences is when the Le dynasty adopted a code of feminist laws about 50 years *after* officially

incorporating Confucianism into legislation. The Hong Duc Code of 1483, which lasted for three centuries, ensured that women had equal inheritance rights to men, could own property, and were able to divorce their husbands due to claims of neglect or abandonment (Jayawardena 198). Vietnamese women exercised some legal power under these provisions despite contradictory and oppressive Confucian values. Regardless of this modest progress, the succeeding Nguyen dynasty in the 19th century withdrew these clauses and reverted the country back to its feudal ages through suppression of protesting voices, including those of women (Jayawardena 198).

Another factor that limited the reach of Confucian beliefs on women is class division: "Generally, the poorer the family the more likely husband and wife were to rely heavily on each other, to share tasks, and thus to take superior-inferior strictures with a grain of salt" (Marr 197). While women in poor families had to endure economic hardships, they generally were on equal standing with their husbands and were able to assert their opinions over domestic decisions. Moreover, many villages not only accepted but also revered female leaders. Villagers cultivated a religion around two women warriors, the Trung sisters, who waged war against the ruling Chinese government in 40 A.D. and victoriously gained control of the nation for three years (Marr 198). This reverence kept the Trung sisters' legacy alive, forming collective memories of women's leadership capability during times of national crisis. These resisting forces demonstrated that women were not entirely disregarded under Confucianism, but efforts to challenge the status quo were scarce, disorganized, and inconsistent, fueling the need for a united women's movement.

Advocacy for Women's Rights in Indochina Vietnam

Vietnam as an Indochina colony provided a unique context for the development of women's status. After three decades of economic and military conflicts, France annexed Vietnam in 1874 (Jayawardena 199-200). Colonialization brought about major changes to Vietnam's politics and culture: Colonists were "eager to erase the memory of the old Empire" with practices such as infringing upon the Vietnamese monarchy's rule, exploiting resources of land and labor, and supporting the erasure of non-Catholic religions (Dalloz 5-7). Vietnamese rebelled against France's activities as early as 1886 with the infamous *Cần Vương* movement that aimed, and failed, to restore power to the Vietnamese monarchy (Jayawarderna 201). These insurrection activities intensified in the 1920s and 1930s due to the birth of the "new intelligentsia" (*giới tri thức mới*)—a social category for Vietnamese who possessed three to ten years of formal education and committed to "thinking, talking, reading, and writing about change" (Marr 31-32). Many of these intellectuals were nationalists, while some were communists. Together, these groups proliferated radical and revolutionary ideals in the colonial society.

Based on discussions of prolonged Confucian sexism in the previous section, one would expect Vietnamese women to be the most vulnerable population during French colonialism. Vietnamese Marxist leaders often portrayed them as such, with Ho Chi Minh condemning "colonial sadism" in a 1922 news article through detailed examples of violence towards women in the colonies (qtd. in Fall, *Ho Chi Minh* 13-14). However, Vietnamese women also actively partook in the anti-France revelry. Records from the French government showed hundreds of women detained and tried for their participation in armed insurrection, strikes, and protests (Lessard, "More Than" 95-96). Moreover, women later fought as guerilla soldiers, alongside their male counterparts, for the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam during the war that

broke out in the 1950s (Taylor 30). This intense political activism stood in contradiction to Confucianist ideals of the subservient woman, suggesting that a change in societal perception of women's status had occurred. Indeed, Vietnamese women's status underwent intense altercation in the 1920s and 1930s due to superjacent forces of radicalism, nationalism, and early communism (Marr 191; Tai 95-102). I now delve into these debates as well as the rhetoric used to mobilize Vietnamese women in nationalist campaigns.

Debates on Women's Status in the 1920s and 1930s

In the 1920s, an explosion of public debates on women's rights took place among the intelligentsia, who questioned Confucian ideals and colonial oppression of women (Marr 200; Jayawardena 201; Tai 91). Many revolutionary thinkers—mostly male—joined this debate through hundreds of articles with topics ranging from challenging feudal sexism to advocating for girls' access to education (Marr 217-218). Advocates called for radical change, demanding that women be liberated from Confucian gender expectations and included in political movements, especially in patriotic campaigns. Traces of Western feminism emerged in these discussions: Two delegates—one French and one British—from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom travelled to Vietnam during this time and stimulated interests in women's issues among the Vietnamese intellectuals (Siegel 661). Later, though, some Vietnamese women advocates vehemently challenged Western feminism, which they regarded as based on bourgeois ideals and inapplicable to the Vietnamese culture (Chiricosta 130; Marr 226). Nevertheless, this time period marked the existence of a collective questioning of Vietnamese women's status, effectively disrupting norms of gender among Vietnamese revolutionaries and allowing women better access to the polity.

With influences from Ho Chi Minh's communist party, debates on women's rights in the 1930s emphasized nationalism as a necessary means for the emancipation of women. Recognizing the potential benefits of recruiting female participants, party leaders egregiously attacked women's oppression in their nationalist campaigns and carved out spaces for women to partake in the socialist revolt (Steward 503; Turley 796). For instance, a women-founded newspaper in the early 1930s, the *Women's New Literature* (*Phụ Nữ Tân Văn*), featured opinions from both male and female radicals on women's roles in national affairs, advocating for ideals of gender equality that are "rooted in Marxist interpretations of history and development" (N. T. Tran 418-419). These discussions gradually integrated women's emancipation into the main objectives of the larger nationalist movement and bolstered support for Ho Chi Minh's rising communist party. Women joined the party in hopes that it would put an end to French imperialism and establish a new government to protect women's rights.

One major factor contributed to the success of these mobilization efforts: the first formal schooling of girls in Franco-Vietnamese institutions. Education in Vietnam under French colonial rule went through massive restructuring with the introduction of Western curriculum and constituency, steadily abolishing the Sino-Vietnamese system of Confucian education and examination (Tai 11). Interestingly, the French authority opened doors to education for Vietnamese women:

> Convinced that uneducated Vietnamese women posed a serious threat to France's civilizing mission and colonial rule itself, French colonial administrators encouraged Vietnamese parents to send their daughters to school. There were two premises involved in encouraging the education of Vietnamese girls. The first was that schooling would allow them to become literate, to become more compatible and more appropriate wives to

> their educated Vietnamese husbands. The second premise was that, more than men, Vietnamese women seemed hesitant to change and accept French colonial rule…. Furthermore, once educated, young Vietnamese women would, as mothers, transmit this appreciation of French culture and of French rule to their children (Lessard, "Colony Writ Small" 8).

While French imperialists hoped to disengage Vietnamese women's patriotic tendencies, they inadvertently gave rise to women's voices in public debates. However, it is imperative to note that French influence did not "politicize" women in Vietnam, for they had "demonstrated political consciousness from as early as 1858" (Lessard, "More Than" 93). Rather, these educational opportunities increased women's access to the knowledge and rhetorical tools necessary for participation in politics. As more women became active in the insurgency, resistance leaders began seeing female emancipation as essential to the success of their campaigns.

Women in Nationalist Discourses

As women's liberation gradually became a goal of the anti-France movement, Vietnamese nationalist discourses incorporated language that turned women's liberation into a symbol of national revolt (N. T. Tran 415; Werner 18). Two rhetorical strategies were prominent among others: evoking the legends of traditional Vietnamese heroines and employing familial metaphors. These strategies not only cloaked nationalism with female emancipation but also shaped collective understanding of women's roles during the revolution.

The first strategy, evocation of women heroes, allowed nationalist arguments in Vietnam to cast women's liberation as emblematic for the nation's independence. Leaders of the French resistance movement frequently made references to historical women warriors and portrayed

them as embodying the nation's crusade against invasive forces (Turley 794; N. T. Tran 415). For instance, the most well-known anti-colonial scholar and resistance leader during this time, Phan Boi Chau, produced a drama of the Trung sisters, in which he portrayed them as "women whose love of country had led them to rise above ordinary feminine weaknesses" (Tai 95). Phan's interpretation of this legend made explicit ties between the Trung sisters' "emancipation" from constraints of traditional femininity and their patriotic upheaval of colonization, implying that Vietnamese women are only free from oppression once they realize their roles in the fight for national freedom. This drama also served to illustrate the revival of matriarchal ideals about women as natural protectors of the nation and how nationalist independence messages normalized women's participation in patriotic causes, though it sometimes reinforced stereotypes of women as the more fragile population (e.g., Phan's reference to the Trung sisters overcoming "feminine weaknesses"). In other words, through depictions of female warriors as symbols for national independence, nationalist discourses encouraged women to recognize their potential and promoted the inclusion of women in Vietnam's resistance politics.

A second rhetorical strategy that also appeared in Vietnamese nationalist discourses was a heavy reliance on familial metaphors: figures of speech that use elements of the "home" or "family" to describe elements of the "nation" or its "people" (Werner 18). These metaphors contributed to the mobilization of women by bridging the public sphere of national politics and the domestic sphere that women were typically expected to occupy (Chandler and Munday). According to Newmark, while the concepts of the public/private spheres are "inherently Western," they are applicable to cultural examination in Asian countries to a certain extent (1-3). For instance, a popular and very old proverb in Vietnam states, "When invaders come to our *home*, women will also fight" (*giặc đến nhà, đàn bà cũng đánh*). The nation—or rather, its

invasion—is understood through implications of the home, which is stereotypically perceived as a sanctuary for women. That is, the proverb describes a woman protecting her nation through the more widely-accepted notion of a woman defending her home; thus, it normalizes the involvement of women in patriotic causes. The Vietnamese communist movement further developed these familial metaphors into figurative kinship models, such as constructing Ho Chi Minh's identity as the "*uncle*" (*bác*) of Vietnamese people[3] (Pelley 159; Werner 20). These models reconceptualized the mission of fighting for the nation into a mission of fighting for the home and the family. Moreover, familial metaphors are so well-ingrained in nationalist rhetoric that they appear as actual words in Vietnamese vocabulary: the Vietnamese word for "nation" (*quốc gia*), for instance, is a compound noun between "country" (*quốc*) and "home" (*gia*) (Werner 20). As Robert Ivie noted, well-established metaphors can merge the figurative with the literal, forming new connotations and realities for the metaphorized ideas: "We move from a perception of speaking metaphorically to a perception of speaking literally when we stop talking about one thing in terms of another and begin treating distinct terms ('savage' and 'Soviet,' for example) as virtual identities, as if one were the other" (72). Familial metaphors in Vietnamese nationalist discourses, therefore, suggest the literal connection between the anti-France resistance movement and a female emancipation movement in which women break off the shackles of domestic duties to participate in the polity.

These strategies of evoking historical female figures and employing familial metaphors hold controversial implications. On the one hand, Western feminist critics point out that nationalism dilutes women's true independence and only engages with their liberation on a symbolic level (Chiricosta 140). On the other hand, transnational feminist scholars contend that

[3] Even to this day, the people of Vietnam more widely refer to Ho as "Uncle Ho" rather than his full name or title.

"the need to free feminism from nationalist discourse is clear. Yet feminism is implicated in nationalism as well as in its counterdiscourses… for feminism comes in many forms—sometimes as a hegemonic Western formation and sometimes as a threat to Western hegemony as well as to national and regional patriarchies" (Grewal and Kaplan 22). The symbolic association of women's issues with nationalism is problematic but unavoidable in many contexts, especially in the rhetoric of colonized communities where Western imperialism exists as a persistent hegemony. Moreover, this symbolism is not unique to the Vietnamese culture: Cold War rhetoric in the US often feminizes liberty (e.g., "*Lady* Liberty"), justifying the need for her protection from "invasive" forces (Ivie 72). Critics need to further engage with this contentious use of female imagery, which might be prevalent in Ho Chi Minh's rhetoric on women's issues, to examine its impacts on the advocacy for gender equality.

Ho Chi Minh

Many scholars have attempted to reconstruct the life and ideology of Ho Chi Minh in their biographical works, but much debate remains on certain aspects of Ho's true character (See e.g., Duiker 2-7, 569-571; Neville 12-14). For instance, scholars dispute whether Ho was more of a communist or a nationalist because he often placed the needs of the country over those of a full Communist strategy (Fall, *Ho Chi Minh* ix). The cult of personality surrounding his image in Vietnam also raised questions on whether he were truly a saint or "a brilliant manipulator, an outstandingly gifted jack-of-all-trades" (Lacouture 229). Nevertheless, scholars are in consensus that Ho was instrumental to Vietnam's independence movement from Western colonizers, largely because he was a master communicator (DeCaro 2-3; Duiker 571; Lacouture 219; Hoang 33-34). The following sections provide information on key elements on Ho's life and his rhetorical strategies that will prove useful for the purpose of this study.

A Patriotic Marxist

Both patriotism and Marxism played crucial roles in shaping Ho Chi Minh's political practices. Before becoming a Marxist, Ho developed patriotic ideals in his early years growing up during Vietnam's transition into a French colonial territory. He was born in the heart of the anti-French resistance movement, Nghe An province, and grew up in a family of rebels and nationalists (Lacouture 13-15). Phan Boi Chau was also a close acquaintance of Ho's father, and Phan offered to educate young Ho on revolutionary ideals (Duiker 16; Neville 15). As a student, Ho was well-versed in many subjects, with a keen interest in world politics, and earned admittance to the most prestigious Franco-Vietnamese secondary school. However, he was expelled from this institution in 1907 for his anti-authority activities such as publicly criticizing the imperial court, calling for reduction of agricultural taxes, and participating in the insurrectionist movement of 1908 (Duiker 35; Lacouture 16). A few months after this expulsion, Ho decided to travel abroad, which is a decision that introduced him to Marxism and shaped his political life.

The actual reasoning behind Ho's decision to travel is unknown. Lacouture provided two practical explanations: "[Ho's] inability to adjust to life under colonial rule" and "the urge to meet the challenge of unfamiliar culture" (17). On the other hand, Duiker argued that Ho's motivation was political: to "evade the watchful eyes of the imperial authorities" and to "find the secrets of Western success at its source" (38). Neville added that Ho had personal reasons to travel as he initially wanted to meet Phan Boi Chau, his old teacher, in China (17). It may be a combination of these reasons, or all of them, that led young Ho to leave Vietnam on a French steamboat in 1911, arriving at various countries and encountering different social and political systems (Duiker 46-47; Neville 17).

The patriot Ho Chi Minh became a devout Marxist during his time abroad. He was already involved with the French Socialist Party during his stay in Paris, but it was not until his colleague gave him a copy of Lenin's "Thesis on the National and Colonial Questions" that he was transformed "from a simple patriot with socialist leanings into a Marxist revolutionary" (Duiker 64). He recounted reading the thesis "again and again" until he could "grasp the main part of it," which drove him to tears. Ho shouted, "Dear martyrs, compatriots! This is what we need, this is the path to our liberation!" (Fall, *Ho Chi Minh* 6). Lenin's writings were likely significant to Ho Chi Minh not because of their socialist ideals, but rather because of their emphasis on liberation from imperial forces. Ho later became a core member of the international communist movement with a firm belief that "only Socialism and Communism can liberate the oppressed nations and the working people throughout the world from slavery" (Fall, *Ho Chi Minh* 6-7). Ho's combination of anti-colonialism and socialism marked his identity as a patriotic Marxist—or a Marxist patriot—whose ideology influenced Vietnam's later independence movement and development into a socialist republic.

Ho Chi Minh's "Special Concerns" for Women's Liberation

An aspect of Ho Chi Minh's political life that many studies have noted but have yet to examine in-depth was his advocacy for women's liberation (see, e.g., Duiker 563; Steward 503; Taylor 13). Governmental websites in Vietnam often claim that Ho Chi Minh was "especially concerned" with the liberation of women and recount stories of his involvement in advancing agendas for gender equality and women's education (Bảo Tàng). Vietnamese academics also publish prolifically on Ho's "calls" for women's liberation—ideals that influenced the implementation of gender equality policies in Vietnam (Q. C. Tran 26-31). This evidence suggests that Ho demonstrated, to a certain extent, that gender equality was integral to his vision

of Vietnam's post-revolutionary government. Addressing women's issues was thus a primary concern for Ho after Vietnam gained independence from France's control.

An explanation for Ho's advocacy of women's rights is that he may have encountered the international feminist movement during his time abroad. The 1920s was when feminists in many different countries successfully championed new legislation that advanced women's roles in society and formed more international alliances (DuBois and Oliviero 1; Rupp 15). It might be that Ho came into contact with these movements directly during his travels and also indirectly through press coverage at that time, because he wrote in a 1922 news article: "[Vietnamese] women and girls even knew of Revolution [during feudalist times]. Let alone today when the two words of 'women's rights' are rumbling around the world" (Quí Lâm 18). Ho's encounters with the international feminist movement during his time abroad might have informed his understanding of women's struggles and compelled him to address sexist issues in independent Vietnam.

Another source that might have inspired Ho's support for women's liberation was his homelife. While many biographical works note the major impact of Ho's father on his patriotic ideology, few accounts mention his relationship with his mother (see, e.g., Duiker 15-35; Lacouture 12-14). However, at least one source contends that Ho's mother was a curious and intelligent woman despite not having access to formal education: She was knowledgeable enough to lull her children to sleep with *Truyen Kieu*—a well-known epic poem about women's struggles between love and traditional duties (Duiker 18). These memories might have become a source of inspiration that raised Ho's awareness of Vietnamese women's oppression.

Ho Chi Minh's Rhetorical Patterns

Current scholarship on Ho Chi Minh, while limited, has noted two recurring characteristics of his rhetoric. Examining Ho's writings and addresses on revolution, DeCaro argued that Ho's rhetoric embodied ideals of Vietnamese heritage and nationalism, specifically the ideas of the "superior man" and the "Mandate of Heaven," that explain his persuasion (51). In the Vietnamese tradition, the title "superior man" (*quân tử*) refers to scholars who have perfected their "character" through acts of "doing" rather than "saying." Ho Chi Minh's character not only fits these criteria but also is one that is outstandingly crafted and performed (Decaro 48, 69). He identified with his people, for instance, through his self-presentation as a Vietnamese peasant who is soft spoken and wears the simplest garb (Halberstam qtd. in DeCaro 70). Since the average Vietnamese citizens at this time were peasants and farmers, Ho differentiated himself from other glamourous leaders, thereby fostering identification and massive support for his independent movement (Warby qtd. in DeCaro 70). Ho's peasant persona may have suggested a lack of interest in rhetoric, but it actually was a compelling part of his persuasive efforts.

The other factor that contributed to Ho Chi Minh's persuasion was his utilization of the Vietnamese "Mandate from Heaven" (*thiên minh*). This doctrine denotes that a revolutionary regime should be supported and will only be successful *if* it demonstrates the potential to completely replace the previous government. As McAlister and Mus explain,

> [I]n the critical task of making their choice the Vietnamese looked for a sign or an intimation of legitimacy, which they called *virtue*. The moment a "virtue" (in the West one would say a political system) appears to be worn out and another is in view ready to take the place of the old, the previous abuses—which had been put up with until then—

> are seen in a new light. Then, and only then, must they be remedied with the help of a new principle. Extreme patience is thus replaced by intolerance. First the people tolerate everything; then they refuse to put up with anything. In other words, the former values do not count anymore. (qtd. in DeCaro 29)

In order for Ho to advocate for his revolutionary ideals, he had to fulfill this "mandate" of the Vietnamese heritage. Ho accomplished this through introducing new terminologies and advocating new political realities: He popularized, for the first time, the idea that a "Party of workers' class" exists, creating new identification of the masses that transcended class divides in the anti-French movement (qtd. in DeCaro 65). By outwardly adopting traditional values of the superior man and framing his movement as a revolutionary one that could succeed, Ho's rhetoric strongly resonated with the Vietnamese people and persuaded them to join his cause. These rhetorical characteristics may also be relevant to Ho's writings after the success of the August Revolution. Moreover, they might have contributed to Ho's persuasion when advocating for the passage and implementation of the 1959 Marriage and Family Law.

The Marriage and Family Law of 1959

In 1960, the North Vietnamese National Assembly officially implemented the first law to regulate women's rights since the establishment of a socialist regime in the northern half of the country (Kim 440). This law covered four main provisions:

> First, for the first time in Vietnamese history, arranged marriages were abolished, and both men and women were granted the freedom to make their own decisions. Second, polygamy was declared illegal, and monogamy was adopted as the official form of Vietnamese marriage. Third, equality between men and women was to be practiced both in the home and in society in general. And fourth, the basic rights of women and children,

such as freedom from abuse and oppression in the home, were to be protected. (Wisensale 80)

This legislation ensured the abolition of feudal practices and denoted the protection of gender equality in all aspects of life. The Marriage and Family Law of 1959 (Family Law) has been revised extensively since then, addressing new issues such as human trafficking and same-sex marriages while remaining one of the cornerstone legal codes for women's protection in Vietnam (Duong 241).

Despite its progressive language and policies, the Family Law faced numerous challenges when it came to implementation. The abolishment of arranged marriages and polygamy came relatively easily while domestic and societal equality between men and women and protection for women and children in the home proved far more difficult to obtain. Cultural and historical factors such as ingrained sexism, war, and poverty continued to present hurdles for the advocacy of women's rights (Duong 252; Goodkind 342; Truong 23). Significantly, Ho Chi Minh was not only one of the first advocates for this law but also part of the National Assembly that reviewed and suggested edits to its original drafts.

Conclusion

Feminist rhetorical criticism of Ho's addresses and writings requires an investigation of Vietnam's history and culture. Contextual knowledge of the international feminist movement and feminist theories, the evolution of Vietnamese women's status, debates on women's issues in Indochina Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh's ideology and rhetoric, and the creation of the first law on Marriage and Family guides the analytical process of this study, providing more breadth and depth to research of Vietnam's rhetorical traditions. In the next section, I will elaborate on my method and describe the specific steps I take to conduct my analysis.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

This study employs feminist rhetorical criticism to extricate Ho Chi Minh's persuasive strategies in his address at the "Meeting to Discuss the Draft of the Law on Marriage and Family" (Draft Meeting Address). In this chapter, I delineate my methodological approach by first explaining why feminist criticism is suitable for rhetorical analysis of Ho's writings and addresses on women's rights. I then describe my chosen artifact, and finally, outline the specific steps I take to conduct my analysis.

Advantages of Feminist Criticism

Feminist criticism is an appropriate and beneficial method of analysis for this study. According to Foss, "the primary focus of feminist criticism [is] identifying and explicating strategies of disruption that can lead to liberation and transformation" (146). In order to advocate for the novel Family Law, Ho Chi Minh had to dismantle traditional ways of thinking about women that failed to see the need for legal protection of women in their private lives. Moreover, Foss instructed that, "Much feminist criticism features the rhetoric of typically marginalized or subordinated groups…. But the artifact you choose to analyze is not required to have this focus" (146). Feminist criticism, thus, is applicable to analysis of a variety of texts, as long as these texts feature disruption strategies and promote nondominant perspectives. These are criteria that Ho's rhetoric in the Draft Meeting Address indisputably meets.

Artifact

The Vietnamese version of the Draft Meeting Address is included in the book, *Uncle Ho and Vietnamese Women* (*Bác Hồ và Phụ Nữ Việt Nam*) (Quí Lâm 42-43). I translated this artifact into English and have provided both versions in Appendix A. Through this translation work, I was able to engage with the primary source for my analysis while allowing the English-speaking

readers access to understand the text. However, I was unable to express some Vietnamese phrases or grammatical rules in English, so I either supply notations or adopt English conventions for convenience. That being said, the meanings of some words or phrases might not fully translate.

Specific Methodological Steps

In order to conduct feminist rhetorical criticism of Ho's Draft Meeting Address, I developed pre-writing analysis questions to aid my examination (see Appendix B). Foss provided a helpful methodological framework for conducting feminist criticism: "Your primary goal as a feminist critic is to identify and explicate strategies that disrupt established hegemonies and, in turn, create new ways of thinking, acting, and being" (147). She suggested a "starting list" of five common strategies for disruption: "generating multiple perspectives, cultivating ambiguity, reframing, enacting, and juxtaposing incongruities" (147). Aside from these strategies, I also considered whether and how Ho used other rhetorical strategies to support his persuasive efforts such as gendered nationalist discourse, Marxist-Leninist ideals of women's emancipation, and other common rhetorical strategies of repetition and persona embodiment.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS

Many people in the United States know of Ho Chi Minh for his appropriation of the American Declaration of Independence to solicit international support for Vietnam's independence movement (Menand). Fewer people know about Ho's rhetoric on women's rights, which supported the creation and implementation of the first law on marriage and family in Vietnam. This study aims not only to shed light on Ho's contribution to the legal protection of women but also to diversify scholarship of presidential and feminist rhetoric. In order to do so, I provide a feminist rhetorical analysis of Ho's speeches and writings that are relevant to his advocacy for the 1959 Marriage and Family Law (Family Law).

Previous chapters have laid the groundwork for this study through providing a literature review and a method description. In this chapter, I present my analysis of Ho's address at the "Meeting to Discuss the Draft of the Marriage and Family Law," which took place in 1959 when Ho directly addressed the National Assembly about the legislation (Mai and Le 219-220). I first discuss key background information that explains the address's importance in the creation of the law and sheds light on the constraints Ho Chi Minh faced when speaking to the National Assembly. From there, I argue that Ho employed reframing strategies and embodied a dual first persona to portray the law as compatible with both traditionalist and communist ideals. The quotes I use for this analysis, unless indicated otherwise, are from my translations of the "Draft Meeting Address" included in Appendix A.

Historical and Rhetorical Context for Ho Chi Minh's "Draft Meeting Address"

The historical situation at the time of the meeting contributes to understanding the rhetorical exigence—or, what prompted a rhetor to speak (Bitzer 6-7). The successful August Revolution in 1945 led the way for Ho Chi Minh to declare Vietnam's independence from

Western imperialists, to establish the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in the North, and to extend the DRV's control to all of Vietnam (Hoang 57-61). Notwithstanding early efforts to mediate with the French, the DRV failed to negotiate on issues of South Vietnam, which led to the use of military forces and an outbreak of war. Ho Chi Minh's forces—the Viet Minh, who were primarily communists[4]—later gained complete victory over the French in mid-1954, leading to the division of the country into communist North Vietnam and pro-Western South Vietnam (Hoang 68). From 1954 to 1956, the communist government began intense political, cultural, and agricultural reform in North Vietnam (Hoang 68-72). These policies delivered mixed results as some programs abolished colonial behaviors and greatly reduced illiteracy, while others brought about terrifying genocide. For instance, the Land Reform campaign (1953-56) wiped out half a million Vietnamese because of two factors: (1) tax policies that aimed "to impoverish the whole population and to reduce all Vietnamese society to the levels of its lowest members" and (2) rampant execution of "dangerous reactionaries" (Hoang 72). The reform era infused North Vietnamese citizens with great confusion and distrust of the government, which might be one motivating factor for Ho and his administration to rhetorically justify post-reform governmental decisions.

During the reform era, the government faced a major issue with "regression"—a term the Party used to imply "adultery." The Party initially encouraged women to "feel completely liberated from all 'feudal ties,' including chastity and conjugal fidelity" (Hoang 144). Specifically, women were "asked"—a pseudonym for "forced"—to openly accept flirtations from men regardless of their marital status or desire to do so; and if women refused, they would

[4] Hoang notes that the Viet Minh initially was a nationalist program in which many non-communists partook (59n1). However, after the August Revolution, communists in the Viet Minh "crushed all nationalist resistance" to move their agenda forward (62).

be criticized as “feudalist” (144). However, the Party’s attitudes soon changed when “adultery” became so widespread that it caused many problems in both small families and the larger community. One example was how “many peasants refused to go on citizen labor duty, resorting to any excuse which would keep them at home so that they could “protect their wives from night-visitors” (Hoang 145). Bigamy was also an issue wherein soldiers, fearing that they would never see their wives again after the war, married someone else during their tour of duty (146). Ho Chi Minh was reported to vehemently disapprove of these practices, but his administration disagreed on the most suitable solution (146). The reform era caused so much discontent among citizens that the government had to confess to making “too many deviations” and executing “too many honest people” (Hoang 210). To address these “mistakes,” the Party organized a “Rectification of Errors” campaign in 1954, putting an end to the Land Reform campaign, releasing captives in prisons and concentration camps, restoring citizens’ confiscated property, and reuniting wives who were separated from their husbands (Hoang 214-217). Following Rectification, the Party resumed its original mission to “complete the setting up of a collectivist pattern of life,” continuing the construction of a socialist society despite remaining negative sentiments towards reform and the government (240). The burden of rectification and lingering “regression” issues might have prompted Ho Chi Minh to attend and speak at the “Meeting to Discuss the Draft of the Marriage and Family Law.” His advocacy for this legal document might have been because it would outlaw polygamy, which addressed some of the issues that the country was facing at the time (Wisensale 80).

While the historical record provides few specifics about the Draft Meeting at the National Assembly, secondary sources indicate that Ho’s address was significant to the passage of the Family Law. In this speech, Ho mentioned that a draft of the law was “about to be presented to

the National Assembly" and later asked this body of government to "approve" the law. Moreover, the contemporary Constitution of the DRV stipulated that the National Assembly was "the highest body of authority" and could "decide on all national issues, promulgate laws, vote on the budget, and approve treaties signed by the Government with foreign countries" ("Vietnam Constitution 1946," art. III, sec. 22-23). The purpose of the meeting, therefore, was to present the first draft of the Family Law for the highest governmental authority to revise, authorize, and implement. Ho's address set the stage for the meeting, introducing the National Assembly to the core values behind this new legal code and encouraging them to evaluate the draft with all seriousness. It is also worth noting that Ho's speech appeared in the fifth book of the *Quotations from President Ho*[5] book series (qtd. in Quí Lâm 43). The book was published in 1960, which was immediately after the meeting and during the Family Law's initial implementation periods (Kim 440). It is unclear whether Ho was aware that his speech would be publicized, or which factors motivated the editors of this book to include the speech. Nevertheless, the Draft Meeting Address had to bear rhetorical significance for the contemporary public, much of whom might be skeptical of post-reform policies, for it to be made widely accessible after the meeting. One purpose for publishing the speech might have been to reassure citizens that Ho Chi Minh endorsed the Family Law and encourage them to accept this new legal code, as well.

To further understand Ho's rhetorical choices in the Draft Meeting Address, one must have foundational knowledge of his immediate audience: the National Assembly. We do not

[5] The more accurate translation is "Calls [to Action] from President Ho" (*Những Lời Kêu Gọi của Hồ Chủ Tịch*). I deliberately translated this title into one that resembles *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung*, more commonly known as "the little red book." Much like how Mao's *Quotations* celebrated his "contribution to establishing a communist China that touted equality, unity, independence, and a better life," Ho's *Quotations* propagated his significant writings and addresses on socialism, revolution, and Vietnam's independence (Lu, *Little Red Book* 11; "Những Lời"). One difference between these publications was the intensity of their reverence, wherein Mao's received biblical devotion—"read by everyone everyday" (Lu, *Little Red Book* 11)—and Ho's did not. The reasons might be because the majority of Vietnamese at the time were illiterate, and that Ho's *Quotations* was a five-part series instead of a concise "little red book" like that of Mao.

know details of assembly members in attendance at the meeting, but a general understanding of this administration sheds light on their shared values. Since the event was in October 1959, the National Assembly that Ho mentioned in the speech was the first legislature of independent Vietnam. This administration served from January 1946 to May 1960 and comprised 333 deputies, only 10 of whom were women (Vietnam News Agency, "First National Assembly"). Not only was this governmental body male-dominated, but its members were primarily workers, farmers, and soldiers, who likely held traditional ideals about women—beliefs that derived from lingering patriarchal, Confucianist thoughts—more so than revolutionary intellectuals like Ho Chi Minh (Marr 192, Tai 92-93). Additionally, most of the assembly members were affiliated with the Communist Party and might not have viewed women's liberation as a primary focus of their agenda (Fall, "Viet-Minh Regime" 10). Persuading this political system to actively endorse and protect women's rights might have spurred a need to make these rights appealing to both traditionalists and Party ideologues. Ho did so through disrupting pre-conceived notions about the family, the law, and women's emancipation, reframing the Family Law into a suitable and necessary policy for the contemporary socialist society of North Vietnam.

Reframing the Marriage and Family Law

Reframing was a major disruption method in Ho's address. As Watzlawick put it, to reframe is to "change the conceptual and/or emotional setting or viewpoint in relation to which a situation is experienced and to place it in another frame which fits the 'facts' of the same concrete situation equally well or even better, and thereby changes its entire meaning" (95). Rhetors perform reframing to introduce the audience to a new interpretation of a common issue or idea. In the Draft Meeting Address, Ho Chi Minh had to reframe the Family Law into a policy that the National Assembly could accept and support. Specifically, Ho proposed that the law (1)

cultivated “good” families and (2) liberated women’s labor power. Ho reasoned both were practices that contributed to completing the socialist nation-building mission, ergo implying that the Family Law was essential to the mission. I provide a diagram to visualize Ho’s arguments, with the dotted line representing his implied argument as opposed to the solid lines representing his more direct assertions (see fig. 2). In order to make his case while appealing to various forces, Ho employed three main strategies: dissociating ideals of the public/private family, associating the “good” family/society with socialism, and relating women’s emancipation to socialist construction. I expound on each strategy in the upcoming paragraphs.

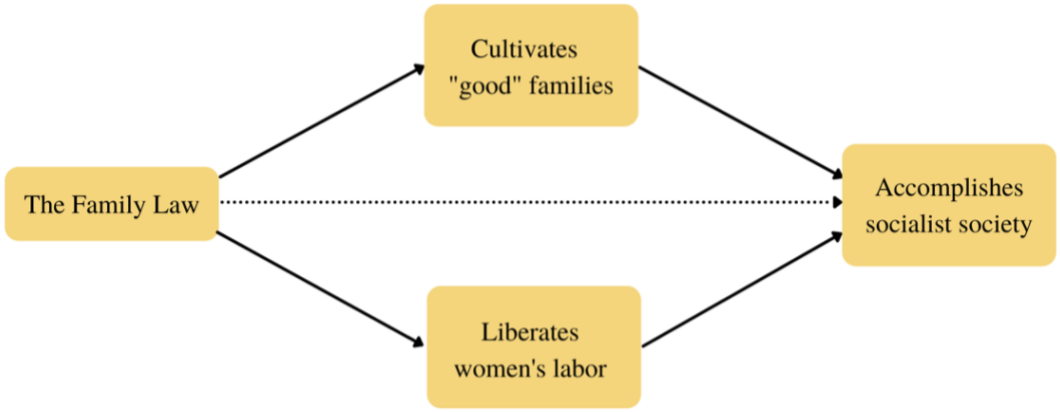

Fig. 2. Diagram of Ho’s arguments to reframe the Marriage and Family Law

Dissociating Ideals of the Public/Private Family

Dissociation is one among the many ways rhetors can engage in reframing. As explained by Zarefsky, dissociation happens when “a seemingly unitary concept is split in two by pairing it with two philosophically opposed terms, one of which is a value to be preferred over the other. Then, the previously unitary meaning, which one wishes to discredit, is connected with the negatively valued term, and one’s own position is linked with the favorably valued term” (114). This strategy allows rhetors to create new meaning associations for a normalized concept and,

simultaneously, appeal to the established values associated with the concept. For example, Ronald Reagan's address on the state of the economy in 1981 featured a dissociation with the "truly needy," which divided the term "need" into one that is "true" and another that is fabricated. This dissociation helped Reagan's proposed economic policy appear as a change from the past while reassuring proponents of past programs that the novel policy still benefitted them (Zarefsky et al. 114). Dissociation, thus, grants speakers the ability to navigate between conflicting forces, which explains its appropriateness for Ho's address at the Draft Meeting.

Through dissociation of traditional family ideals, Ho was able to present the Family Law as both conforming to well-established values and revolutionizing practices in the new and equitable North Vietnam society. Ho dissociated the term "family" immediately at the start of the speech when he said, "Some people think I do not have a family and thus am unknowledgeable about this issue. I may not have a *private family*, but I have the *great family*: the international working class and the people of Vietnam" (emphasis added). The unitary concept of "family" was split into two philosophically opposing terms: the personal, blood-related, and private family versus the general, race-related,[6] and public one. In this instance, Ho connected traditional ideals of the family to the discredited "private" family ("I may not have") while linking his position to the favorably-valued "great" family ("but I have"). The "public family" was an imaginary concept—a familial metaphor alluding to all Vietnamese people and/or communists ("the international working class and the people of Vietnam")—that Ho derived from the original "private family." This derision allowed Ho to ascribe values of the "private family," which was one's most intimate and personal community, to the newly-formed notion of the "public family,"

[6] According to Werner, Vietnamese nationalist discourses often promote the "ethnic singularity of the Viet," which describes all Vietnamese as coming from the "same womb" ("đồng bào") and sharing the same ancestors (19). This portrayal made women emblematic for the "national race" and mystified the separation among race, ethnicity, and ancestry (19).

with public entities protecting citizens mirroring the idea of private family members protecting each other. However, Ho made a deliberate attempt to elevate the authority of the "public family" over that of the "private family." He asserted that being in the "great family" granted him credibility to "deduce the small family" and publicly speak about "private" matters. The dissociation, consequently, portrayed public organizations as more knowledgeable and competent than citizens in managing issues of the smaller families. It is also interesting that Ho claimed to not have a private family while some records suggest that he had several wives and even children (Brocheux 39-40; Halberstam 16; Quinn-Judge 183). Some scholars contend that Ho's denial of having a private life was a deliberate strategy to cultivate his image as a fully-committed nationalist and to reinforce familial metaphors between the Party and Vietnamese citizens (Pelley 158; Werner 20). Therefore, by claiming that he did not have a personal family, Ho was able to associate himself completely with the "public family," further exaggerating its division from the "private" family.

If Ho previously argued that a public entity *can* manage private family issues, he also continued to insist that a public entity *should* care about these issues through dissociated ideas of the "good family" and "good society." The "good family" refers to the existence of a private family that is good and another that is undesirable. Similarly, the "good society" implies that a society—or "public family" as Ho established—can exist as one that is good or bad. Ho cultivated a causal connection between these concepts when he said, "…many families added together equal society. A good society makes a good family, and a good family makes a good society." Ho seemingly suggested a reciprocal beneficiary relationship between the "good society" and the "good family." By emphasizing society's influence first, however, Ho elevated the importance of the society over that of the family. Thereby, he urged members of the "good"

society—the National Assembly—to exert control over and cultivate "good" families; one way of doing so was through enforcing a "public" law that regulated "private" matters.

Other minor dissociations assisted Ho's appeals to both traditional and revolutionary forces. For instance, another dissociated term was the "good marriage"—one where the husband and the wife "*truly* love each other" (emphasis added). Marital love here was dissociated into one that is "true" and another that might have been "forced," indicating that marriage by choice better honored traditional values of a union than arranged marriages. When discussing marriage, Ho also grounded the revolutionary in the traditional when he quoted a Vietnamese proverb and built his argument on the proverb's premise: "As our proverb says, 'When a husband and his wife are of the same mind, there is nothing they cannot achieve.' For the husband and wife to be on the same mind, they must truly love each other in marriage." Ho paid homage to Vietnamese traditions by drawing from folk knowledge, but he simultaneously supported ideals of free marriage that were not the norms in society. These strategies did not further Ho's dissociation of the private/public family, but they contributed similar effects to reframe the Family Law into an appealing policy for both traditionalists and revolutionaries.

Ho's overall dissociation of the "family" simultaneously accomplished two goals. First, it introduced the audience to a "public family" that retained widely-accepted values of the traditional "private family." In this framework, the "public family" (i.e., the government) functioned to protect its "family members" (i.e., the citizens) similarly to how parents protected their children or to how siblings protected each other; thus, this framework normalizes governmental interference of citizens' personal matters. Second, despite bridging the two terms through similar values, the address implicitly instilled the public family with control over the private family and argued for the legitimacy of public entities handling citizens' personal

matters. Ho's ultimate purpose might have been to address opposition from among the National Assembly and the wider public (i.e., the "some people" he mentioned at the start of the speech who said he had no family and thus no knowledge about such issues), encouraging them to perceive the Family Law as not only applicable but also important to contemporary society.

Associating the "Good" Society/Family with Socialism

Further aligning the Family Law with the interests of the communist-led National Assembly, Ho continued to form new associations between the dissociated "good" society and family with socialism. Specifically, while he did not clarify what separated a "good" society from a "bad" one, his rhetoric implied that a "good" society was a socialist society: "A *good society* makes a good family, and a good family makes a *good society*. The nucleus of *society* is the family. Because we want to build *a socialist society*, we need to pay attention to its nucleus" (emphasis added). The phrase "good society" went through a subtle reassociation wherein the "good" was replaced with the "socialist." In other words, the "good society" *was* the "socialist society," and because the Family Law served to build good families in the good society, it contributed to building the socialist society, as well. Ho also used a significant family-as-nucleus metaphor to portray the family as the basic element of a society, much like how the cell[7] is the most basic unit of all matter. Once again, he emphasized the authority of the society over that of the family and urged the "good" and "socialist" society to care for its smaller families. In the original Vietnamese version, moreover, the last sentence did not include the word "we" nor any pronouns because the existence of a collective identity was assumed. This ambiguity invited not just the National Assembly but everyone in the socialist society to protect the private family.

[7] While I translated Ho's "hạt nhân" as "nucleus," which is the center region of a cell, some sources translated "hạt nhân" into the "cell" instead (Mai and Le 219-220). I believe both translations are interchangeable as Ho wanted to portray the family as not only being the center of the society, like the nucleus to the cell, but also being the basic unit that makes up society, like the cell to all matters.

Associating the "good" society with socialism, Ho argued that a good socialist society was one that nurtures smaller families and presented the Family Law as a "good" policy worth the considerations of the communist-led National Assembly.

By way of deduction, because a "good" society was a socialist society and a "good" society built a "good" family, Ho's "good" family was a socialist family. However, Ho neither defined nor explicitly referenced the "socialist family" in the Draft Meeting Address. He instead insisted the audience to view the Family Law under a "socialist standpoint" rather than the "wrong… bourgeois or capitalist perspective." Therefore, we can surmise Ho's ideals of what a "socialist family" entailed through examining the Marxist-Leninist framework on women's liberation. Marx and Lenin would argue that the labor oppression of women became the metaphor for capitalism, and conversely, women's liberation from domesticity was the signifier for communist success (Coole 188-189; Lenin qtd. in "Women Question" 45-46). As a Marxist-Leninist, Ho might share these views of the "socialist family" as one where women were liberated from domestic duties to join the economy and contribute to the making of a socialist society. "In order to liberate women," he pointed out, "one must concurrently exterminate bourgeois and capitalist ideology in the man." Ho was referring to the oppression of women in patriarchal family systems as synonymous with capitalist oppression and argued that only socialism could bring freedom to women and equality to all, which corresponded with Marxist-Leninist ideals on women's oppression. The "good" family was thus the "socialist" family, and vice versa.

Overall, Ho Chi Minh was navigating conflicting demands when advocating for the Family Law. On the one hand, he had to assure conservative supporters that public regulation of personal issues was appropriate for the Vietnamese culture and values. On the other hand, he had

to persuade communist assembly members that the law was essential for the country's socialist revolution. Dissociating ideals of the public/private family then associating the "good" society/family with socialism, Ho argued that the Family Law contributed to building a socialist North Vietnamese government because it cultivated "good" socialist families. This new framing disrupted opposition to the law's applicability and presented it as a legitimate policy solution for the National Assembly to review and implement.

Relating Women's Emancipation to the Socialist Construction

Ho Chi Minh contended that, beyond cultivating "good" families, the Marriage and Family Law contributed to the national mission of building a socialist society by liberating women's labor power. To build this argument, Ho employed the method of strategic repetition, which is a common rhetorical device not only for providing emphasis and emotional heightening but also for generating linkage between concepts (Fahnestock 231). Strategic repetition enhanced Ho's general persuasion through both content and form, strengthening his argument that the success of North Vietnam's socialist revolution required the liberation of women.

In the Draft Meeting Address, Ho multiple times created linkages between "women's emancipation" and the mission of "building a socialist society" through the use of strategic repetition. An instance of this was when Ho engaged the audience in an assessment of the mission: "Our entire nation today all want to build a socialist society. In order to do so, what should we do? We absolutely need to greatly increase production. To produce abundantly, we need more labor power. If we want more labor power, we need to emancipate the labor power of women." Repeating "production" and "labor power" in successive sentences made these terms into connective linkages between the shared goal of "building a socialist society" and the necessary means to that goal: "emancipating women." This repetition also mimicked the form of

a deductive argument in which premises were explicitly laid out for the audience. In other words, Ho walked the audience through each step of his reasoning process so that they came to the same conclusion that the liberation of women played a crucial and practical role in the mission of building a socialist society.

Another example of Ho's strategic repetition was when he stated, "When we speak to women, we speak to half of society. If we do not liberate women, we are not liberating half of human beings. Not liberating women means the building of a socialist society is only half-way done." Utilizing parallel structure ("When we speak to…, we speak to…" and "If we do not…, we are not…"), Ho's argued that women were human beings in society; to build a righteous socialist society, all humans in such society had to be free from oppression. The repeated term "half" also emphasized women as a statistically important population with untapped potential in the nation-building mission. After relating women's liberation to the mission, Ho later in the speech claimed that the Marriage and Family Law "liberates women"; hence, this law was a means for the government to set half of the population free from domestic duties and gain abundance labor power for the shared nation-building task.

Aside from creating linkages between concepts, the method of strategic repetition in Ho's address also strengthened his persuasion through formal appeals. Repeated terms and phrases help orators create patterns that stimulate expectancy, priming the audience for another repetitive instance (Fahnestock 231). Combined with rhythmic sound effects, repetition involves the audience in the speech and "driv[es] home a point with syncopated insistence" (Fahnestock 231). An exemplar for the formal power of repetition is John F. Kennedy's 1961 statement, "Mankind must put an end to war—or war will put an end to mankind." The reprised phrasing of "mankind" and "war" is persuasive partly because the inversion fulfills the audience's

expectancy for repetition and produces incantatory effects, both of which makes the repetition pleasurable to the audience. Ho Chi Minh's utilization of strategic repetition in the Draft Meeting Address delivered similar effects of fulfilled expectancy and enhanced the speech's overall eloquence, encouraging the audience to participate in Ho's calls for women's liberation and gender equality. Repetition also made Ho's arguments more memorable to the audience, contributing to his reframing of the Family Law as a means to increase labor power for the socialist revolution.

After establishing the two ways the law contributed to the mission of building a socialist society—cultivating "good" families and liberating women's labor power, Ho then firmly stated that, "The Law on Marriage and Family about to be presented to the National Assembly today is a revolution; it is a part of the socialist revolution." The strategic repetition of the term "revolution" in this assertion added cadence to the speech and assisted Ho's argument that the Family Law was not only a revolutionary policy but also one that is necessary for the nation-building mission. This new framing made the law appealing to the National Assembly and urged them to implement it.

Embodying a Dual Leader/Uncle First Persona

Ho Chi Minh's first persona played a major role in his persuasive efforts with the Vietnamese public (DeCaro 51). The concept of "persona" describes the performative roles assumed by the rhetor and audience in discourse, and the "first persona" is the persuasive identity that the rhetor implicitly embodies to construct their credibility in the eyes of the audience (Waisanen and Becker 258-259). For instance, a woman politician might rally support for a childcare initiative through rhetoric that emphasizes her maternal identity, fashioning herself as a concerned mother who has experienced the hardships of finding the right care for her

children. According to DeCaro, Ho Chi Minh meticulously crafted his first persona as a charming, down-to-earth, and pure Vietnamese leader to identify with and gain support from the majority of the country (70). Pelley also noted that Ho fully embraced the "national uncle" identity:

> The family presents the "natural" model of a relationship that is clearly hierarchical, but one is that also based on reciprocal ties. According to this model, a political ruler is supposed to govern like a parent, with wisdom and benevolences; and subjects, like children, must be filial—they are constrained to obey. When Ho Chi Minh was construed as a grandfather or uncle, the unspoken meaning was clear: just as "Uncle Ho" conducted himself as a wise and benevolent leader, his nieces and nephews revered him and happily obeyed. (159)

The familial first persona of the "uncle" granted Ho immense rhetorical power to impart perspective change more easily upon his Vietnamese comrades and people. In the Draft Meeting Address, I argue that Ho's "leader" and "uncle" personae did not function separately but merged into a dual identity that Ho embraced throughout the speech. While Ho's first persona was not a rhetorical strategy for hegemony disruption, its persuasive effects bolstered his reframing of the Family Law, thereby enhancing the speech's overall impact.

President Ho Chi Minh was a "leader" in both title and practice. During the 1946 election, Ho indisputably won the presidential seat with 98% of votes, granting him the highest authority not only in the government but also in the eyes of citizens (McAlister 221). Ho's legacy as the face of the independence movement further enhanced his representation as the "leader" of the Vietnamese people, embodying the victorious struggle of the nation against

invasive forces (Duiker 2-3; Neville 1-2). Ho's credentials as the leader of North Vietnam, therefore, consisted of both legal and rhetorical power to procure public acceptance of his ideals.

Performing the role of a national leader in law and spirit, Ho endorsed a commanding tone throughout the speech and ordered the various constituents to respect and practice the law. Emblematic of this tone was when Ho demanded women "not wait for the Government and the Party" but instead, "be self-reliant and fight for yourselves," an assertion that almost suggested a legal intervention was not needed. However, he quickly disabused audiences of such an interpretation when he underscored the importance of the legislation by calling for the Party to "protect" the Family Law "from its proposal to promulgation" and for cadres and party members to "direct the youth unions and women" in the implementation process. When delegating these tasks, Ho emphasized that the government and unions "must do it right" ("*phải làm cho đúng*"), framing his orders as commands rather than suggestions and demonstrating his authority as the leader. This authority also allowed him to declare that "the Party must protect [the law] as it is a revolution," reinforcing his previous arguments that the Family Law was an essential part of the socialist nation-building mission.

Nowhere was the "leader" role more important than when Ho had to address the obstacles to implementing the Family Law. Near the end of the speech, Ho brought up a concern about practices that were already in place before the Family Law's prohibition and provided solutions: "Someone asks, 'What if you already have a second wife? What if the young child is already married?' The law is effective 'after' the National Assembly's approval and the government's announcement. Issues 'before' will be voluntarily discussed and handled by families from both sides. If unable to reach an agreement, families can go to the government." Once again, Ho adopted the tone of a leader to answer citizens' questions and direct them to the right resources.

His words also reinforced the ultimate authority of the government over families if they were unable to resolve their private matters. Ho then acknowledged the remaining challenge of "old customs [that] are deeply rooted in the people's lives" and called for "prolonged education" to go hand in hand with the law's promulgation. Through assuming the role of the leader in these instances, Ho was able to address potential barriers to implementing the Family Law. Ho's "leader" identity, thus, granted him great credibility when speaking to his followers and citizens about enforcing a novel policy. However, being the "leader" alone did not grant Ho the strong influence he had over the Vietnamese audience. It was rather the merging of "President Ho" and "Uncle Ho" into one—Ho Chi Minh of the Vietnamese people—that enhanced the value of his words to this audience.

On his "uncle" identity, Ho referred to himself exclusively as "*Bác*" in the entirety of the address, denoting the person speaking was an uncle or grandfather. In Vietnamese, when speaking to an older man, one needs to show respect by referring to them as "*bác*" (or "*chú*," which also means "uncle").[8] This man conversely assumes the word "*bác*" as the first-person pronoun to denote seniority when speaking to younger people. For instance, "*Bác khoẻ*," and "*Tôi khoẻ*," both mean "I am fine," but the word "*bác*" signifies that the person speaking is a man who is much older than the listener(s). When speaking to the National Assembly, Ho Chi Minh always referred to himself as "*Bác*" instead of the more formal and generic "*tôi*" that he used when addressing a larger audience (see, e.g., Quí Lâm 29-30, 52-53). The usage of "*Bác*," therefore, was a deliberate attempt to adopt the position of an older—and hence, wiser—man guiding his relatives and children. Ironically, this position also enhanced Ho's rhetorical authority by placing him in the traditional "head of the family" role, emblematic of the

[8] The connotation here is quite similar to the English prefix of "Mister."

patriarchal hierarchy in the Vietnamese homes that Ho was rejecting. Aside from referring to himself as the "uncle," Ho used "women" (*phụ nữ*) and "sisters" (*chị em*) interchangeably and called assembly members "distant relatives" (*các cô các cậu*) at the end of the speech. By doing so, Ho involved the audience in the familial metaphor, designating their more inferior and submissive positions to accept and follow his orders. Another minor but interesting detail was how editors of the 1960 *Quotations* book, in which the address was published, capitalized Ho's pronoun. It has been standard practice in Vietnam, even till this day, to capitalize "*Bác*" when referring to "*Uncle* Ho," the reason being that he was not *an* uncle but *the* Uncle of the Vietnamese people. This practice further gave authority to Ho's "uncle" persona in the printed version of the speech that was accessible by the wider Vietnamese public.

The rhetorical power of Ho's dual identity lies not only in constructing his credibility—or ethos—to enforce the Family Law but also in creating the perfect setting for his dissociation of the public and private family. Bostdorff and Ferris contend that the artful performance of a speaker's ethos is essential if the audience is to accede to any reality transformation strategy in a speech, including dissociation (441). They gave the example of Christopher Hedges' 2003 commencement speech at Rockford College, during which he failed to appeal to the occasion and the graduates, as expected of epideictic speakers, and thus was unable to successfully alter the audience's perception of the U.S. war with Iraq (411). In the case of Ho Chi Minh, his dual identity was a strong performance of not only his legacy as the national leader but also his seniority as the uncle of the Vietnamese people, priming the audience to accept a significant perspective change on the importance of women's liberation in the new socialist society. Beyond a performance of credibility, the leader/uncle identity resembled the public/private dissociation in the speech. In other words, Ho embraced the dissociation within his identity, demonstrating

how a public figure (the "leader") could govern like a family relative (the "uncle") while remaining in control over "private" matters. Ho Chi Minh's leader/uncle identity, therefore, constructed the perfect environment for his dissociation of the public/private family, allowing him to reframe the Family Law more easily into an appropriate and necessary policy for the contemporary North Vietnam society.

Conclusion

Given the circumstances surrounding the reform era in mid-1950s North Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh's government was in need of a public policy that would address "regression" issues and rebuild citizens' trust in the mission to build a socialist society. The 1959 Family Law met these criteria, but for it to be implemented, the National Assembly—consisting of primarily traditionalists and/or communists—had to edit and approve a draft of the law in a meeting in October 1959. Ho Chi Minh attended and gave a speech at this meeting, demanding that the National Assembly see the Family Law as a legitimate and significant part of the socialist nation-building task. Ho built his argument through three main reframing methods. First, he dissociated the concept of "family" into one that is personal and another that is national to normalize governmental intervention into citizens' private matters. Second, he associated ideals of a "good" society and family with socialism, claiming that the Family Law built "good" socialist families that formed a "good" socialist society. Third, through his strategic use of repetition, Ho related women's emancipation to the socialist revolution and asserted that because the law liberated women, it had to be a part of the socialist agenda, as well. In addition, Ho's strong performance of a dual leader/uncle first persona assisted his reframing efforts, creating the perfect environment for perspective change. These rhetorical strategies were effective in helping Ho advocate for the Family Law to be implemented and practiced in North Vietnam.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Ho Chi Minh endorsed the passage and implementation of the 1959 Marriage and Family Law, which was one of the most important legal codes to protect women's rights in North Vietnam. The National Assembly passed this law in January 1960 and found it to be successful in some provisions (Wisensale 80). For one, after the Family Law came into effect, the proportion of arranged and premature marriages fell dramatically in many areas (Goodkind 181). Moreover, this law removed several patriarchal structures in the family, encouraging women to advance their education and assume decision-making roles in the government (Truong 4). Ho's address at the Draft Meeting not only impacted the passage of this law but also became a prominent rhetorical artifact that exemplifies his beliefs in equality of gender.

This study set out to shed light on Ho Chi Minh's advocacy for women's rights in post-colonial Vietnam. Specifically, I examine his address at the "Meeting to Discuss the Draft of the Marriage and Family Law" in 1959 and call attention to the rhetorical strategies he used to present the Family Law as an appealing policy for the contemporary North Vietnam government. In the remaining parts of this chapter, I conclude this analysis by discussing its major conclusions, implications, and limitations. I then provide my recommendations for further research and final thoughts.

Major Conclusions

My analysis of the Draft Meeting Address culminates in three main conclusions. First, Ho dissociated the term "family" to argue for the legitimacy of public entities managing citizens' private matters. The commonly-held perspective at the time was that a "family" contained one's close-knit and intimate relationships. From this definition, Ho described the entire nation of Vietnam and/or communist followers as belonging to one "public family," existing outside of the

"private family" while upholding its traditional values. This framework portrayed governmental actors intervening in citizens' private lives as equivalent to family members taking care of one another; thus, the dissociation dismantled negative connotations of the Family Law as an invasive policy. However, Ho was careful to emphasize the authority of the "public family" over that of the "private family," so that public entities seemed more knowledgeable and competent than citizens in managing family conflicts. A "public" law regulating "private" matters in this depiction was not only acceptable but also imperative to the current society.

Second, Ho incentivized his communist comrades to implement the Family Law by underscoring two ways this law contributed to the socialist revolution in North Vietnam: through cultivating families and liberating women. With the former, Ho described small families as the "nucleus"—the center and most basic element—of society to associate the mission of building society with the act of building small families. With the latter, Ho utilized the rhetorical method of strategic repetition to emphasize that liberating women from domestic duties meant liberating significant labor power for the socialist mission. Ho argued that the Family Law played an indispensable role in the socialist revolution of North Vietnam and urged the National Assembly to recognize the law's potential for accomplishing their agenda.

Finally, Ho artfully utilized his dual persona as both the leader and uncle of the Vietnamese people to support his persuasive attempts. In the speech, Ho performed his credibility as President and Independence Leader Ho Chi Minh when he ordered various governmental bodies and citizens to protect and endorse the implementation of the Family Law. At the same time, Ho enacted the Uncle Ho persona through his pronoun usage: embracing the "*Bác*" first pronoun while addressing the audience as "*các cô các cậu"* (distant relatives) and women as "*chị em*" (sisters). These "leader" and "uncle" identities merged into one cohesive

character whose words carried significant weight for the Vietnamese audience. Furthermore, the leader/uncle persona corresponded to the public/private dissociation, enabling Ho to demonstrate how a public figure could oversee private matters. These rhetorical strategies allowed Ho to effectively promote the Family Law as crucial legislation for North Vietnam.

Implications

This study contributes to our understanding of gender equality issues in Vietnam and Ho Chi Minh's legacy. Specifically, my analysis illuminates the public/private gap in attitudes towards women in the country. Many scholars studying contemporary women's issues in Vietnam shared the observation of a complex discrepancy between how women were promised protection and equality in the law but not in their private homes (see, e.g., Chiricosta 138-139; Do and Brennan 285; Munro 17-18; Schuler et al. 384). Moreover, Duong discusses the "paradoxical values" of gender equality in Vietnam:

> For instance, Queen Trung Trac and Lady Trieu were revered as elephant-riding commanders of the army, and Ho Xuan Huong was admired as an advocate of women's causes. In contrast, gender equality in today's families…leaves much to be desired. Bigamy is still practiced by men and tolerated by women. Social prejudices against single mothers are still prevalent. Domestic violence is an issue in one-third of divorce cases. Women are still being disproportionately blamed for family troubles. (316-317)

In other words, women are subjected to double standards: publicly hailed as *nữ anh hùng* ("heroines") but culturally degraded as *con đàn bà* ("women creatures" with the pronoun "con" often used to refer to animals) (317). Ho's Draft Meeting Address sheds some light on how this gap came to be. In particular, the dissociation of the public/private family in the speech—discourse that elevated the "public" and dismissed the "private"—is exemplary of rhetoric that

might have shifted the responsibility of managing gender-based issues to governmental actors without naming and condemning cultural misogyny. Consequently, while the country celebrates women's contributions and implements legal measures to ensure gender equality, sexist customs and patriarchal thoughts persist. Another way that Ho's speech deepened this gap was through associating gender equality with the socialist revolution. While his intentions might have purely been to persuade the communist-led National Assembly, his discourse portrayed the Family Law not as an independent feminist doctrine but as a part of the national movement to build a socialist society. In this framework, the purpose of liberating women was solely to benefit the agenda of the state without consideration for women's personal struggles. As Duong put it, "'Rights' granted in Vietnam thus may not secure freedom of choice.… In summary, the promise and availability of women's rights under Vietnamese law can, and is, being thwarted in practice by inequality in the economic, social, and cultural realms" (250).

This project is also the first comprehensive investigation of Ho Chi Minh's advocacy for women's rights, laying the groundwork for future studies into his rhetoric. Notwithstanding the positive outcomes of the Family Law, issues of domestic violence and child marriage were still prominent after the law's passage, prompting Ho Chi Minh to continue advocating for the Family Law to be fully practiced and upheld. He did so publicly on several ceremonial occasions and even anonymously in a news article (Quí Lâm 44-54). Comparing Ho's rhetoric in these instances to that of the Draft Meeting Address, one might find that some rhetorical strategies remained constant while others altered. For example, in a public letter to women on International Women's Day in 1960, Ho mentioned the Family Law not as a means for socialist revolution, like in the Draft Meeting Address, but as an achievement of the Party's "care" for women (Qui

Lam 44). This analysis of the Draft Meeting Address, therefore, informs future studies that aim to extend scholarship of Ho Chi Minh's rhetorical efforts to advocate for women's rights.

The final implication to emerge from this study is the effects of profound ethos in advocacy rhetoric. On the one hand, Ho's powerful credibility greatly increased his chance at changing audiences' perspectives because his ethos compelled them to be more receptive of his ideas. On the other hand, Ho's character overwhelmed the issues he was addressing, diverting audiences' attention from these problems. Indeed, wherever this speech appears, it is presented in a way that centers Ho Chi Minh's "care" for women's issues but blurs out problems of gender inequity. The book *Uncle Ho and Vietnamese Women*, with the image of Ho Chi Minh surrounded by ethnic women on its cover, is exemplary of this phenomenon. The Draft Meeting Address appears alongside Ho's various other writings and speeches on women's issues, but the book did not offer any contextual information on the inequality women faced that required Ho's intervention. In short, my analysis reveals how a speaker's ethos can overshadow the ideals for which they were advocating.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is the scope as I only examine one among Ho's many writings and addresses on women's issues. Before the Draft Meeting Address, Ho published his beliefs on liberating Vietnamese women, with his most well-known work being the "Annamese Women and French Domination" news article that criticized France's colonization of Vietnam through portrayals of the colonizers' cruelty towards Vietnamese women (Quí Lâm 15-16). After the Family Law became an official legal document, Ho continued to praise the law's various successes and condemn violations of this law (Quí Lâm 44-54). This analysis, therefore, is not exhaustive of Ho Chi Minh's advocacy rhetoric on behalf of women.

An additional source of weakness for this study is the reliance on Western sources and interpretations. I unfortunately have limited access to scholarly libraries and resources in Vietnam nor do I know of any theorization on the Vietnamese rhetorical traditions. My extrapolation of Ho's rhetorical strategies, thus, might not demonstrate the full extent of his persuasiveness for the Vietnamese people. While I was careful to engage with both the Vietnamese and English versions of this text, as well as seek out transnational perspectives on feminism in addition to US-based articles, I might have incorporated Western biases into my analysis of a Vietnamese text.

Recommendations

This research has highlighted some questions in need of further investigation. First, considerably more work will need to be done on Ho's other writings and addresses about women's issues. A study of other artifacts in the *Uncle Ho and Vietnamese Women* book might reveal how Ho's advocacy evolved over time and adapted to new political contexts in the country. Additionally, further research should investigate the lingering traces of Ho's rhetoric about women that appears in contemporary government discourse in Vietnam. A recent example is Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc's 2018 speech at the ASEAN ministerial meeting, in which he asserted: "Strengthening the economic power of women should become part of the real national development agenda" (Vietnam Women Union). This statement echoes the way Ho connected women's liberation to the socialist mission in the Draft Meeting Address, elucidating Ho's rhetorical legacy in Vietnam. These potential research topics diversify rhetorical studies on Ho Chi Minh and pave the way for better assessment of gender equality policies in Vietnam. Such studies should also raise consciousness of Vietnamese women's struggles and engage

critically with the call for a feminist movement in the country that is independent from nationalist, communist, and colonial forces.

Final Thoughts

Examining Ho Chi Minh's Draft Meeting Address in this yearlong study, I had the opportunity to reflect upon my place in both the academic and personal realms. First and foremost, as a product of academic scholarship, this project helps me realize how a study of rhetoric need not start from complex theorization, but rather from critical observations of daily discourse. It is about seeing the abnormal in the normal and asking questions of why an idea is presented as it is, such as why a book that seemingly appeals to women with its corny pink cover actually centers a man. My lived experience as a Vietnamese woman also informs my choice of topic as well as my academic interest in advocacy rhetoric and gender equality. Through conducting this analysis, I found my place as a scholar in the interdisciplinary studies of communication and rhetoric.

In addition, as a product of self-discovery, this project allows me to make sense of my experiences growing up female in the country of Vietnam. Conducting research on the status of Vietnamese women in the country and on Ho Chi Minh's ideology helped me better understand how I was brought up and how I grew into the person I am today. Living in Vietnam, I was always surrounded by women role models and leaders, who taught me that Vietnamese women were courageous, hardworking, and incredibly influential in the country. In elementary school, I read folk stories of Mother Au Co and the Trung sisters—women who governed the nation and waged war against invaders. In high school, I never questioned why a schoolgirl—Võ Thị Sáu—joined the Resistance War against France, tossed a grenade at a group of French soldiers, and requested to not be blindfolded when executed by a French firing squad (Chu). I was made to

believe that my heritage as a Vietnamese woman was a point of pride, yet I was never given the same treatment as my male classmates or cousins. In a way, I greatly relate to the blurred-out women on the cover of the *Uncle Ho and Vietnamese Women* book. In a way, I *am* one of those women. And so, working on this project was my way to move from the blurry corners to the clear center. Outside of academics, this research topic is not only a personal accomplishment but also an act of resistance—*my* act of resistance—against the various forces that constantly undermine and erase the legacy of powerful Vietnamese women in society.

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APPENDIX A: ARTIFACT

I provide both the original Vietnamese text and my English translation of the "Draft Meeting Address" below.

Bài Nói tại Hội Nghị Cán Bộ Thảo Luận Dự Thảo Luật Hôn Nhân và Gia Đình

Có người nghĩ rằng Bác không có gia đình, chắc không hiểu gì mấy về vấn đề này. Bác tuy không có gia đình riêng, nhưng Bác có một đại gia đình rất lớn, đó là giai cấp công nhân toàn thế giới, là nhân dân Việt Nam. Từ gia đình lớn đó, Bác có thể suy đoán được gia đình nhỏ.

Bây giờ toàn dân ta ai cũng muốn xây dựng chủ nghĩa xã hội. Muốn xây dựng chủ nghĩa xã hội phải làm gì?

Nhất định phải tăng gia sản xuất cho thật nhiều. Muốn sản xuất nhiều thì phải có nhiều sức lao động. Muốn có nhiều sức lao động thì phải giải phóng sức lao động của phụ nữ.

Nói phụ nữ là nói phân nửa xã hội. Nếu không giải phóng phụ nữ thì không giải phóng một nửa loài người.

Nếu không giải phóng phụ nữ là xây dựng chủ nghĩa xã hội chỉ một nửa.

Rất quan tâm đến gia đình là đúng và nhiều gia đình cộng lại mới thành xã hội, xã hội tốt thì gia đình càng tốt, gia đình tốt thì xã hội mới tốt. Hạt nhân của xã hội là gia đình. Chính vì muốn xây dựng chủ nghĩa xã hội mà phải chú ý hạt nhân cho tốt. Tục ngữ ta có câu: "Thuận vợ thuận chồng, tát bể Đông cũng cạn".

Muốn thuận vợ thuận chồng thì lấy nhau phải thực sự yêu đương nhau.

Luật lấy vợ lấy chồng sắp đưa ra Quốc hội là một cuộc cách mạng, là một bộ phận của cách mạng xã hội chủ nghĩa.

Vì vậy phải đứng trên lập trường vô sản mà hiểu nó. Nếu đứng trên lập trường phong kiến hay là tư sản, tiểu tư sản mà hiểu luật ấy thì không đúng.

Luật lấy vợ lấy chồng nhằm giải phóng phụ nữ, tức là giải phóng phân nửa xã hội. Giải phóng người đàn bà, đồng thời phải tiêu diệt tư tưởng phong kiến, tư tưởng tư sản trong người đàn ông.

Về phần mình, chị em phụ nữ không nên ngồi chờ Chính phủ, chờ Đảng ra chỉ thị giải phóng cho mình, mà tự mình phải tự cường, phải đấu tranh.

Đối với luật lấy vợ lấy chồng từ lúc chuẩn bị đến lúc đưa ra và thi hành, Đảng phải lãnh đạo vì đó là một cuộc cách mạng. Đảng lãnh đạo nghĩa là cán bộ và đảng viên phải làm cho đúng và lãnh đạo các đoàn thể thanh niên và phụ nữ kiên quyết làm cho đúng.

Có người hỏi rằng: "Lỡ đã có vợ hai rồi thì thế nào? Con còn nhỏ đã lỡ lấy vợ lấy chồng rồi thì thế nào?".

Luật có hiệu lực từ "sau" lúc Quốc hội thông qua và chính quyền công bố. Việc đã lỡ "trước" thì do gia đình đôi bên tự nguyện cùng nhau thoả thuận giải quyết. Nếu không giải quyết được thì đưa ra chính quyền hoà giải.

Thi hành luật này có hai mặt:

– Có phần dễ dàng vì nhân dân ta đã được Đảng giáo dục, đã tiến bộ nhiều.

– Nhưng cũng nhiều khó khăn vì tập quán cũ đã ăn sâu lâu đời trong nhân dân. Cho nên công bố đạo luật này chưa phải đã là mọi việc đều xong, mà còn phải tuyên truyền giáo dục lâu dài mới thực hiện được tốt.

Mong các cô các chú cố gắng, bền gan, hiểu rõ và làm tốt. Nhất là phải thận trọng vì luật này quan hệ đến tương lai của gia đình, của xã hội, của giống nòi.

Address at the Meeting to Discuss the Draft of the Law on Marriage and Family

Some people think I do not have a family and thus am unknowledgeable about this issue. I may not have a private family, but I have the great family: the international working class and the people of Vietnam. From that great family, I am able to deduce the small family.

Our entire nation today all want to build a socialist society. In order to do so, what should we do?

We absolutely need to greatly increase production. To produce abundantly, we need more labor power. If we want more labor power, we need to emancipate the labor power of women.

When we speak to women, we speak to half of society. If we do not liberate women, we are not liberating half of human beings.

Not liberating women means the building of a socialist society is only half-way done.

Caring about the family is good, and many families added together equal society. A good society makes a good family, and a good family makes a good society. The nucleus of society is the family. Because we want to build a socialist society, we need to pay attention to its nucleus. As our proverb says, "When a husband and his wife are of the same mind, there is nothing they cannot achieve"[9].

For the husband and wife to be on the same mind, they must truly love each other in marriage.

The Law on Marriage and Family about to be presented to the National Assembly today is a revolution; it is a part of the socialist revolution.

Thus, we need to understand it on a socialist standpoint. It is wrong to view it under a bourgeois or capitalist perspective.

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[9] *Thuận vợ thuận chồng, tát biển đông cũng cạn.*

The Law on Marriage and Family liberates women, which liberates half of society. To liberate the woman, one must concurrently exterminate bourgeois and capitalist ideology in the man.

For our women, you must not wait for the Government and the Party to give directions for your liberation, but you must be self-reliance and fight for yourselves.

For the Law on Marriage and Family, from its proposal to promulgation, the Party must protect it as it is a revolution. The Party protecting this law means cadres and party members must do it right and direct the youth unions and women to determinedly do it right.

Someone asks, “What if you already have a second wife? What if the young child is already married?”

The law is effective “after” the National Assembly’s approval and the government’s announcement. Issues “before” will be voluntarily discussed and handled by families from both sides. If unable to reach an agreement, families can go to the government.

There are two facets to enforcing this law:

- It is somewhat simple as our people have been educated by the Party and have greatly improved.
- It is, however, still challenging as old customs are deeply rooted in the people’s lives. Thus, it is not enough to only announce this law without prolonged education.

I hope you make every effort, preserve, understand thoroughly, and do well. You must be cautious as this law affects the future of the family, society, and species.

APPENDIX B: PRE-WRITING ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

Feminist Criticism: Strategies of Disruption (Foss 147)

1. How did Ho generate multiple perspectives on the Marriage and Family Law?
    a. Did he summarize different perspectives on the law? If so, which perspective(s) and how did Ho summarize them?
    b. Did he repeat a phrase multiple times but every time with a different meaning? If so, which phrase(s) and how did Ho repeat them?
    c. Did he seek out perspectives that are different? If so, which perspective(s) and how did Ho phrase them in the artifacts?
2. How did Ho cultivate ambiguity?
    a. Did he present more than one single story? If so, what are the stories and how did Ho present them?
    b. Did he repeat any aspects of his arguments with variation? If so, which aspect, what are the variations, and how did this repetition support Ho's persuasion?
    c. Did he prevent narrative closure? If so, how?
3. How did Ho engage in reframing?
    a. Did Ho use a new metaphor to describe a normalized idea? If so, which metaphor(s) and how did this change impact Ho's arguments?
    b. Did Ho engage in redefinition? If so, which ideas were redefined and how did this strategy enhance Ho's persuasion?
4. Did Ho engage in enactment? If so, how?
5. Did Ho juxtapose incongruities? If so, what are the incongruities and what ideas can the audience drew from Ho's juxtaposition?

Gendered Nationalist Discourses

1. Did Ho evoke traditional female figures of Vietnam? If so, how did he use their legacy to enhance his arguments?
2. Did Ho use familial metaphors? If so, what are the effects of such metaphors?
3. How did themes of nationalism function in Ho's discourses on women's issues?

Marxist-Leninist Ideals of Women's Emancipation

1. When Ho discusses women's emancipation, what are the similarities and differences between the ideology of his rhetoric and those of Marx and Lenin?

Consider the presence of these other rhetorical strategies:

1. **Strategic Repetition:** Ho several times repeated words or phrases in meaningful rhythmic patterns. How would scholarship of strategic repetition (see Fahnestock 231) explain the impact or result of these instances?
2. **First Persona:** As DeCaro noted, Ho's first persona play a crucial role in his persuasion (51). How does this concept function in the Draft Meeting Address?