Vietnamese International Students' Identity Formation During Integration into Australia: Perceived Challenges and Strategies

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Statement of Originality

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge, it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Flinders University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by others, with whom I have worked at Flinders University or elsewhere, is explicitly acknowledged in the thesis. I also declare that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, except to the extent that assistance from others in the research project's design and conception or in style, presentation and linguistic expression is acknowledged.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I want to dedicate this thesis to my mother, who sparked my love for English by encouraging me to start learning early; who inspires me to take an interest in teaching English through her admirable determination and passion to learn English, despite being in her later years and not having a chance to begin her journey with English earlier. Dear mom, whenever I think about the fact that you are my greatest teacher and, at the same time, the student that I have failed the most as an English teacher, it always puts a smile on my face and then I would feel a mixture of endearment, bittersweetness and irony. And maybe a tiny bit of sadness too? Thank you for inspiring me to learn from my mistakes, for your support and encouragement, I would not be here today without your love. One goal down, now onto the next, helping you read this paragraph without my Vietnamese translation of it.

Secondly, I would like to extend my gratitude to my participants. Thank you for your honesty and enthusiasm in contributing knowledge to the community as well as improving the situation for future international students. Thank you for your insights and stories, especially the more vulnerable and difficult parts.

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List of Abbreviations

- **DVA** Department of Veteran's Affairs
- **EFL** English as a Foreign Language
- **ODT** Optimal Distinctiveness Theory
- **SDT** Self-Determination Theory
- **SLA** Second Language Acquisition
- **VIS** Vietnamese International Students

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Figure 1. The four identity statuses paradigm

Figure 2. Three layers of factors contributing to VIS's identity formation challenges

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ABSTRACT

Most speakers of English as a Foreign Language believe that their challenges in social integration stem from insufficient English proficiency. However, this study suggests the conflict between the identity motives for belonging and distinctiveness may play a more salient role in social integration challenges, as can be seen in the case of five Vietnamese international students from different universities in South Australia. Qualitative analyses of these five one-to-one semi structured interviews reveal the big picture of this cohort's social integration challenges to be more nuanced and complex, including multiple contributing factors such as internalized beliefs about Second Language Acquisition, ingroup and intergroup bias, as well as intragroup tensions. This study conceptualizes and investigates all these factors through the dynamics between language, identity, and power in social practices as demonstrated by contemporary Second Language Acquisition research.

Contemporary research calls for the expansion of Second Language Acquisition theories beyond the acculturation model and the integrative motivation concept whereby successful Second Language Acquisition is theorized to depend entirely on the learners' motivation to engage with native speakers. This Second Language Acquisition model has two prominent shortcomings: (1) it fails to address the reality of unequal social power that often renders learners illegitimate English speakers and causes native English speakers to deny them further engagement, and (2) it fails to recognize the multidimensionality of learners' lived experiences in conceptualizing them dichotomously as being motivated or unmotivated to learn English.

For those reasons, the process of Second Language Acquisition has been reconceptualized in this thesis as a matrix of identity, power and language, wherein language is constructed by and constructive for the identity of its user simultaneously. Therefore, to acquire a second language, learners must engage in identity negotiation to garner more right to speak and develop competence. Since many young adults are pursuing higher education abroad in English-speaking countries, their entry into adulthood usually converges with the process of acquiring English as a second language, which exacerbates their challenges in feeling and expressing an authentic sense of self. The findings suggest a stable sense of personal identity and having their autonomy supported by significant others can help young adults mitigate these challenges.

1. INTRODUCTION

Even though it is natural for young adults to face an identity crisis upon entering adulthood, in recent time, identity formation has become increasingly problematic due to many factors. One prominent factor is the taxing psychological load they must expend to navigate this emerging adulthood period which is all about self-determination (Arnett, 2000, 2004). Meanwhile, these days, under the effect of globalization, many young adults struggle to find a standing in societies that have become increasingly heterogeneous which entail not only numerous opportunities but also inequities in economic, social as well as political power, influence and resources (Arnett, 2002; Jensen et al., 2011).

For instance, English became the very first global language and brought about many cultural as well as social phenomena and changes (Crystal, 2012; Northrup, 2013). One result of postcolonialism was the wave of immigrants and international students from all over the world shifting toward the West for upward social mobility. Due to this connotation of superiority associated with English and the West, immigrants and international students always find themselves navigating the imbalance of status and power between their heritage culture and the receiving culture (Jensen et al., 2011). This imbalance of status and power is so pervasive yet nuanced that dominant groups like native English speakers may take the impact of English for granted; whereas to some non-native speakers this foreign language could lead to issues with self-esteem, mental health, and even threaten their livelihood.

For international students whose time spent studying abroad coincide with their young adulthood years, these differences in status and power further complicate their coming-of-age experience. These young adults must now construct identities that are authentic and adaptive to not just one but two cultures at the same time (Jensen et al., 2011). Even more so when there has been a long history of conflicts between the two cultures. Vietnam is one of those cases. Given this juxtaposition, Vietnamese international students (VIS) will likely face complex challenges in their identity formation during time spent abroad yet this group remains understudied. Through qualitative and in-depth interviews, this study aims to contribute unique insights into the identity formation process of this cohort through the lens of Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

1.1 Definition of Key Guiding Concepts

1.1.1 The Concept of Identity

Identity can be defined as statements people think of or outwardly express to describe who they are, ranging from inherent characters such as physical, biological, psychological qualities to external connections such as relationships to their communities, or even material possessions (Vignoles et al., 2011). However, having a particular character does not automatically give a person an identity usually associated with it. For example, having citizenship or permanent residency in Australia does not give a person an Australian identity by default. Therefore, discussions on identity should be approached with greater focus on acts of interpretation and meaning giving on a personal or social level.

The essence of identity can be boiled down into three components, (1) a sense of internal sameness and continuity, (2) perceived recognition for such sameness and continuity given by others, and (3) the individual's belief in social roles (Erikson, 1959, p. 47). The existing literature conceptualize these components through three levels, **personal identity**, **relational identity**, and **collective identity** (Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). However, it is important to stress that a person's identity representation is always intertwined among three levels and cannot be separated completely (Vignoles et al., 2011).

1.1.2 The Concept of Identity Formation

As children mature and enter adolescence, they are faced with the need to adopt roles, responsibilities and tasks that live up to society's expectations (Ryan & Deci, 2011). In doing so, individuals find themselves with a multifaceted identity and these many aspects are not always complementary (Vignoles et al., 2011). Such a conflict leads to a state called identity crisis (Erikson, 1968). Identity formation happens when adolescents start resolving and consolidating this conflict to establish secure identities and step into adulthood (Erikson, 1968). Therefore, identity formation, by nature, is a process of integration (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Even though identity development is a lifelong mission (Erikson, 1968), it is the most salient for adolescents due to the developmental significance of transition into adulthood (Ryan & Deci, 2011).

1.1.3 The Concept of Identity Motives

In the literature on identity formation, while there is relative consensus on the process of identity formation, there have been fewer answers about the reasons behind those

processes (Soenens & Vensteenkiste, 2011). In other words, there have been few answers for people's motivation to engage in identity formation. A person's motivation is a private mental experience powered by their motives which can guide their behaviors and keep them engaged with their surroundings in a resilient manner (Reeve, 2018). The set of similar guiding principles that motivate the identity formation of a person is termed identity motives (e.g., Chandler et al., 2003; Hogg, 2007; Vignoles, 2011).

In his attempt to provide an integrated theoretical model for identity motives, Vignoles (2011) names six universal identity motives including (1) self-esteem, (2) continuity, (3) distinctiveness, (4) meaning, (5) efficacy, and (6) belonging. A person must form identities that satisfy these identity motives to maintain psychological well-being (Vignoles, 2011). In other words, people can form adaptive or maladaptive identities throughout their lives. Adaptive identities are those that afford a person engagement with their environment in a psychologically fulfilling manner. On the contrary, maladaptive identities are those that get a person through life in a constricted, stagnant and rigid manner. Even though these identity motives are proposed to be universal, different cultures have different ways of satisfying these motives (Vignoles, 2011).

1.2 The Context of the Study

1.2.1 The Global Context – Psychological Adulthood and Identity Formation Complication

In contemporary society, identity formation has become increasingly problematic for adolescents due to the changing nature of maturity. Before industrialization, adulthood seemed to unfold in a universal manner and children had their parents and surrounding community as social references (Jordan, 1978; Merser, 1987). Since industrialization, children were taken out of the labor force (Arnett, 2002), the stage of adolescence prolonged and revolved around education as well as personal development (Erikson, 1968; Jordan, 1978; Merser, 1987). Because of this social change, adolescence became a distinct life stage with its own unique lifestyle compared to the adult members of society (Côté, 2000). As a result, the transition into adulthood is not as straightforward anymore. It takes on different shapes for each adolescent (e.g., pursuing higher education, moving overseas), some of which their parents have never experienced before and cannot serve as a source of social references as was the case in the past.

Therefore, adulthood became a psychological process in which one works autonomously on one's identity (Jordan, 1978; Merser, 1987). The emphasis on individual autonomy and self-determination for a thriving adulthood in contemporary society is further enhanced by globalization (Jensen et al., 2011). Nowadays, when it comes to identity formation, adolescents must juggle with achieving adulthood in both their local and global cultures. More importantly, on top of the loss of social references, globalization has been widening the gap between adolescents and their parents in terms of their opinion about parental authority and adolescent autonomy (Jensen et al., 2011).

1.2.2 The International Higher Education Context – Transnational Identity

In the past few decades, higher education has become the most common pathway into adulthood for adolescents. With the rising influence of globalization, the pursuit of higher education does not stop within the borders of one's country, especially in the case of adolescents in the developing areas such as Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Despite moving to another country providing a promising chance for upward mobility (e.g., Behtoui, 2022; Legewie, 2021; Oleksiyenko, 2013; Schneider et al., 2014), it also puts this cohort of international students at more risks of identity crisis and increased identity formation challenges (e.g., Destin & Debrosse, 2017; Scheider et al., 2014; Schwartz et al., 2006).

The identity formation of this cohort is mainly characterized by its transnational nature. People who have cross-cultural living experiences between two or more countries share a quality termed transnational identity (Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2015). Wang (2020, 2022) conceptualizes transnational identity as the interaction of self-agency along four dimensions including (1) intercultural competence, (2) reconstruction of locality, (3) diaspora consciousness, and (4) mixed sense of belonging. ***Intercultural competence*** (Byram, 2012) refers to the content of transnational identity expression such as knowledge of language and cultural awareness to connect with others interculturally (the 'what'). ***Reconstruction of locality*** (Appadurai, 1996; Vertovec, 2009) concerns the manner in which transnational individuals express relationships with outgroup members (the 'how'). ***Diaspora consciousness*** (Vertovec, 2009) refers to the overall and critical reflection about their conception of '*Us*' and '*Others*'; in other words, it explains the reason behind student returnees' shift in identities along the dimension of orientation and disorientation (the 'why'). ***Mixed sense of belonging*** (Wang, 2022) concerns the

complex emotional attachments, personal memories and experiences they develop and possess for two or more places of belonging.

Whether they decide to return or immigrate, international students usually find themselves occupied in a constant struggle for equilibrium in synthesizing a coherent sense of identity from various components (Marginson, 2014). Such state of disequilibrium is even more problematic when their multiple places of belonging have drastically different values and, sometimes, are even at odds with each other. The latter situation can even subject these international students to double stigmatization from both nations. For instance, a study from Jin and Wang (2022) found that Chinese international students returnees were caught in double stigmatization amidst the political controversy between China and the United States during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.2.3 Vietnamese International Students and Identity Formation Challenges

Despite the rocky relationships with Western nations in the past, nowadays English-speaking countries are the most popular destinations for Vietnamese international students (Hoang et al., 2019; Ly, 2021; Tran, 2009). For many Vietnamese students, studying in a foreign country marks a significant milestone for their transition into adulthood through gaining more personal independence and cultivating professional growth (Delaisse & Zhang, 2023; Hoang et al., 2019; Ly, 2021; Tran, 2009).

There have been very few studies, however, that investigate their identity formation during this period. So far, the literature reports that Vietnamese people in general prefer integration strategy the most, like most other acculturating groups (Berry et al., 2011). In an article investigating 51 VIS who have had extended time living in Australia, Tran (2009) reported more than 90% of her interviewees showing a preference for integration strategy. But when their actual behaviors in acculturation were considered, less than a half of the people alluding to integration strategy genuinely had a multicultural social network. "*I feel terribly downgraded, maybe less confident than an Aussie kid"*, one participant shared (Tran, 2009, p. 5). It is a stark contrast to the life of personal independence and competence they aspire to lead upon arrival in the receiving country.

Tran's (2009) study suggests that these VIS did not develop a sense of belonging to Australian society nor positive attitudes toward Australia, despite living in this nation. In a more recent study, which investigates acculturative stress and attitude towards seeking professional help among Southeast Asian graduate international students in

the United States, Vietnamese participants also reported a similar gap between attitude and behavior (Valuyeetham, 2022). Despite having a positive attitude towards seeking professional help, these VIS were leading with the highest mean score on acculturative stress and psychological distress.

1.3 Research Problem and Rationale of the Study

Most people would think English proficiency is what causes the identity formation challenges of international students. It is undeniable that proficiency in a foreign language has a strong connection to the sociocultural adaptation of transnational individuals. Sufficient language proficiency can facilitate greater engagement with the new culture and limit sociocultural maladaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Language barrier is indeed one of the major reasons stopping Valuyeetham's (2022) participants from seeking help.

English proficiency, however, may not be the magic bullet to solve the struggle for belonging of VIS. As shown in Tran's (2009) study, despite high competence in English and academic success, the VIS of this study still felt disconnected from the society they lived in. The United States immigrants of Louis's (2002) study also reported the same experience, where other Americans did not engage in conversations with them despite their English fluency. Wang (2021) observes that the problem may stem from the difficulty of free expression in speaking English which in turn leads to the expression of inauthentic identity of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speakers. The issue with expressing authentic identity may be even more prominent for EFL speakers with high English proficiency. It is of the study's interest to identify the cause for this issue of inauthentic identity.

Many studies have accentuated the importance of agency and free choices in the identity formation of transnational individuals, especially in the domain of building a sense of belonging (Jin & Wang, 2022; Sinanan & Gomes, 2020; Wang, 2020, 2022). VIS were also reported by Ly (2019) to rely on agency to create English learning opportunities outside of classrooms. However, as Vansteenkiste and colleagues (2006) explain, being agentic is in a way being motivated, yet the concept of agency does not usually offer insight into how autonomous the current motivation is. Furthermore, it piques one's curiosity about the role autonomy plays in negating challenges arising from English language acquisition and constructing an authentic identity as EFL speakers.

1.4 Research Aim and Research Questions

1.4.1 Research Aim

The aim of this study is to investigate the challenges to identity formation, as perceived by VIS during their integration into Australia, and the coping strategies they develop to counter these challenges. It aims to provide the big picture of VIS's experiences when pursuing higher education in Australia and to provide practical recommendations for their improved integration into Australia, as derived from their insight. Through the personal narrative of each case study of VIS, the study will elucidate the nuances of each case's integration challenges. In the long run, the findings are also of significance for international students coming from other Southeast Asian countries as well as VIS studying in other countries, other than Australia, both of whom have been under-studied in the literature.

1.4.2 Research Questions

To achieve the research aim, the study will inquire into the following three main research questions:

Question 1: What challenges do VIS perceive in their identity formation during their integration into Australia?

Question 2: What coping strategies do VIS use to counter their perceived identity formation challenges during their integration into Australia?

Question 3: How autonomous is the motivation for identity formation of the VIS and to what extent do they practice personal agency in their identity formation?

1.5 The Scope of the Study

This section outlines the scope of the study and what is outside of the scope given the time constraints. *First*, the study shall investigate the intersection of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and identity formation of post graduate VIS in South Australia, who are EFL speakers. *Second,* the study takes an interest in the English communicative competence of participants for the purpose of constructing a sense of belonging while studying in South Australia. *Third,* the study focuses on the degree

of initiatives demonstrated by participants and to what extent their contexts support or hinder such initiatives. *Finally*, the investigation is limited to only the perceptions of VIS, without inputs from other significant socializing agents of the VIS cohort.

1.6 Summary

Even though international students have garnered more attention from researchers, little attention is paid to the identity development of Vietnamese students, especially in Western contexts. The chapter demonstrated the struggle for belonging of VIS may be more deep-rooted than the lack of foreign language proficiency. Findings from studies investigating the acculturating and SLA experience of EFL speakers suggest that the issue may stem from difficulties in expressing oneself freely in English and a sense of inauthentic identity. While the tasks of identity formation have become increasingly complicated for young adults on a global scale, the challenges resulting from having to negotiate one's identity in a foreign language add further stress to the equation for VIS. Chapter 2 will systematically review the relevant literature on SLA research and identity formation to elucidate this intricate relationship between English and the identity of EFL speakers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND BACKGROUND

In the late 1990s, inspired by critical educational theories such as that of Freire (1970, 1985), Giroux (1988, 1992) and Simon (1987, 1992), many SLA researchers investigated the dynamic between power and language and accentuated the fact that language teaching is not a neutral practice but a highly political one (see Hornberger & Corson, 1997).

Expanding on these findings, through the case studies of five immigrant women in Canada, Norton (2000) contends that the acculturation model of SLA (Schumann, 1978, 1986), being the main framework for understanding the second language acquisition of adult immigrants at that time, falls short on addressing the nuances that arise from the relationship between power and language. Yielding from poststructuralist theories of identity and Bourdieu's (1977) conception of the right to speech, Norton (2000) draws attention to the need to conceptualize SLA as a matrix of identity, power and language.

Based on this matrix as a scaffolding structure, this literature review embarks on synthesizing insight from interdisciplinary literature to elucidate the importance for SLA researchers and educators to address the three aspects of this matrix fully; especially in helping EFL learners extend their success outside the four walls of SLA classrooms.

2.1 Language, Identity and Power

The interconnectedness of language and identity is straightforward; language can function as both the means and the end for identity expression (Norton, 2000; Zenker, 2018). In other words, language can be a medium for identity expression and a marker of identity at the same time. For instance, a non-native speaker can use English to express who they are and relate to the global community, yet despite speaking English their non-native accent would identify them as someone from non-English heritage background.

However, there is a third hidden force in the equation above, which is power. In the example above, power manifests itself in the choice of English as a language for global communication, and not another language. While globalization has been around for many centuries and the world has witnessed the rise and fall of many international languages such as Greek, Latin, Spanish, Arabic and Persian, no language has ever before achieved a global status like English. This dominant position of English

certainly has a lot of implications for the identity formation of EFL learners and the process of their SLA. Before getting to the relationships among identity, power and language in the context of SLA, it is important to discuss first how English became a global language and conceptualize the mechanism by which language exercises its power.

2.1.1 English as a Global Language

The first instinct to explain the reason English became a global language is usually citing the fact that it is spoken everywhere, by an enormous number of people. However, Crystal (2012) argues that it is not the case. According to him, the number of speakers contributes little to a language's level of influence, rather it is who those speakers are that decides its influence.

For example, Latin became an international language during the time of the Roman Empire, but it was not because the Romans were dominating the world in number, they were dominating the world in terms of power and influence. When Roman military power declined it remained in this position for a long time thanks to the religious power of Roman Catholicism. Another case would be Chinese, if it is simply a matter of number, by now Chinese could have easily become another global language like English.

Crystal (2012) emphasizes the links between language dominance and economic, technological as well as cultural power. In his opinion, language cannot be conceptualized outside of the existence of its speakers as it is embedded in the way they think, speak and interact with their surroundings. In other words, language is the manifestation of a person's identity; if they thrive internationally their language becomes influential and if they fail, their language falters.

There is only one salient reason that has traditionally propelled any language into being an international language, that is the power of its people, especially political and military power (Crystal, 2012). English's rise to worldwide influence is dependent on two factors: the spread of British colonial power and the emergence of the United States as an international economic and technological powerhouse (Crystal, 2012).

Nowadays, the influence of English is predominantly driven by economic prosperity and technological advancement. It appeals to a global audience as a capital for upward mobility. Therefore, a telltale sign to identify a global language is when nobody or no single nation holds complete ownership over it anymore, in other words, now everyone has a stake in it (Crystal, 2012).

Nonetheless, many people find this new transnational ownership of English upsetting, even slightly obnoxious (Crystal, 2012) due to a weakened sense of ownership over the language and the perceived impurity this new transnational ownership is causing to it. To a lesser degree, this resentment can be found even between the British and the American variants of English, where each accuses the other of ruining the language. For non-native speakers, the relationship with English remains complex. On one hand, being able to use it serves as a great cultural capital, on the other hand, achieving decent proficiency comes at a great cost and non-native speakers are still often confronted with the unfair advantage enjoyed by those who happen to call English their mother-tongue (Crystal, 2012). Despite the broad market for possibilities and opportunities it has opened, claiming ownership of English to advocate for one's own development as an EFL speaker does not come without struggle.

2.1.2 The Matrix of Identity, Power, and Language in Second Language Acquisition

Literature on SLA theory has been highly influenced by the acculturation model of SLA (Norton, 2000). The model was developed by Schumann (1978, 1986) to specifically explain the language acquisition of adult immigrants. As the name suggests, it operates on the basis that the degree of acculturation a person engages in has a direct control over the degree of second language they can acquire. Acculturation is so salient for adult immigrants that the lack of it could nullify even formal language instruction. Building on the foundation of the acculturation model, most SLA theories center around the concept of learners' integrative motivation as a key for successful SLA (Norton, 2000). This concept of integrative motivation entails an admiration for the native speakers and the desire to become a member of their culture (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998; Gardner, 1985; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Sridhar & Sridhar, 1986).

In recent time, this acculturation model has faced two major issues that led to several criticism. *First*, it fails to keep up with the reality and the future trajectory of English as a global language, where non-native speakers are increasingly assuming the position of the majority users of English, instead of native speakers as was the case in the past (Crystal, 2012). This new development requires an approach to English teaching that can prepare learners for mutual intelligibility instead of emulating the native speakers. As this variant of English is still in development, there is no official name for it yet, some proposed terms include 'New Englishes', 'World Standard Spoken English', or 'World Englishes' (e.g., Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2006; Crystal, 2012). The concept of integrative motivation has been criticized by many scholars in favor of

this new variant of English (e.g., Coetzee-Van Roy, 2006; Cohen, 2005; Doğançay-Aktuna & Kiziltepe, 2005; Lamb, 2004; Norton, 2000).

Second, this conception of integrative motivation views language simply as a skill and conceptualizes EFL learners in a dichotomous manner (Norton, 2000). Learners are either motivated or unmotivated to learn English, they are either willing or unwilling to engage with the target speakers, they are either interested or uninterested in the target culture, etc. It implies that if learners make an effort to expose themselves to the native speakers, they will inevitably accumulate the language skill. In this sense, it fails to acknowledge that language learning is a form of social practice (Norton, 2000) which involves the power dynamic, identity negotiation and meaning making between interlocutors with unequal power which in turn can lead to multiple nuances. For instance, according to the acculturation model and integrative motivation concept, immigrants must rely on exposure to the native speakers to enhance language acquisition, yet native speakers are rarely patient enough to maintain the conversation past breakdown in communication with EFL leaners due to their low level of proficiency, thereby gatekeeping the exposure needed to improve their proficiency in the first place (Norton, 2000, p. 110).

It creates a paradoxical situation where learners are expected to be responsible for something that seems to be out of their control. As some scholars have observed, this culture learning approach to SLA offers an application rather than theoretical explanation (e.g., Berry et al., 2011; Masgoret & Ward, 2006; Ward et al., 2001). The implicit acceptance and enforcement of native speakers as the gatekeepers of resources and recognition for EFL learners' language acquisition has an extensive effect on immigrants and international students, even beyond their SLA process.

Linguists and many applied linguists, argued by Bourdieu (1977) and Norton (2000) respectively, take for granted the fact that communication happens on the basis of merit, that engagement is granted only when the speakers are deemed worthy to speak. Building upon Bourdieu's (1977) conception of the 'power to impose reception' (p. 75), Norton (2000) calls for the need to include the 'right to speak' (p. 8) in the definition of communicative competence for EFL learners. When their level of English proficiency is not enough to compel reception, learners must utilize other cultural capital to reimage themselves as legitimate speakers and facilitate learning opportunities for themselves.

By leveraging the multifaceted nature of their identity, the participants in Norton's (2000) study were able to reconceptualize their relationships with the dominant interlocutors and seize more power to assert their right to speak. For instance, one

participant, Martina, despite her low efficiency in English, derived willpower from her identity as a mother to resist being marginalized by a teenage coworker. What is remarkable is her ability to reconstruct their dynamic from being between a non-native speaker and a native speaker to being between a mother figure and a teenager, thanks to which she was able to gather more authority and advocate for herself. Her identity as a primary caregiver of the household also empowered her to speak up against a vendor's exploitation in the interest of her family's financial wellbeing. Arguably, Martina's identity as a mother is a reliable and adaptive source of power for her to negotiate the right to speak.

For these reasons, Norton (2000) argues that EFL learners do not exist in a vacuum of motivation dichotomy where they are either motivated or unmotivated to integrate; they bring to the SLA progress their unique memories, present circumstances and aspirations for the future. Therefore, current SLA practice has shifted toward investing in learners' identity and facilitating their empowerment to create learning opportunities themselves and how educators can create accommodation for their own agency (Norton, 2000, 2019a; Ushioda, 2011).

Norton's (2000) conception of the right to speak has contributed significantly to the field of SLA research and practice by elucidating the 'why' to invest in learners' identity. However, it left the questions pertaining to the 'what' and 'how' to invest in their identity open. Referencing identity research from the sociopsychological approach (e.g., Erikson, 1968), the next part of this literature review shall address these questions.

2.2 The Need for Understanding Identity Formation

At this point of the discussion, a misconception will likely arise, that high English proficiency guarantees EFL speakers the right to speak. This is a belief commonly held among EFL learners themselves. While linguistic competency is an indispensable foundation, Louis (2002) argues that it is not the '*be-all and end-all*' for the well-being of acculturating individuals, as demonstrated by the fluent immigrants participating in his study, who were still denied the right to speak by native English speakers. Similarly, the VIS participating in Tran's (2009) study also possessed high control of English and had spent on average three years living in Australia, yet they struggled to develop a sense of belonging to this place.

Wang (2021) alludes to the imbalanced power relations between second language speakers and the dominant interlocutors as an explanation for this struggle, which leaves second language speakers functioning with an inauthentic identity. The author

also contends that this issue with inauthentic identity usually occurs implicitly and is more prevalent among speakers who have sufficient competence for communication (Wang, 2021). To get to the bottom of this issue, it is necessary to discuss how individuals construct their identity and what contributes to the authenticity of a person's identity. This part of the thesis will discuss the explanation, assessment and purpose for identity formation process according to sociopsychological literature.

2.2.1 Origin of Conception

One simply cannot discuss identity formation literature without coming across the name of Erik Homburger Erikson and James E. Marcia at least once as they are the founding fathers of the literature on identity formation. Erikson's (1950) achievement centered around inheriting and systematizing literature on ego psychology to develop the concept of ego identity, which has been expanded on and referred to as personal identity in the recent literature.

The ego can be characterized as a human being's mental function that is capable of self-restraint and mindfulness in response to that human's more primal and instinctual impulses (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). The development of ego was brought forth in three stages, going from being driven by self-preservation to functioning autonomously, accompanied by inputs from interpersonal relations and society (Hartmann et al., 1946; Kroger & Marcia, 2011; Rapaport, 1958).

Sigmund Freud is one of the prominent scholars that contributed significantly to the studies on ego. In Freud's (1930) point of view, a person's ego, or in other words, their sense of the distinctive self, actualizes through unavoidable sensation of pain and unpleasure resulting from external restriction (p. 65). Therefore, a person's nature is inherently aggressive in pursuit of the lost unlimited pleasure and civilization can only thrive when individuals suppress this aggressive instinctual impulse (Freud, 1930, p. 122). In other words, the process of maturity is characterized by suppression of and resistance against self-indulgence and impulses for the sake of society.

Based on all these scholars' work, Erikson established the eight stages of ego growth for a person's life course. Each stage comes with a distinctive and specific psychosocial crisis that requires collaboration from the growing individual and their social milieu to resolve (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Unlike Freud's (1930) hostile description, Erikson's conception of the relationship between the individual and society assumes a more co-creating nature, in which a person is neither adapting nor being molded by society (Rapaport, 1958). In other words, the individual and their social context are two forces regulating each other in ego identity development,

wherein society may restraint a person's ego, it may also adjust to their will and assist through its adult members, social institutions as well as traditions.

2.2.2 Assessment and Optimal Pathway for Identity Formation

How does one determine if an identity has been formed or not, when both ego and identity do not have any physical manifestation? To address this issue, Erikson came up with two struggles for almost every young adult, namely choosing a career and establishing an ideology. Expanding on Erikson's ideas, Marcia (1966) proposed two criteria, *exploration* and *commitment*, to measure the quality of engagement the young adults spend with these two life areas of identity formation.

Exploration talks about the experimental nature of how a person approaches choosing an occupation and developing an ideology. Commitment relates to the extent which a person is invested in their action and belief. Depending on the quality of engagement (low or high) in these two criteria, the identity formation of a person can be placed on any one of the four identity statuses. If the degree of exploration is used as reference, from the highest to the lowest, the four identity statuses shall unfold in the following order (1) Identity Achievement, (2) Moratorium, (3) Foreclosure, and (4) Identity Diffusion.

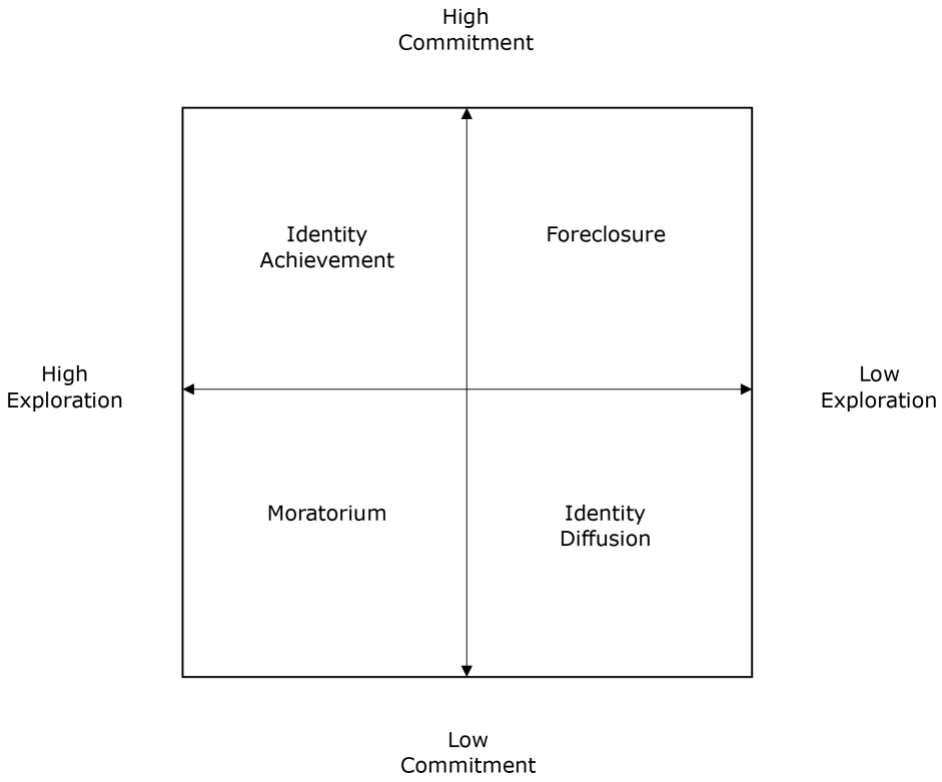

Figure 1. *The four identity statuses paradigm*

The first two groups, Identity Achievement and Moratorium, are characterized by a high level of exploration, wherein thanks to exploring alternatives, Identity Achievement members established firm commitments. Moratoriums are in a struggle of reaching commitments, therefore they engage in an exploratory period. The last two groups, Foreclosure and Identity Diffusion, share a low level of exploration. Foreclosures, as the name suggests, forego exploration and simply oblige with commitments from significant others. Meanwhile, Identity Diffusions are neither committed nor exploring alternatives altogether.

Both theoretical and empirical studies have concluded that individuals arrive at a firm and adaptive commitment through exploration (Al-Owidha et al., 2009; Marcia, 2012a). The Ego Identity Incomplete Sentences Blank (EI-ISB) is a tool designed to capture the holistic score of a person's ego strength (Marcia, 2012a). In his early work, Marcia (2012a) found both Identity Achievement and Moratorium members scored higher on EI-ISB than members under Foreclosure and Identity Diffusion statuses. Some prominent scoring criteria include self-reflection, a realistic sense of future, self-initiated action, social integration, internal locus of self-evaluation, and autonomy (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Therefore, identity statuses demonstrating higher degrees of exploration are considered developmentally optimal.

The decided optimal developmental order was as follows, starting with (1) Identity Diffusion, (2) Foreclosure, (3) Moratorium, and ending with (4) Identity Achievement (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Even though Moratoriums struggle with commitments, exploring can possibly move them to Identity Achievement status, they are placed higher in identity compared to Foreclosures (Kroger & Marcia, 2011; Marcia, 2012a). Furthermore, even though Foreclosures demonstrate more conformity than Identity Diffusions, a decent level of commitment still contributes toward identity, therefore the former is still preferable to the latter (Kroger & Marcia, 2011).

Depending on how individuals cope with identity crisis in terms of exploration and commitment, they can move to more optimal statuses, to less optimal statuses or anchor to their established status. Overall, any progress following the optimal developmental order is progressive and any shift from other statuses into Identity Diffusion status is developmentally regressive (Kroger & Marcia, 2011; Waterman, 2012).

2.2.3 The Salience of Identity for the Wellbeing of Individuals

It can be said that the identities of a person include their understanding of who they are, their sense of belonging and their sense of purpose in the world (Ryan & Deci, 2011; Zenker, 2018). Translated to identity motives, it entails (1) the distinctiveness motive, (2) the belonging motive, and (3) the efficacy motive. Even though there are six universal identity motives, these three motives are especially fundamental and critical for the processes of identity formation due to their implications for human existence and survival (Vignoles, 2011).

First, distinctiveness is the hallmark of identity (e.g., Apter, 1983; Codol, 1981; James, 1892). The meaning for being someone or something would prominently be found in characteristics that make this person or concept different from other people or other concepts, for instance, what makes the British identity meaningful to a British person depends largely on what they perceive as not being British (Vignoles et al., 2000). Remarkably, this need for distinctiveness or being distinguished from others has significant implication on survival benefits (e.g., Burris & Rempel, 2004) since it facilitates social coordination whereby group members are motivated to play complementary roles to achieve a common goal, rather than replicating behaviors of other group members (Vignoles, 2011).

Second, the need to belong concerns the importance of social acceptance including feelings of closeness to others, both in interpersonal relationships and within groups (Vignoles, 2011). As Vignoles (2011) observes, social inclusion is at the heart of evolution for mankind. Human beings have evolved as a social species and were not cut out for solitude (Vignoles, 2011). Therefore, Ryan and Deci (2003) propose that the most important goal of identity formation is establishing a secure sense of belonging. However, such establishment is not always straightforward considering the person also needs to feel distinctive. The dynamic between distinctiveness and belonging motives is especially intriguing and shall be elaborated further later in the thesis.

Lastly, efficacy motive refers to the need to feel competent and in control (Vignoles, 2011). A feeling of efficacy is another defining feature of identity since having sovereignty over oneself and one's environment is fundamental for individuals to establish a sense of self (Apter, 1983; Codol, 1981). This need for sovereignty ranges from having competence and control to perceiving oneself in this light (Vignoles, 2011). Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1997) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000) explain the relationship between the life quality of individuals and their perception of self-efficacy at length.

SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000) includes the last two motives, belonging and efficacy, in the three basic psychological needs of human beings. According to SDT, the wellbeing and development of a person depends largely on the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs including (1) the need for competence, (2) the need for relatedness (or belonging), and (3) the need for autonomy (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2011). The need for autonomy refers to a sense of ownership over and psychological freedom in one's actions (deCharms, 1968).

Extending SDT, Sheldon and Gunz (2009) propose that these three basic psychological needs could function as motives. Vignoles (2011) does not list autonomy as a universal identity motive because it only influences the processes of identity formation, not the content of identity formation. Nonetheless, given the connection between personal autonomy and perception of self-efficacy, the satisfaction or frustration of the need for autonomy of individuals remain significant in investigating their identity formation.

For those reasons, Ryan and Deci (2011) also argue that identities exist to fulfill the basic psychological needs of human beings and people must engage in identity formation to maintain their wellbeing. Originally, Ryan and Deci (2000) developed SDT to deal with the questions about human capabilities and wellbeing (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). However, over the course of time, it has been expanding and many of its core principles can work in tandem with the existing literature to actualize Erikson's identity theory in a more holistic manner (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2011).

2.3 Power and Complex Sense of Belonging in Contemporary Society

Even though Marcia's identity statuses paradigm has done great work in materializing Erikson's theory on identity, it has inadvertently neglected Erikson's process of internalization (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2011). In its essence, Erikson's (1968) idea about identity development revolves around the process of internalization.

Children are theorized to begin identity formation with a fragmented and primitive adoption of values and ideas from socialization figures, usually parents, teachers, extended family, and even the media. Erikson (1968) refers to this process as introjection. As they mature, these early identifications are integrated into more coherent and unique commitments that provide a consistent and continuous sense of self as well as a sense of purposeful direction (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2011). This process of integration is known as internalization (Erikson, 1968).

In other words, Vansteenkiste and colleagues (2006) describe internalization as the process of absorbing and synthesizing social norms. It can be said that the extent of a person's successful identity formation depends largely on the quality of internalization they have undergone through the life course. A commitment instilled by coercion will yield different results from those of a commitment driven by personally accepted values (Soenes & Vansteenkiste, 2011).

Furthermore, it raises another question about whether it is possible to pursue intrinsically motivated aspirations without compromising one's responsibility to society. In this regard, the identity statuses paradigm falls short of providing an instrument to describe what a well-integrated internalization process would look like.

Along the line of this thought, in terms of SLA, learning usually happens in formal settings, detached from real social context. Learners are often preoccupied with establishing themselves as legitimate speakers through practice and rehearsal. Communicative competence assessment tasks often cannot reflect the internalization of learners' identity as EFL speakers. Therefore, they may lack the freedom to explore who they are using the target language and may not be comfortable with presenting their identity in a foreign language (Wang, 2021).

For reasons mentioned above, it can be said that well-integrated internalization facilitates intimacy and sense of belonging without compromising individual distinctiveness. As Erikson (1968) theorized, intimacy comes with an initial threat to one's sense of self due to the merging nature of a close relationship. Therefore, a person must have a secure sense of identity to withstand this temporary threat and achieve emotional closeness.

Indeed, the struggle between intimacy and isolation is one of Erikson's (1968) eight stages for ego growth. The resolution of this struggle has been increasingly problematic in contemporary society because of the following two factors. *First*, the inherent dilemma over the need for belonging and distinctiveness. *Second*, the inequities in power and social standing. The next two sections shall discuss these factors respectively.

2.3.1 Dilemma over the need for Belonging and Distinctiveness

Despite both being essential for the survival of human beings, the motives for belonging and distinctiveness are often perceived as functioning oppositely (Vignoles, 2011) so that the satisfaction of one motive is a potential frustration of the other (e.g., Brewer, 1991; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). However, from the perspective of

social identity motives, this tug of war between the two motives is the main driving force of social identity processes (Brewer, 1991; Hornsey & Jetten, 2004).

2.3.1.1 Group Membership and Ingroup Bias

Group membership is a possible way to resolve the conflict between distinctiveness and belonging motives. Brewer's (1991) Optimal Distinctive Theory (ODT) proposes that a point of balance can be achieved between the satisfaction of these two motives through inclusion in ingroups, thus meeting the need to belong, and distinguishing one's group from other groups, thus meeting the need to feel distinctive. In other words, as the Uniqueness Theory (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980) describes, individuals prefer a state of moderate distinctiveness.

In practice, individual thresholds for identity motive frustration varies from person to person and objective group composition is usually hard to alter (Ormiston, 2016). Therefore, individuals have different strategies to reach the optimal state of feeling distinctive. Some common strategies include altering perception of the differences within the large group composition, of oneself, of one's ingroup and outgroup (e.g., Pickett et al., 2002; Ormiston, 2016).

These perceptions may not always align with the objective composition of the large group (Ormiston, 2016) and, when driven by the identity motive for self-esteem, may lead to ingroup bias (e.g., Aberson et al., 2000; Abrams & Hogg, 2006; Fischer & Derham, 2016;). It is also hypothesized that individuals with minimal conflict between these two motives will perceive the objective group composition more accurately (Ormiston, 2016).

Generally, these two social identity theories argue that the conflict between needing to belong and needing to stand out is an inevitable part of the human existence (Vignoles, 2011). However, Vignoles (2011) contends that it is not always the case, if the two motives are understood more fully. It is possible to feel autonomous belonging, for instance, a sense of belonging can also be generated from having one's differences recognized and accepted by others (Green & Werner, 1996).

2.3.1.2 Autonomous Belonging

Many opinions deem autonomy a product of the Western culture (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006) and embodiment of individualism as it is more visible in Western European and North American societies (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995; Fischer & Derham, 2016). There seems to be a misconception that autonomy equals independence,

therefore, to practice autonomy, one must not rely on others. However, a person can depend on other people out of autonomy (Ryan & Solky, 1996). Many studies have pointed out how seeking support and guidance from others can be done autonomously and how doing so can also promote autonomy (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006).

The satisfaction of the need for autonomy is not decided by the absence of external support but rather by the presence of the individual's volition and free choice to seek out external support in the first place. It provides valuable insights into the way autonomy and belonging complement each other. In fact, in a recent study, Pardede and Kovač (2023) discovered that, even though the need for belonging is universal, there are different conditions from which individuals can derive a sense of belonging.

Some conditions include receiving emotional support, having their differences accepted, not being compared to others or feeling a sense of social-worthiness. Interestingly, social-worthiness has a considerably higher effect on a person's sense of belonging in comparison to the social-emotion support condition (Pardede & Kovač, 2023). In this sense, social-worthiness is understood as the ability to present one's self-worth according to the way they want it to be. Therefore, autonomy support is essential to facilitate a sense of optimal belonging.

Furthermore, in a meta-analysis across 18 societies, Fischer and Derham (2016) discovered that ingroup bias heightens in low autonomy contexts. More importantly, due to the deconstruction of traditional communitarian links in contemporary society (Côté, 2000; Jordan, 1978; Merser, 1987), people in highly individualistic societies have the tendency to look for collective affiliations and may inadvertently emphasize ingroup bias (Fischer & Derham, 2016; Hogg, 2000, 2007).

As previously discussed, Western European and North American societies are mostly individualistic. Under the influence of globalization, there has been a worldwide shift of immigration toward the West, which inevitably resulted in inequities in power and social status, further complicating the identity formation of the non-dominant members in those societies (Hammack, 2008; Jensen et al., 2011).

2.3.2 Aspiration toward Whiteness

Ingroup bias is a relatively ubiquitous human experience (Fischer & Derham, 2016). While there is a rising emphasis on collective affiliations in high individualistic societies in contemporary times, ingroup bias can also be prominent in collectivist societies such as Asia, Africa, Eastern and Southern Europe, and South America (Hinkle &

Brown, 1990). It is commonly expected that individuals in high collectivist cultures are more likely to be concerned about ingroup identification as well.

Given the transnational identities of international students (Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2015), especially when a large part of this cohort originated from highly collectivist societies, it begs the question whether ingroup bias could be doubled or intensified for them. Balancing the need for distinctiveness and belonging is inherently complicated in the context of one culture, it is expected that this dilemma will be even more complex for international students with a mixed sense of belonging across two or more cultures (Jensen et al., 2011).

Arguably, integrative cultural experience is instrumental in cultivating the wellbeing and development of international students (e.g., Delaisse & Zhang, 2023; Oleksiyenko, 2013). However, a high tendency for ingroup bias may undermine this cultivation. Therefore, there is a rising need to investigate how well a person can cope with moving from a homogeneous community to a heterogenous, cosmopolitan one in terms of identity formation. There has been little research that investigates the connection between identity statuses and acculturation strategies.

Regardless, Schwartz and colleagues (2013) have contributed insightful findings in this sphere, drawing a connection between high identity group (Identity Achievements and Moratoriums) and biculturalism, i.e., integrative acculturation strategy. Conversely, the low identity group (Foreclosures and Identity Diffusions) were found to engage with less integrative strategies. However, the participants of this research were first- and second-generation immigrant adolescents and emerging adults in the United States, and not international students. The findings are not necessarily applicable to international students.

When two or more cultures exist together in society, an imbalance of power is inevitable (e.g., Berry et al., 2011; Jensen et al., 2011). One culture would likely dominate the other, creating dominant and non-dominant groups (Berry et al., 2011). This inequity in power will present multifaceted challenges for international students which shall be discussed in the following part.

This section will start with discussing two perceptions about belonging in a multicultural context, which are slightly different from the universal need and conditions of belonging presented in previous parts. However, these constructs of belonging in a multicultural society have prominent implications on the identity formation of international students. Furthermore, it can also help explain the underlying belief of native speakers as the role model for SLA adopted by many SLA

theorists. These constructs are the concepts of ***national belonging*** and ***governmental belonging*** proposed by Hage (2000).

At first glance, ***national belonging*** is usually equivalent to or indicated by citizenship, yet Hage (2000, pp. 49–51) argues that it is not the case in practice. Since the power to grant citizenship is delegated to the state, on behalf of the collective, it opens a gap between formal acceptance of new citizens and social acceptance by the dominant community toward such new members.

Furthermore, this practical-cultural national acceptance is better conceptualized as a spectrum rather than a binary system (Hage, 2000, pp. 52–55). It means that, more than being accepted or not, individuals can also have unequal sense of national belonging. Due to many factors like social class, gender, or ethnicity, a person can be made to feel more or less nationally accepted than others. Hage (2000, pp. 53–54) uses Bourdieu's (1977) definition of cultural capital to conceptualize this construct of national belonging. Cultural capital can be defined as intangible and tangible characteristics deemed symbolically valuable within a specific context, which Bourdieu referred to as a '*field*'.

In the national field, cultural capital includes appearance, accent, demeanor, behaviors, social preferences, etc. Among them, accent seems to be especially important (Hage, 2000, p. 56), enough to offset the deficit of other cultural capital. For instance, in the field of Australian national belonging, having blond hair and an 'East European accent' may not be more valuable than having brown hair and an Australian accent. In fact, accent has always been a controversial topic for EFL students. Instead of functioning as a symbolic marker, a non-native accent is often deemed a problematic identity marker that leads to anxiety, low self-esteem and breakdown in intergroup communication for many EFL students (e.g., Coppinger & Sheridan, 2022; Montgomery & Zhang, 2018).

Naturally, as people want to feel belonging, they strive to accumulate national cultural capital. However, to convert accumulated cultural capital into national belonging, this cultural capital needs to be recognized by the dominant group in this field as well (Hage, 2000, p. 53). One cannot help but wonder about the basis on which some individuals wield the power to socially gatekeep the national belonging of others. This question will be addressed by the next construct of belonging.

Hage (2000, pp. 55–56) observes that ***governmental belonging*** shares many characteristics with Bourdieu's (1998) concept of 'field of power'. Originally, field of power is a construct of the ruling class wherein different individuals holding unequal

capital that endows them with governing power over the rest of society compete among themselves for domination within the field of power (Hage, 2000, p. 55). Hage (2000, p. 56) proposes this notion of the field of power can help conceptualize the construct of governmental belonging.

Governmental belonging manifests when one has the power to position others within the nation (Hage, 2000, pp. 65). This power does not stop at imposing on others specific national values or a specific national identity, it also extends to imposing a national order in which the subject of governmental belonging has the dominant position. The justification for such intrusive practice of power can be traced back to the history of European colonization which normalized an impression of cultural superiority about White identity (Hage, 2000, pp. 57–58).

In this sense, Hage (2000, pp. 57–58) explains being White means being the agent of Western civilization, it is not completely equivalent to one's skin color. Therefore, Whiteness is a field of power in which individuals yearn to occupy such position of superiority (Hage, 2000, p. 58). In other words, Whiteness is not defined solely by either skin color or ethnic background; rather it is through the identification with this field of Whiteness and the aspiration to accumulate Whiteness that people can be identified as being White. This study refers to this identification as the ***Aspiration toward Whiteness***. More importantly, as Hage (2000, p. 58–77) analyzes, no one can be fully White; this aspiration dons the quality of a fantasy in the psychoanalytic sense and failing to achieve this fantasy can lead to various problematic behaviors such as racism.

In tandem, the acculturation model and integrative motivation concept of SLA theories, discussed in Section 2.1.2, inadvertently parallel with the aspiration toward Whiteness by establishing the native speakers as the standard against which immigrants' national belonging, or their degree of acculturation, shall be measured. It emulates the paradoxical quality of the Whiteness fantasy whereas one can never become fully White. Therefore, even long-term international students and fluent immigrants still struggle with a sense of inauthentic identity and a lack of belonging (Louis, 2002; Tran, 2009; Wang, 2021).

Understanding these constructs of belonging and identification is instrumental for this study. Since power does not stop at the macro of social institutions, it also seeps into the everyday social interactions between people with unequal cultural capital, which is an integral part of the language learning experience (Foucault, 1980; Norton, 2000). This effect can be seen in the struggle of EFL students with having a non-native accent. To sum up, the aspiration toward Whiteness can be a significant

challenge for international students during their time abroad. The challenges can manifest through other interlocutors' practice of governmental belonging aimed at them or be self-imposed by the international students themselves.

It is important to note that, as much as a non-white person can be identified with the Whiteness, not every white-skinned person or person of English background heritage identifies themselves with this Whiteness (Hage, 2000, p. 232). Furthermore, not every person from ethnic background wants to comply with being an object for the White governance either. In fact, Hage (2000, pp. 235–239) argued the multiculturalism is not the exclusive construction of the White nationalists, rather it is co-constructed by the migrant community through their effort to facilitate more participation for themselves in Australia's politics, culture and social life. In other words, the reality of multiculturalism was brought into existence due to the practice of autonomous belonging by the immigrant community; it emerges through their resistance against being an ethnic object to be governed and even through holding the White nationalists accountable to the nation's espoused values at times (Hage, 2000, pp. 228–229). Cultivating a sense of belonging, which has always been a struggle for identity formation due to the conflict between the distinctiveness and belonging motives, has now been even more complicated in contemporary society due to many polarizing social-political factors.

The point of balance between needing to belong and needing to feel distinctive can be achieved through group membership or through autonomous belonging, in which one's need for autonomy is satisfied. However, group membership may lead to ingroup bias and intergroup discrimination. Amidst the aspiration toward Whiteness and the rise of polarizing ideologies, they can lead to breakdown in intercultural interactions. Given the connection between low autonomy t and heightened ingroup bias, Schwartz and colleagues (2006) suggest that an autonomous personal identity can help stabilize conflicts happening in the process of identity formation in a multicultural context.

Therefore, approaching SLA as a practice for learners to construct a stable and autonomous personal identity will not only maximize their caliber to facilitate learning opportunities, as Norton (2000) argues, but will also contribute toward their wellbeing as intercultural citizens.

2.4 Background: The Compartmentalized Identity of Vietnamese

By now, the study has demonstrated how language, identity and political power are three interconnected aspects of a person's lived experience. Therefore, it seems appropriate to profile the identity of the VIS cohort through an overview discussion of Vietnam's history of foreign relations and how it impacted the education system of the country, including its foreign language learning policy. A brief history of the teaching of English language in Vietnam will also be included, demonstrating the crucial effect it has on the identity formation of VIS.

2.4.1 Upheaval in Foreign Relations and Foreign Language Policies

As Wright (2020) observed, foreign language policy has a direct connection to a nation's foreign relations with other nations. The sphere of foreign language learning in Vietnam throughout the nation's history has been unpredictable and riddled with upheaval. To this date, despite the high demand and aspiration for English competency, foreign language acquisition remains difficult for Vietnamese policy makers.

After four decades of clashing with five different nations, France, the United States, Britain, Japan and China, the Vietnamese witnessed the appearance and subsequent disappearance of four different foreign languages at different points in time. Regardless, none of them was able to develop enough to create a multilingual environment in Vietnam. With each nation's presence, the Vietnamese people hastily picked up their respective language, then just as abruptly discarded them due to political conflicts and patriotic reasons.

The first period started with the French colonialization. The French language was present but mainly served the purpose of assimilating a few selected Vietnamese into the French culture and language for colonial administration (Le Myre de Vilers, 1908, quoted in Osborne, 1997, p. 50). The Vietnamese people showed little interest in learning French despite the rigorous education programs of the colonial regime (Wright, 2020). Confucian education was still favored by the bourgeois class and was continued in private sector, until it was banned in 1919.

During the French war from 1945 to 1954, amidst the decline in colonial power of France and the struggle for control over Vietnam from other powerhouses, the nation was occupied by the Japanese, Chinese, British and French troops (Wright, 2020). After the French declaration of colonial crisis, Vietnam was divided into a colonial regime in the South and a Vietnamese nationalist regime in the North. This moment is where a rift began between North and South Vietnam and, to this date, its remnants persist in Vietnamese daily life. January 1946 saw Ho Chi Minh gets

officially elected; France offered to recognize Vietnam's independence within the French Union and establish a type of commonwealth. However, negotiation broke down in 1947 and France opened fire to seize back the North by force (Aldrich, 1996). This period concluded with the withdrawal of France from Vietnam and the appearance of the United States in their place. In the context of the Cold War, the conflict between the communist regime in the North and the American-backed regime in the South was exacerbated (Karnow, 1994).

After achieving independence, the regime in the North continued a different kind of war, a war against famine, ignorance and foreign aggression. Basic education was established for the mass public and achieved certain successes. In the sphere of foreign language acquisition, Chinese replaced French as the most desirable foreign language (Bui Tin, 1995) due to the military and civilian support the Vietnamese received from China. Chinese culture and media products enjoyed great popularity in Vietnam during this period. Association with the French language became stigmatized and warranted incarceration (Bui Tin, 1995).

Meanwhile, the United States introduced English to the South. Southern Vietnamese started to acquire some level of control over English to adapt to the new circumstances. There was a shift of popularity from French to English, yet French still retained some degree of utility, such as for administrative purposes (Wright, 2020). However, whatever competence Southern Vietnam was able to gain would be significantly discarded along with the departure of the United States in 1975. The fall of Saigon in 1975 led to an exodus of an estimated 100,000 people (see Terzani, 1997). Given the stigmatization aimed at Southern Vietnamese who had a connection to the United States and the old regime after reunification (Thomas, 2005), both the English and French languages swiftly disappeared from the educational system and from the Vietnamese linguistic repertoire (Wright, 2020).

After reunification, Vietnam entered isolation, the economy suffered greatly, and education was not given high priority during this period (Wright, 2020). After the 1981 reforms, education prioritized ideological and moral training before technical and scientific skills (Pham Minh Hac, 1998). Traditional humanities professions, including foreign languages were virtually ignored (Wright, 2020). This period also witnessed two more wars against Cambodia in 1978 and against China in 1979. As a result, Chinese also disappeared from the Vietnamese linguistic field. Foreign language education was limited and tightly regulated during this period. Outside of the education system, learning a foreign language was stigmatized. Learning language for the purpose of studying Confucian or Catholic teachings could lead to repercussions (Wright, 2020).

The last stage began in 1986 with a period called *Doi Moi*, which means '*Innovation*'. The main purpose of this change was to introduce economic liberalization. As a result, Vietnam increased contact with other countries and started building economic relations with the West (Wright, 2020). This development brought rapid growth to the economy. However, it also brought forward challenges in terms of the Vietnamese lack of competence in foreign languages (Wright, 2020). Observers noticed 12 years of national education were enough in terms of preparing Vietnamese for technical work but left a lot of room for improvement in foreign language competence and intercultural communication competence (Carlson, 1998; Dickson, 1998; Nguyen Tri Dung, 1998). This period witnessed the return of English. Since then, English has become what Bourdieu would term cultural capital. However, public training remains limited due to the lack of funding and qualified staff.

Throughout all constant conflicts, foreign relations crisis and diplomacy meltdown, Vietnam has insisted on maintaining a strong sense of national identity and keeping its borders closed (Wright, 2020). Therefore, it was not only unpatriotic but also unfeasible to take the initiative in learning a foreign language. This attitude toward learning a foreign language only changed recently. Infrastructure and training quality challenges aside, however, one cannot help but wonder if a strong sense of national identity (e.g., Duy, 2021; Lan, 2022) still gatekeeps or prevents Vietnamese from developing a global English user identity.

Wright (2020) observes that the community of Vietnamese immigrants have started to leverage their fluency in both Vietnamese and the language of their receiving country to meet the rising demand for language skills in Vietnam. In the late 1990s, heavy taxes on expatriate money and other restrictions were abolished and overseas Vietnamese were invited to return. However, the number that answered this invitation was small and those who did return chose to keep their foreign passport as a safety measure in case of future political upheaval (Lamb, 1996) as there is still tension and unease in response to the growing influence of these returning Vietnamese immigrants in the social and economic spheres of Vietnam (Wright, 2020). It shows that the effort to heal the wounds of war in Vietnam so far has achieved superficial rather than substantive results.

2.4.2 The Vietnamese Diaspora in Australia

Based on the criteria of generation, age, place of birth and time of migration, the diaspora of Vietnamese in Australia can be categorized into three subgroups (1)

Vietnamese migrants following the Vietnam War, (2) Australian-born Vietnamese and (3) new Vietnamese arrivals.

The first group often came from the middle class of the old regime, who had received education in French and English (Wright, 2020). Their migration to Australia happened in three waves (Thomas, 2005). The first wave arrived from 1975 to 1978, mostly consisted of people who were associated with the old regime or military. The second wave arrived after 1979, who were mostly Vietnamese with Chinese heritage and their departure shrank the pool of Chinese competence in Vietnam significantly (Wright, 2020). The third wave arrived after 1985, consisting of mostly family members migrating under the family reunion program.

According to the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) (2024), there are currently about 155,000 members of this first group in Australia. After the event in 1975, two million people left South Vietnam, and about 2,000 of them arrived in Australia by boat (DVA, 2024). Many of them did not survive the journey, succumbing to the seas or perishing at the hand of pirates. Members of this group usually face some issues about social and economic well-being due to high unemployment rate and below median incomes (Baldassar et al., 2017). More importantly, this group identifies strongly with a Vietnamese Australian diaspora narrative centered around the shared traumatic experiences of exile from Vietnam (Nunn, 2013, as cited in Baldassar et al., 2017), which Baldassar and colleagues (2017) refer to as the 'victim' diaspora narrative, in which members share a collective consciousness of being a victim.

The second group are relatively socially upwardly mobile compared to their parents, the first group (Baldassar et al., 2017). They have high presence in higher education enrollment. They also have a higher retention rate of parent's native language at home compared to other second generations of immigrants, demonstrating high fluency in both Vietnamese and English (Baldassar et al., 2017). Unlike the older generation, who are motivated to be involved in community life out of political orientation, this younger generation is less focused on political conflicts and gravitate toward charitable causes.

The last group are predominantly international students or skilled migrants with high levels of English competence and education. These students usually come from middle-class backgrounds from all over Vietnam, whose families can afford to cover their children's international student tuition fee. Their reasoning for choosing Australia usually includes the desire to gain fluency in English, prospect of enhancing their social status in Vietnam, and Australia's relative closeness to Vietnam. However, members of the first group tend to perceive new student arrivals as being aligned

with the current Vietnamese government and unappreciative of the first group's pioneering effort in establishing the Vietnamese diaspora in Australia (Baldassar et al., 2017).

Furthermore, across the period of 46 years, the Vietnamese diaspora in Australia still leaves an ambiguous impression on its members, lacking the feeling of a homogeneous, well-organized and stable community (Baldassar et al., 2017; Thomas, 2005). In fact, there seems to be a status of compartmentalization, especially between the first generation and the new arrivals, whereas the older generation perceive the younger one as putting a strain on community resources and leaving the younger generation feeling a lack of community support, which in turn may lead to rising issues of isolation and mental illness (Baldassar et al., 2017).

Baldassar and colleagues (2017) identified three possible reasons that could lead to such tension among the members and strain on community resources. First, the Vietnamese diaspora does not receive adequate support and assistance from the Vietnamese government like other diasporas such as the Indian or the Chinese diaspora do. Second, the Vietnamese do not take initiatives in asserting their need for support from the wider community due to their cultural reticence. Finally, the diaspora itself is socially divided so community resources are spread thin across three subgroups.

Lastly, the North Vietnam versus South Vietnam division mindset is still prevalent (Baldassar et al., 2017, p. 944). This division is not only prevalent among the diaspora in Australia but also among the Vietnamese nationals themselves. It is usually expressed in the form of stereotypes. Northen Vietnamese are stereotyped as the '*winners*' of the war and Southern Vietnamese are the '*henchmen of American imperialism*' or '*traitors*.' On the other hand, Northern Vietnamese can also be stereotyped as '*primitive communists*' and Southern Vietnamese are the '*members of a lost civilization*'. Due to Vietnamese cultural reticence, these stereotypes hardly get expressed verbally. They, however, function as implicit beliefs and deepen the rift within the two regions.

2.4.3 Vietnamese International Students and Identity Formation pre-departure

Throughout all previous parts of the Literature Review, autonomy has emerged as a salient component across all domains of identity formation discussed. From balancing the identity motives of distinctiveness and belonging, to decreasing ingroup bias, to navigating polarizing political ideologies and beliefs, to claiming ownership of English

and asserting the right to speak, autonomy always plays a crucial role in constructing an authentic and adaptive identity.

Autonomy does not develop on its own. Adolescents can learn to do so through having their need for autonomy supported by significant others such as parents, teachers and peers (Branje et al., 2021; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005). Many studies have confirmed the importance for adolescents to have the three basic psychological needs satisfied during this period of identity development (e.g., Branje et al., 2021, Branje, 2022). The satisfaction of all three needs were linked to stronger identity commitment. Furthermore, a supportive and nonjudgemental environment around caregivers and friends creates space for adolescents to explore their identity without defensiveness (Branje, 2022).

In fact, both attachment theory and ego identity development theories discovered the quality of relationships adolescents build with these significant others has great influence on their identity formation beyond adolescence well into young adulthood as well (Pittman et al., 2011). Namely, support of autonomy is particularly important (Branje et al., 2021; Branje, 2022; Skhirtladze et al., 2019; Waterman, 2012). Adolescents who do not receive enough autonomy support from parents and friends are prone to develop less optimal identity, as shown through internal conflict and feeling alienated from their own selves.

In terms of identity statuses, the relationship with parents and parenting style appears to be connected to the child's identity status (Marcia, 2012b). First, ***Foreclosures*** are found to be closest to their families and encouraged to conform to family values; they also have the highest score on measure of authoritarianism (Kroger & Marcia, 2011; Marcia, 2012a, 2012b). In this sense, authoritarianism is defined as a preference for strong leadership over democratic process, placing responsibility for one's decisions on external forces, and a strong ingroup bias (Marcia, 2012a, 2012b). Second, ***Identity Achievements*** perceive their families as supportive of their differences and capable of negotiation and reconciliation. Third, ***Moratoriums*** are conflicted about their feelings toward families, torn between maintaining harmony and struggling for autonomy. Finally, ***Identity Diffusions*** are the least attached to parents (Campbell et al., 1984) they are distant and feel rejected by their families (Marcia, 2012b).

The community a person lives in can also predispose them to a certain identity status. Waterman (2012) commented that a homogeneous community with established traditions increases the chance for its youth to grow up as Foreclosures since everyone around them seems to be conforming to the norms. Especially when such

community expectations are reinforced by the school system. Being exposed to a heterogeneous, cosmopolitan communities is a prominent trigger for a person's identity crisis (Water, 2012).

There have been very few longitudinal studies that investigate Vietnamese's identity formation in the public education system. What researchers do know is that Vietnamese have a strong sense of national identity due to its history of constant wars (Wright, 2020). The public education system did not appear to be optimal for individualism and autonomy, sometimes promoting conflicting ideas torn between Confucianism and Socialist-based free market (Khoi Nguon, 2023; Underwood, 2020).

Studies about interactions between caregivers and children in Vietnam are also scarce. A study from Truong and Underwood (2023) found that high school students in Vietnam rarely come to parents for emotional support during challenging times, and Confucian stereotypes place the father as a bystander in terms of childrearing. Furthermore, the Confucian mindset has been deeply and widely instilled in Vietnamese parents and educators, affecting their behaviors in some ways that may be detrimental to children or students (Truong & Underwood, 2023). Discipline and respect are emphasized in Confucian society therefore family space can be a source of stress instead of comfort. There is usually little space for children's autonomy.
Most Vietnamese students, therefore, develop compartmentalized identities and struggle with satisfying the need for autonomy. In a world where there are more and more children growing up with transnational identities, it may be more fruitful to adopt a more lenient way to approach their identity formation and language use.

2.5 Summary

Language is a social practice through which individuals construct their identity to build a distinctive self and establish their belonging in the world. Resolving the tension between needing to feel distinctive and needing to belong is crucial for individuals in developing a stable identity which allows them to build intimacy with others without feeling defensive. However, this social practice has become problematic in contemporary society.

When more and more people with drastically different backgrounds, having unequal power and resources, start to engage with each other, ingroup bias and intergroup prejudice seem to be on the rise and polarizing political ideologies and beliefs make way for problematic political agendas. Researchers believe that a stable and

autonomous sense of personal identity can help individuals traverse this turbulent time.

Given the tumultuous relationships the nation had with many Western nations in the past and the little attention paid to the identity formation of young Vietnamese in the literature, VIS seem to find themselves in troubled waters with little support and guidance. In hope to contribute insights to the literature about the Vietnamese identity and to better assist this cohort, this study sets out to investigate the identity formation challenges VIS face during their time studying in Australia and the strategies they used to address these challenges.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

3.1.1 Theoretical Framework

The data collection and analysis for this research is based on Marcia's (1966, 2012a, 2012b) identity statuses paradigm discussed in Chapter 2. The distinctive characteristics of each identity status will be used to determine the individual's chosen identity formation strategy. Descriptions of distinctive characteristics of all four statuses are provided by Kroger and Marcia (2011).

First, people belonging to the **Identity Achievements** status are described as actualized people who demonstrate important life focuses guided by adaptation flexibility and open-mindedness. Their coherent sense of self makes them a reliable source of strength for others.

Second, **Moratoriums** are characterized by a struggle for self-definition, therefore they usually demonstrate moral sensitivity in an intense way. If accompanied with articulation, they can sometimes appear briefly charismatic. However, other Moratoriums can appear weighed down by the struggle to go against social norms or what is expected of them from authority figures in their lives. Instead of becoming explorers, they can end up being ruminators buried under perpetual dilemmas.

Third, **Foreclosures** may come across as determined as Identity Achievement members at first, however, such determination is accompanied with a defensive stance against information that may disrupt their commitment. Therefore, this group usually operate from an "us" versus "them" mindset to preserve their commitment from being confronted by different opinions, which may prompt exploration. This group also has a strong ingroup bias.

Finally, people under **Identity Diffusions** status have various manifestations, yet they all share a common tendency of engaging very little to not engaging at all in exploration and having difficulty making firm commitments. On surface level, Identity Diffusions demonstrate a chameleon-like appeal through their extreme flexibility and ability to go along with every situation. However, underneath this charm is a constant pursuit of external validation. If external validation is not granted, they can feel lost and isolated due to a sense of emptiness and meaninglessness.

Furthermore, in tandem with the identity statuses paradigm, data analysis will also consult salient themes from Narrative Identity concept. Narrative Identity was developed by McAdams (1985). It is an internalized and ongoing story an individual constructs about themselves to give their life some semblance of unity, purpose and meaning. In other words, narrative identity is "*the integrative story that 'I' tell about 'Me'*" (McAdams et al., 2021, p. 4). For this reason, the concept provides an effective framework to gauge the participants' degree of autonomy in their identity formation. Furthermore, it also helps in assessing how cohesive a person's identity formation is, and the extent to which past experiences are integrated with current situations to guarantee fulfilling outcomes in the future (Adler, 2012).

A person's narrative identity can be analyzed along two main themes: the prevalence of agency (e.g., power, achievement, autonomy) and the prevalence of communion (e.g., love, intimacy, belongingness) (McAdams, 2011).

3.1.2 Research Method

The data for this thesis was collected using the Identity Status Interview (ISI) developed by Marcia (2012a). ISI is a semi-structured interview. The main goal of ISI is to show whether a person demonstrates developmental process in the manner in which they have approached the psychosocial task of identity formation to arrive at the current identity status. Three main domains commonly included in the ISI are (1) occupation, (2) ideology, including religious and political positions, and (3) interpersonal issues (Marcia, 2012a). ISI concerns the strategy a person uses to handle the task of identity formation more than a continuous measure of their personal identity (Waterman, 2012). For this assessment, what the individuals chose is not as important as how they made those choices, including the degree of exploration, the extent of commitment and the underlying feelings involved (Kroger & Marcia, 2011).

Furthermore, when investigating identity motives, participants' self-reports should not be taken at face values (Vignoles, 2011). The semi-structured interview method affords the researcher an orderly structure of topics to be covered yet is still dynamic enough to explore unexpected developments that may bring about great insight (Richards, 2009). Participants were prompted to recount and interpret important personal milestones to understand the narratives they construct about themselves. See Appendix 1 for the Interview Questions.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face and individually with each participant. Each interview session lasted about one hour. The researcher interviewed all participants in Vietnamese, which is the shared native language of participants and the researcher. Answers were audio-recorded and transcribed. The researcher worked directly on the Vietnamese transcripts to identify the main themes for this study's discussion. Afterwards, Vietnamese transcripts were translated to English and are quoted selectively in the final report.

Sharing the mother tongue with participants not only helps the researcher in creating accommodation for and building a rapport with participants during interviews, but it also enables the researcher to minimize deviation from the original language and meaning during the data gathering stage, which is a common challenge in conducting cross-language research (van Nes et al., 2010). Secondly, the researcher also translated data from Vietnamese to English to limit the risks of meaning getting lost in translation when using a third-party translator (van Nes et al., 2010).

At the discretion of the researcher, the data was translated to English word-by-word or using paraphrase, whichever technique she deemed better at preserving the original meaning, capturing the personality of participants, and forming natural conversations in English. In the final report, where participants' quotes also require pragmatic knowledge and understanding of Vietnamese cultural nuances, the researcher utilized footnotes to serve as translator's notes and provide necessary contexts, explanation, or elaboration to best assist English-speaking readers without interrupting the flow of information in the main report.

3.2 Research Participants

The study investigates five (05) cases of VIS currently studying in post graduate programs at a university located in South Australia, who satisfy the following criteria:

(1) Being at least 18 years of age

(2) Holding a Vietnamese citizenship

(3) Coming from a non-native English-speaking background

(4) Currently enrolled as a post graduate student under a valid international student visa at a university in South Australia

(5) Participants must not be commencing students. Instead, they are continuing students and have completed at least one year of studies

(6) Participants must have lived in Adelaide, South Australia for at least one year.

Accordingly, there are four exclusion criteria. *First,* people who are from Vietnamese ethnic background but do not hold a Vietnamese citizenship. Most of the VIS cohort are those who have undergone Vietnam's compulsory public education from primary, secondary, to high school. This program was first introduced in 1986, the year Vietnam introduced its '*Doi Moi*' policy (Khoi Nguon, 2023). Vietnamese who did not attend such a public education program may have had different experience that is not representative of the cohort this study targets.

Second, VIS who grew up in an English-speaking environment, in which, English was at least used as a home language. One of the main aims for this study is to contribute insight into the identity formation of VIS as EFL speakers, using English as a home language would take away the unique perspectives and challenges of being an EFL speaker.

Third, VIS new arrivals who have stayed in Australia less than one year. Since the strategy and outcomes of identity formation are usually observed in longitudinal research for optimal insight (Marcia, 2012b), participants are chosen carefully to be those who have had moderate amount of time acculturating and developing identities while studying at a university in South Australia. It is a way to guarantee the substantive relationship between the chosen strategy and reported outcomes.

Fourth, by the same token of the above criteria, undergraduate students are not the target participants of this study. Post graduate students who are more likely to be around the age from 25 to 30 are more aligned with the second half of emerging adulthood, which lasts from 18 to 29 (Nelson, 2021).

Finally, VIS who are not attending university in person. Even though acculturation is no longer confined within a nation's borders only (Jensen et al., 2011), the most salient and intricate challenges for EFL speakers are still real time interactions with native speakers that are prone to breakdown in communication (Norton, 2000, p. 123).

Participants were recruited online through newsletter emails of international student services at universities and advertisement posts on social media. Recruitment

materials and information of the study was presented bilingually, in both English and Vietnamese. See Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 for the study's Information Sheet together with Consent Form that was used for recruitment and Ethics Approval respectively. Participants registered to take part in the study through a Google Form link included in newsletter emails and advertisement posts on social media.

After the recruitment period, ten candidates submitted registration forms and expressed interest in giving interviews in total. This number exceeded the original goal of the study twofold, which indicates the high interest of VIS in the research topic and the need for larger scale studies in the future. Weighing inclusion and exclusion criteria as well as diversity of participants, five participants were selected for interviews, including three female (60%) and two male (40%) participants. The average age of the participants is 30.

3.3 Limitations of the Study

The study has three limitations. *First*, the study worked with a small number of cases, specifically five (05) student cases. However, given the importance of personal interpretation in identity formation process, the small sample still proves beneficial in contributing to the literature.

Second, due to time constraints, the researcher was not able to send research participants the English translation of their respective interview transcripts before the final reporting stage as planned, to maximize the representation and preservation of participants' voice in cross-language qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, van Nes et al., 2010).

Finally, the data analysis of this study relies mainly on the interpretation of the researcher. In qualitative research, researchers' skills, observation, perspective and autobiographical experiences altogether serve as a critical analyzing and filtering instrument for research (e.g., Duff, 2014; Lichtman, 2010). Nonetheless, subjectivities in data analysis and interpretation are inevitable (Cresswell, 2007; Duff, 2008; Mertens, 2010).

Like many young adults these days, in the age of technology and information, the researcher grew up with a transboundary identity and used to struggle with existing in the in-between, not just in terms of globalization and cultural differences, but also in terms of generational differences and polarized political rifts. It was this experience that motivated her to conduct the study. However, it is important for the researcher

to note that not every VIS would like to develop a mixed sense of identity to the extent that she does.

The goal she set out to achieve was not to measure how optimal their identity formation strategy is or to dictate which strategy is better. Rather, she aims to utilize her transcultural familiarity and insight into the Vietnamese people from different generations as well as backgrounds to build a bridge of mutual understanding free from defensiveness. Furthermore, where it is appropriate to do so, the researcher aims to problematize the perception of participants in the interest of critical reflection, as Norton (2000) has noted, at times, accommodating individuals' experience while highlighting that it may not work in their best interests in the long run.

To the best of the researcher's ability, the subjectivities in data analysis was mitigated by engaging in regular personal reflection as well as weekly discussion, reviewing and editing with the researcher's supervisor throughout the time of the project.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Overview of Participants' Profile

Table 1. *Summary of participants' information*

Name	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Course	Time spent in Australia
Audrey	Female	35	Married	Master of Social Work	More than 3 years
Willie	Male	27	Single	Doctor of Philosophy – Biotechnology, Life Science	More than 3 years
Ginger	Female	37	Married	Master of Education	Less than 3 years
Freddy	Male	29	Single	Master of Wellbeing and Positive Mental Health in Education	Less than 3 years
Jane	Female	26	Single	Master of Wellbeing and Positive Mental Health in Education	Less than 3 years

All names were generated randomly with a name generator application, any resemblance to actual people bearing these names or actual events is purely coincidental.

This chapter of the thesis provides excerpts from the interviews with the participants and outlines the main patterns emerging from the analysis of the interviews. The findings from these interviews will be discussed in the second half of the chapter.

When it comes to academic integration, all five participants expressed satisfaction with their course material and quality of teaching, despite initial difficulties. Audrey and Willie had the smoothest transition to their current courses, due to their extended time spent studying in Australia, as compared to the other participants. This is the second time that Audrey and Willie have pursued a postgraduate program in Australia. Ginger and Jane struggled with the Australian accent and the learning culture respectively but managed to adapt as time went by. Freddy is the only participant whose course is connected to neither his bachelor's degree nor previous work experience. Along with language differences and learning culture shock, he

reported the most struggles during transition time. Regardless, given time and support from peers, he has adjusted successfully.

In terms of social interactions, four participants (80%) namely Freddy, Ginger, Jane and Willie reported a social circle of mostly Vietnamese people. These participants did not share significant connections with people outside of this nationality cohort. Most of them kept this distance by choice. The remaining participant, Audrey, was the only one to report extensive interactions with people outside of the Vietnamese cohort thanks to her work and placement as a social worker.

More importantly, although it varied to different levels for each participant, all of them reported tension with their own Vietnamese community. Even though Freddy had many supportive Vietnamese friends, he yearned for deeper connections outside of that community. Willie and Jane reported strained relationships with parents which may have contributed to their reservation about every social connection in general. Ginger reported good relationships with her friends but opted for deflection and avoidance when asked to share further details. Finally, Audrey, whose social interactions were the most extensive and diverse, still reported a certain level of anxiety while working with the Vietnam War immigrants' community in Australia as a social worker.

4.2 Challenges perceived by VIS in their identity formation during integration into Australia

Even though participants' opinions on the challenges varied, three salient themes emerge clearly from their stories. These are: (1) negative self-perception about English proficiency, (2) differences between Vietnamese and Australian cultures, and (3) internal tension among their own community.

4.2.1 Negative self-perception about English proficiency

Freddy found it difficult to express thoughts in English, which hindered him from starting more personal and meaningful conversations with other students. Additionally, there was an assumption of covert racism, "*where I autosuggested some kind of racism here, so it made me uncomfortable to communicate*." When asked for examples of such autosuggestion, Freddy recalled instances where others laughed when he spoke, "*there was no way to verify whether it was true or not… only my own feeling. Especially, I also heard from other Vietnamese, experiences like mine, it reinforced that thought.*" Acknowledging that this assumption may be untrue, Freddy

pondered the lack of something in him to get over it, "*maybe not enough, not yet, not the right type of motivation that drives me to break through that limitation."*

On the other hand, both Willie and Jane confirmed that accent is not a challenge for their identity formation. Despite his speech impediment, Willie was secure in his English proficiency, "*when it comes to speaking, I think as long as people understand me, it's okay, I don't think anybody minds my slight lisp*". Jane also agreed, "*if we are talking about accent then I haven't met any case that was overtly rude like that here*." Interestingly, Jane used to be self-conscious about having a non-native accent too; but has now changed her mind, "*I no longer restrict myself like that.*" It may be helpful to investigate what factors contributed to Willie and Jane's resilience against the non-native accent stereotype.

One possibility could be a matter of time and exposure, as in the case of Ginger. Like Freddy, Ginger struggled with accent, "*honestly, the Aussie accent is so 'amazing'* [laugh]." Since she was more familiar with British and American accents, Ginger had difficulty understanding the Australian accent at first, but eventually she was able to adapt. According to Ginger it is a matter of time before everyone adapts.

However, time is not always the solution, such as in Audrey's case. Despite a long time spent in Australia and using English for work purposes, Audrey still struggles with academic English, "*how do I put it, I use English for work a lot but when it comes to academic tests it seems like the tests hate me or something*". In general, she did not have difficulty with assignments, exams and communication at work. It was her memories about having to take the IELTS exam multiple times earlier to qualify for university entrance in Australia that weighed on her mind since she will have to take the exam again for a temporary working visa soon. She also mentioned great difficulty with understanding contextualized English used by a specific identity group such as the Aboriginal LGBTQ+ community, "*it is not simply English anymore, it is embedded with culture, contextualized by the person I'm working with and the topic I'm studying.*"

4.2.2 Differences between Vietnamese and Australian cultures

For Freddy, the differences between Vietnamese and Australian cultures were affecting both his academic and social life. Since his previous degree and work experience came from a different profession, Freddy faced great challenges in understanding what lecturers were discussing in classes, having to navigate a different teaching and learning culture. He did not seek help from lecturers after classes due to anxiety about his English proficiency, "*I also think, like I was worrying*

about wasting their time." He compensated by relying on his peers instead. More importantly, in terms of socializing, he observed a critical difference in the concept of friendliness between two cultures. In his eyes Vietnamese culture is a collective culture where everyone knows a lot about each other, "*sometimes it may cross your boundaries and your private spaces but that is their culture.*"

Out of all participants, Willie placed the most emphasis on cultural differences to explain why he did not interact with others outside of the Vietnamese circle, "*I'm the traditional type, I pay a lot of attention to something like nationality. The cultures are different, mindsets are different. I still find it easier to get along with Vietnamese.*" Other than Vietnamese culture being a collective culture, he also commented that Australian culture is too young compared to Vietnamese culture, "*to be blunt, Australians have not had a culture that is truly a culture yet*". Therefore, how people gather and have fun is materialistic, such as "*going to bars or going to the cinema, go to concerts, or go hiking*", it is not "*something soulful, more spiritual like in Vietnam.*" Willie also missed "*discussing some topics like drama*[1] *in Vietnam*" which he could not recreate with Australian peers due to having little common ground with them.

Although Ginger did not mention cultural differences directly like Freddy and Willie, she also described something like a boundary which kept people confined to their ingroup, "*I found that making friends with Aussie is not easy*", "*maybe they prefer friends within their community.*" Jane did not comment that it was hard to make friends with Australian peers, but she also demonstrated a similar sense of distance, emphasizing the need to be selective about "*people who make you feel safe to make the first move*" to avoid being put in a vulnerable position.

Audrey was the most comfortable with and tolerant of these cultural differences. She utilized the differences to connect with her clients better as a social worker, through the fact that both parties have a mother language that is not English, "[the fact alone] *helps me connect and contact with them more empathetically, they do not necessarily have to understand my language.*"

4.2.3 Tension among the Vietnamese community

Freddy learned about the Australian boundaries and privacy in socialization the hard way, when a fellow Vietnamese international student told him about this difference. However, "*it was a little aggressive*", they did not remain friends as Freddy shared "*I*

[1] 'Drama' is what Vietnamese call casual gossip, usually about topics/people in the public sphere such as social controversies, celebrities etc.

learned from this old friend but I felt a distance." Overall, despite having very supportive Vietnamese friends, Freddy still yearned for deeper connections, "*it is supportive because we need each other, I don't think any of them can last more than five to ten years, or more. It can't be called being confidants.*"

Jane also had friction with the Vietnamese community. Jane found a group of supportive Vietnamese friends since arriving in South Australia with whom she could study and bond due to similar work ethics, something which she had not expected. Outside of this small group, Jane reported "*a bad impression with the majority of Vietnamese students*" for "*their complacency and lack of agency*". Therefore, she maintained a distance and limited contact with the larger group of Vietnamese.

Ginger reported an overall good experience with her Vietnamese friends. However, when prompted to share in detail what this experience looked like, curiously she offered generic and deflective answers whether it was about her learning or social experience, "*only going out is fun, what fun is there in studying*" and "*it is fun as long as we can go out together, there were too many* [memories] *that I can't remember.*"

Audrey and Willie did not report tension with other Vietnamese international students, however there were tensions with the Vietnam War immigrant community in their stories. Interestingly, both participants were from North Vietnam. As a social worker Audrey sometimes worked with the Vietnam War immigrants who have migrated to Australia since 1975. Audrey did not feel any ill-intention, but she still reported a sense of anxiety and unease due to her identity as a Northern Vietnamese, "*in my work I supported some groups, obviously it wasn't any big support, since I myself came from the North, they were mostly from the South*[2]". She also alluded to the fact that other Vietnamese international students may have felt the same, "*I understand this concern, I am the same, when I was providing support to them, I couldn't say that… there were some women, well most of them were from the South and not the North*".

Unlike Audrey, Willie did not consciously connect his observation to the Vietnam War immigrant community, yet his definition of his ingroup, i.e., the Vietnamese community, may create in him a similar emotional distance with the Vietnam War immigrant community in Australia. Specifically, when asked to define who he thinks the Vietnamese people are, Willie believed that they must have Vietnamese parents and have grown up in Vietnam. By this definition, it means the second and third generation of Vietnamese immigrants born in Australia who "*went to school in an*

[2] The participant was referring to North and South Vietnam.

Australian environment" and "*most of the time communicate in English, interacting with the Australian culture"* are not Vietnamese to Willie.

4.3 Strategies used by VIS in their identity formation during integration into Australia

In terms of social integration, Audrey fitted the Identity Achiever profile the most, demonstrating extensive exploration and well-founded commitment for her identity formation. Ginger and Willie appeared secure in their identity commitment but showed little exploration, aligning with the Foreclosure profile. Lastly, Freddy and Jane did not show strong commitment yet, but they were engaging in exploration, fitting the Moratorium profile.

4.3.1 Foreclosure profile

Ginger used the most avoiding and foreclosing strategies, from navigating linguistic difficulties to socialization. When asked for advice to help future students in adapting to the Australian accent, she did not think discussing it before they arrive in Australia will yield any result, "*you can't change the English teaching system in Vietnam anyways.*" Commenting on why she thought it was not easy to make friends with Australians, Ginger said her view could be one-sided since she did not have a lot of Australian classmates. However, when asked about the social events that she did attend, she replied with "*I don't need more friends, I have enough friends*." More interestingly, when inquired about her personal meaning given to the Vietnamese cultural traditions, some of which she was no longer practicing in Australia, Ginger became frustrated and defensive.

Like Ginger, Willie relied a lot on avoiding and foreclosing strategies. Out of all participants, Willie placed the most emphasis on his Vietnamese identity, to the point of distancing himself from people outside of this ingroup. He did not try to involve outgroup members in his Vietnamese cultural activities such as visiting the Buddhist temple because the outgroup members "*can't really understand the enjoyment from it.*" Willie did not verify this observation with factual events either, "*I only thought so, I haven't actually asked any of them to join because instead of asking the local friends I can just ask my Vietnamese friends.*" Even after his most challenging moment, in which he felt lonely during a trip to Brisbane for a conference, which made him realize that he needed more personal connections with others, Willie still stressed it had to be connections with Vietnamese people because "*Australians here they're still living a very Westernized lifestyle*". Willie only demonstrated extensive exploration and

strong commitment in forming his identity as an EFL speaker. On top of traditional English learning methods, he drew motivation and engagement with learning from reading comic books and manga, demonstrating personal integrity well-founded in factual experience, "*I read well, I write okay enough, I listen well, that is okay, enough, when it comes to speaking, I think as long as people understand me, it's okay, I don't think anybody minds my slight lisp*."

4.3.2 Moratorium profile

Freddy reported a mix of foreclosing and exploring strategies but not a lot of strong commitment. He defaulted to foreclosing strategies when faced with challenges both in academic and social circumstances. Freddy did not come to lecturers for help when he was not able to follow the lesson, and relied on his classmates to help him understand the lessons instead. During socialization, when faced with unfavorable reactions of others, he would "*end the conversation, find excuses to do my own stuff, continue to work alone.*" However, Freddy started to explore more by participating in meetups with Christian groups, within which he reported more positive experiences, "*they asked me about the recent flooding[3] in Vietnam, 'where is your hometown, in the North or South?', 'did the flood affect it?'*" Freddy was "*pretty surprised when they care about the flooding situation in Vietnam*", it made him feel "*a sense of loving, caring*", "*it was so endearing, it was the first time I've seen something like tha*t" and "*they were local Australian, typical Australian, and they cared about it that's why I was so surprised and I found it so endearing.*"

Jane also demonstrated a mix of foreclosing and exploring strategies. She began studying with a foreclosing disposition due to her previous negative experiences with Vietnamese students back home, "*when I just arrived, I did not plan on making friends*". However, she gradually became more open to exploring, "*luckily this friend group of mine not only can get along with each other but also can work well in group projects.*" Like Willie, Jane showed extensive exploration and stable commitment in her identity as an EFL speaker, expanding the use of English to her hobbies such as watching crochet tutorial videos, reading novels, comic books and manga. More interestingly, Jane has been using an English name that sounds close to her Vietnamese name to communicate with English speakers, even before living in Australia. When asked which name she preferred to use, Jane said "*whichever name is fine with me, as long as I can realize people are addressing me.*" She appreciated lecturers who tried to pronounce her Vietnamese name but if asked the question of

[3] Flooding caused by Typhoon Yagi in September 2024 (Guardian staff and agencies, 2024)

which name she prefers, Jane remained flexible "*that's up to you, whichever is easier for you.*"

4.3.3 Identity Achievement profile

Not only did Audrey have the most exploration and commitment in her identity formation, from choosing her professional pursuit to socialization, but she also showed the most creative and flexible strategies in her identity development. In her responsibility as a social worker, Audrey leveraged her non-dominant identity as an international student to accommodate migrant women clients, "*just by telling them 'Other than English, I also have a mother language' to support them, it helped me connect and contact with them more empathetically, they do not necessarily have to understand my language*", because it helped both parties build rapport "*ah so we both belong to non-dominant groups*" so that "*they can talk to me more comfortably*".

This flexible strategy also extended to her English native speaker clients. Like Jane, Audrey uses an English name to work with native speaker clients. Because they come to her already traumatized or stressed, "*so I don't want them to feel stressed about pronouncing my name correctly and feel hiccups, interruptions in their flow of emotions when talking to me*", "*the name will help my work become easier and save my clients from feeling uncomfortable.*" To Audrey, "*it's not about languages, but it's about emotions*", as a social worker she "*found it* [the language differences] *unfavorable for my clients therefore I chose to be the one to change first*." She was able to be flexible and accommodating in her expression of identity because "*whether my name is* [her English name] *or* [her Vietnamese name], *it doesn't really matter, the values I identify myself with are more important.*"

4.4 Autonomy and personal agency demonstrated in VIS's identity formation

As demonstrated through her strategies, Audrey showed a high level of autonomy and personal agency. In most circumstances she placed the locus of control on herself and took initiatives to adapt and resolve the challenges, "*I chose to be the one to change first"* because "*the values I identify myself with are more important*". Remarkably, she expressed her non-dominant identity (e.g., being an international student and an EFL speaker) in an adaptive manner that leveraged her more conversational power to drive the conversation forward as an active agent, even with English native speakers who are usually assumed to be the more dominant agent.

Jane shared a similar personal agency with Audrey in her strategy to use an English name alongside her Vietnamese name when interacting with native English speakers. She demonstrated a flexibility in her identity expression to best accommodate every interlocutor in the conversation, "*back in Vietnam I see that they* [her teachers] *struggled a lot* [with her Vietnamese name] *and I also struggled a lot, so I chose that* [her English name] *from the start to save myself those problems."* She was stable enough in her identity to exert conversational power and accommodate native English speakers who are typically expected to be the accommodating side. However, in some circumstances, her personal agency originated from the lack of support from others rather than her autonomous choices, "*whether there were supporters or not the person who organized and managed the project will still be me*". This leads to Jane's passive disposition in socializing with peers.

Unlike Audrey and Jane, both Freddy and Ginger needed native English speakers to be accommodating first in conversations. For Freddy, he needed to feel "*a positive attitude, a positive energy*" to make a deep conversation with "*a foreigner, an Australian*". If it was someone he had just met or just began a conversation with, he was not able to convert that into a deep conversation. Ginger stated that she felt "*it is not easy to make friends with Aussie*".

More importantly, both participants also relied on their friends' opinions to commit to their decisions, sometimes without firsthand experience. Freddy consulted Vietnamese friends' experiences of being ridiculed when speaking English to reinforce his view, "*I also heard from other Vietnamese, experiences like mine, it reinforced that thought*"; he also relied on others' negative opinions about international students to decide that he did not want to work in group projects with them, even though he had not worked in any group project with them. Justifying her comment that it is not easy to make friends with Australians, Ginger mentioned "*First my class didn't have a lot of Aussie. Therefore, not just me, I saw many people also felt that… well… that Aussie children are not willing to make friends with other nationalities*." She trailed off the original point and deflected to younger Australian instead, probably talking about her son's experience who was going to school with Australian children.

Willie was the most rigid in his identity formation. He emphasized the differences between the Vietnamese ingroup and outgroup rigorously. He also had the strongest identification with being Vietnamese, but his commitment was externally motivated, i.e., to distance himself from outgroup members, showing little internal integrity for his commitment.

For instance, the reason Willie could not connect with his Australian peers was because they do not know how to share his appreciation for spiritual activities such as visiting the Buddhist temples, which is commonly considered a religious activity for Vietnamese people. However, Willie commented "*Vietnam is an atheist*[4] *country*" because "*most of Vietnamese follow Buddhism and Buddhism is an atheist religion*". Willie explained "*Catholicism, Christianity, they have god, they have Christ, similarly, Hinduism also has god, not just one but many*" but "*Buddhism is different, it does not have god, we have Buddha, but Buddha did not claim to be a god"* and "*Buddha has gone to Nirvana, Buddha is not immortal, and therefore Buddha is not godlike*". Despite not following any religion, Willie commented "*I definitely think Buddhism has some advantages over other religions*".

Even though experts have not reached a unanimous definition for atheism, an underlying theme about atheism is religious disbelief or the lack of belief in something that cannot be proven such as spiritual beings including God (Bullivant et al., 2019; Schiavone & Gervais, 2017; Weir, 2020). It appeared as if Willie fixated on distinguishing Buddhism from other religions more than genuinely identifying it with atheism, since he was also contrasting Vietnamese culture with Australian culture by the spirituality of the former.

In fact, his answers painted a picture of conflicting definitions with Vietnamese culture being spiritual while having an "*atheist religion*" at its center. Even though Buddha did not claim to be a god, the practice of developing a religion centered around his teachings and guiding followers to live by it, without the ability to discourse on those teachings with Buddha who is no longer alive, equals to having faith in something that cannot be proven, which is not atheism. By the same token, it begs the question whether Willie stated his Australian peers cannot appreciate Vietnamese spiritual activities because of their Australian identity or because of their lack of spirituality.

4.5 DATA INTERPRETATION AND IMPLICATIONS

In general, as shown in Figure 2, the findings suggest three factors that have significant impact on VIS's challenges and strategies during their identity formation in South Australia. ***First****,* the lack of autonomy support during adolescence. ***Second***, political tension among the Vietnamese diasporic community. ***Third***, the aspiration toward Whiteness.

[4] In Vietnamese, "*atheist*" translates to "*vô thần*" and it can be interpreted in two ways. The first way is more figurative in nature, meaning not believing in a higher power, supernatural forces or being nonreligious. The second way is more literal, meaning god-less. The participant seemed to be talking about the second interpretation.

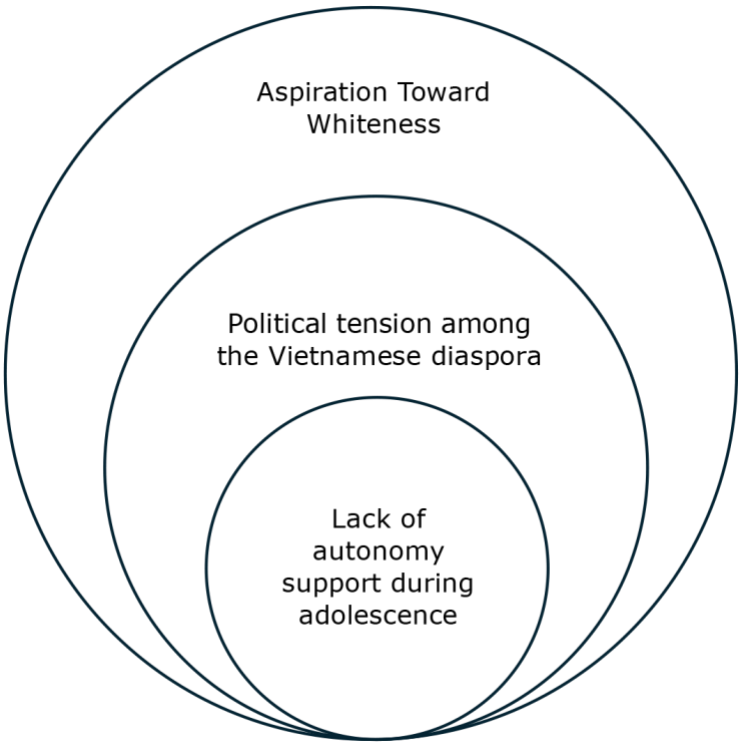

Figure 2. *Three layers of factors contributing to VIS's identity formation challenges*

Aspiration toward Whiteness is present in the identity formation of VIS, through externally imposed stereotypes, tacit knowledge or by self-imposed implicit beliefs. This aspiration manifested itself and influenced the participants in three areas (i) English learning strategies and self-perception of English proficiency, (ii) identity motives conflict, ingroup bias and intergroup bias, and (iii) the struggle to facilitate autonomous belonging. For example, this aspiration can manifest through VIS's preference for Western peers due to their native English accent and perceived superior work ethics, or their avoidance to seek help from Western lecturers due to self-criticism as a non-native speaker. More interestingly, due to Vietnam's history of being colonized by Western countries, this aspiration can also inspire VIS to form negative perception of the Western culture and defensive attitude in interactions with Western peers, such as overgeneralizing the Australian lifestyle as materialistic and unhealthy.

Even though it is undeniable that achieving language proficiency is essential for sociocultural adaptation (Berry et al., 2011), especially when a native-like accent is one type of cultural capital that helps speakers accumulate Whiteness in a White society (Hage, 2000), it is not the deciding factor for the participants of this study.

Based on their interviews, Willie and Jane were the most confident in their English proficiency, demonstrating extended use of English for hobbies outside of academic purposes and defying the foreign-accent stereotype. They both however reported a sense of social reservation for every type of connection in general and confined themselves to a small ingroup of Vietnamese. Meanwhile, Audrey was not the most confident in her English proficiency, yet she reported abundant interpersonal relationships with a more diverse group. It implies that the critical challenge is more complex and nuanced than English proficiency.

The conflict between needing to belong and to feel distinctive plays a bigger role, introducing challenges by altering the participants' perception of their ingroup and outgroup in Australia. This altered perception then causes ingroup bias and the lack of exploration in the identity formation strategy of these VIS. This dilemma over fitting in and standing out resulted from the pressure to follow the aspiration toward Whiteness combining with the of autonomy support VIS received from significant others in their adolescence. The findings suggest a strong link between the quality of autonomy support VIS received from caretakers, teachers, peers during adolescence and the adaptability of their later identity formation strategies in South Australia.

As Hage (2000) observed, the reality of multiculturalism in Australia was driven forward by the political and social struggles of the immigrant communities themselves for optimal citizen rights and participation in society, policy makers and White dominant group did not authorize multiculturalism but rather had to adapt to this new socio-cultural reality. Therefore, it is the most important for VIS to construct their identity in the manner that facilitates this autonomous belonging and create their multiculturalism reality in collaboration with other counterparts while studying in Australia. The Vietnamese diasporic community also serves important role in facilitating this sense of autonomous belonging. However, the participants of this study reported challenges in both areas. Most participants had their need for autonomy frustrated in adolescence. Additionally, they had limited engagement with the Vietnamese diaspora in Australia due to political controversy and conflict.

4.5.1 Aspiration toward Whiteness

4.5.1.1 English learning strategies and self-perception of English proficiency

The culture learning approach contends a salient relationship between language fluency and sociocultural adaptation (Berry et al., 2011) arguing that good proficiency is associated with more engagement with the new culture's members and less

sociocultural maladaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Since the late 1980s, SLA theories have focused on the concept of learners' integrative motivation as a key for successful English second language learning (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998; Gardner, 1985; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Sridhar & Sridhar, 1986). Such a concept was still relevant not too long ago (Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2006). As discussed previously, this concept of integrative motivation inadvertently conforms to the aspiration toward Whiteness and left EFL leaners with what seems like a never-ending journey of becoming a White English speaker.

In recent times, the notion of integrative motivation has been criticized by many scholars (eg., Coetzee-Van Roy, 2006; Cohen, 2005; Doğançay-Aktuna & Kiziltepe, 2005; Lamb, 2004; Norton, 2000). Most noticeably, Norton (2000) argues this notion of integrative motivation in current SLA theories fails to provide the big picture of the matrix between power, identity and language learning. It is a matrix which learners must negotiate their identity through language use and attain more powerful identities to assert their right to speak (Norton, 2019a) instead of accumulating more Whiteness and conforming to the aspiration toward Whiteness during integration (Coetzee-Van Roy, 2006; Norton, 2000). Therefore, current SLA practice is shifting toward empowering learners to exert their own identity in language learning as a key to success (Norton, 2000; Ushioda, 2011).

In Vietnam, native English speakers still enjoy a dominant status as the superior role models. When it comes to learning English, opportunities to engage with them are perceived as a kind of cultural currency (Gillen, 2016). Therefore, learning English remains mostly White-centric and seldom concerns learners' expression of their own identities.

Only two participants, Willie and Jane, reported immersing their personal identities in daily use of English through their hobbies, resulting in an overall higher confidence in their English proficiency. Meanwhile, the other three participants who followed a more exam-oriented learning routine reported several difficulties during their time in Australia.

Such a traditional learning strategy, which is usually White-centric, left Audrey unprepared for the type of contextualized English that she encountered in a multicultural environment; where she interacted with non-dominant groups, even marginalized groups, such as the Aboriginal LGBTQ+ community. Likewise, Ginger found the Australian accent confusing since she had been exposed more to British and American accents, yet she did not entertain the need to change this aspect of most Vietnamese students' English learning. In Freddy's case, the aspiration toward

Whiteness manifested in his preference for working on group projects with native-born students rather than international students of other nationalities, or as Hage (2000) describes "Third World-looking people" (p. 18). He alluded to the later group's confusing accents and unfavorable work ethics to explain such a preference.

When learners have not developed confidence in their proficiency yet, an empowering strategy they could use is refining their relationships with interlocutors to gain more powerful identities which give them the ground to speak (Norton, 2019a). Audrey was the only participant to demonstrate a sophisticated strategy of this nature. Particularly, as a social worker, in her interactions with native-born clients, she maneuvered from being a non-native speaker, a non-dominant agent, to claim her power and responsibility as a social worker, a more agentic interlocutor in this specific context, to motivate herself to speak in an accommodating and fruitful manner.

On the contrary, Freddy could not utilize this strategy and afford more opportunities to practice English. Due to Freddy's insecurity about his English proficiency, he did not utilize the opportunity as a student to ask for clarification or assistance from lecturers in understanding lectures. He worried that doing so would have been "*wasting their time"*. Even though it is common and encouraged for students to ask lecturers for help in learning, Freddy's perceived incompetence stopped him from seizing more opportunities to practice English.

4.5.1.2 Identity motives conflict, ingroup bias and intergroup bias

Even though language learners' active conceptualization and reconceptualization of their identities is recommended by many researchers (e.g., Coetzee-Van You, 2006; Norton, 2019a; Ushioda, 2011), it is not a turmoil-free endeavor. A noticeable challenge learners may face would be a conflict of identity motives resulting from these scenarios, particularly the belonging motive and distinctiveness motive. The compensating strategies to keep these motives satisfied may inadvertently prevent learners from investing in their identity as an EFL speaker.

As various studies have established, with the group context, belonging and distinctiveness motives are the most relevant to analyze due to their independence on each other and their importance for human survival (e.g., Brewer, 2004; Fiske & Fiske, 2010; Ormiston, 2016). The ODT explains this intertwined relationship by suggesting that individuals thrive when they find a middle ground between the two motives; in other words, individuals want to be neither too similar nor too different from other members in their groups (Brewer, 1991). One can achieve such balance

through belonging to a small group that is distinct from other groups (Ormistion, 2016).

In practice, achieving such a point of balance is not always straightforward as the satisfaction of one motive can lead to the frustration of the other (e.g., Brewer, 1991; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). While objective group composition is hard to alter and individuals have different thresholds for identity motive frustration, they can use various strategies to satisfy these motives including altering perception of the differences within the objective group composition, of themselves, of their ingroup and outgroup (e.g., Pickett et al., 2022; Ormiston, 2016).
As Ormiston (2016) observed, these perceptions may not always align with the group's objective composition and individuals usually construct them through three strategies (1) identity differentiation, (2) self-stereotype, and (3) group stereotype. Furthermore, depends on which identity motives that are frustrated (e.g., belonging, distinctive, or both), individuals will prefer one strategy over the other, or use a combination of different strategies at the same time.

For instance, Willie whose distinctiveness and belonging motives appeared to be frustrated simultaneously demonstrated the use of all three strategies. To appease his distinctiveness motive, Willie relied on identity differentiation strategy, using unique terms to describe himself (Markus & Kunda, 1986) such as "*ever since college I have had an unusual motivation to learn English*", even recalling undesirable traits (Leyens et al., 1997) from his school time in Vietnam "*generally an insignificant factor in my class*", "*people told me I was too serious for example*."

At the same time, there is an undertone in these memories that Willie felt out of place with his peers. This frustration of the belonging motive remained to the current time, evident through Willie's most challenging moment in Australia when he did not have anyone to enjoy Brisbane's beach view with. To alleviate this lack of belonging, Willie used the self-stereotype strategy, describing his way of thinking as "*a little bit like an elder*" because he was raised by his grandparents. This stereotype made him feel similar to his caregivers, the ingroup, and distinguished himself from other children, the outgroup.

After moving to Australia, a group composition that is more complex, Willie turned to group stereotype, in which ingroups are perceived as stereotypically similar and outgroups are perceived as stereotypically dissimilar. Like self-stereotype, group stereotype also serves in maximizing intragroup similarity thus satisfying the belonging motive and maximizing intergroup distinctiveness thus satisfying the distinctiveness motive (Ormiston, 2016).

The aspiration toward Whiteness does not only influence how Vietnamese approach learning English, but it also penetrates into their sociocultural life, sometimes leading to more problematic stereotypes about Westerners than just the White native English speaker stereotype. Particularly, when it comes to sexual politics, foreigner men, especially white men, are problematically stereotyped as a superior source of wealth and opportunities than Vietnamese men for Vietnamese women (e.g., Gillen, 2016; Hoang, 2015).

A similar connotation could have led Willie to stereotype the lifestyle of his outgroup in Australia, i.e., native-born peers, as too materialistic and not spiritual enough for Vietnamese cultural tradition. Throughout the interview, he often criticized their bar-going activity, alluding to this activity as the difference that drove him away from them. There seems to be a misalignment between Willie's perceived differences and objective differences among the large group composition since alcohol consumption is undeniably a part of the Vietnamese culture and identity as well, especially in association with masculinity (e.g., Gillen, 2016; Lincoln, 2016; Parker, 2010) and bar-going is also a common pastime for young Vietnamese adults (Gillen, 2016).

To explain his differences from Australian peers, Willie also recalled a discussion about the creation of the universe with an Australian friend who believes in God and a higher power, with which Willie disagreed and concluded how atheism is a prominent theme in Vietnamese culture. As previously discussed, Vietnamese culture is not necessarily atheist as Willie perceived. Furthermore, his discussion with the Australian friend also shows Willie's Australian peers are not necessarily less spiritual than Vietnamese as per his perception. However, to satisfy his belonging and distinctiveness motives, Willie altered his perception of group composition and inadvertently stopped himself from exploring relationships with members of the outgroup.

Like Willie, Jane also showed signs of her belonging and distinctiveness motives being frustrated. She also used identity differentiation strategy when talking about her determination to study psychology against all odds, describing it as being "*stubborn.*" Both Jane and Willie also claimed to be socially reserved but not falling under the dichotomous system of extroversion and introversion ("*I'm more like an everywhere-vert*[5]*"* – Willie; "*Because I'm such a closed-off person, I don't think I can even call it introversion now because it may not be correct*" – Jane).

[5] The participant was making a play on words regarding "extrovert" and "introvert", implying that he does not belong to either category, he is not exclusively directing energy outward or inward, it goes everywhere.

Once again, there is also an undertone in Jane's expression of distinctiveness that she felt like the odd one out or she felt unsupported. However, she differed from Willie in that she did not use group stereotype strategy on outgroup members to satisfy both belonging and distinctiveness motives; she directed it at subgroups within the Vietnamese ingroup instead. Jane said she was lucky to have a group of Vietnamese classmates whose personalities and work ethics match hers, unlike most Vietnamese students Jane has observed during her bachelor's degree in Vietnam and in South Australia, who were prone to complacency and passive learning. It resulted in her generalization "*To be frank I don't have good impressions of most Vietnamese students*" and the observation that her subgroup is an exception. It was with this subgroup that Jane found her belonging and distinctiveness.

Freddy was another case whose both motives were frustrated. In congruent to Van Bavel and colleagues' (2012) findings that individuals with a chronic need to belong are more sensitive to social cues, Freddy was hyper-alert for his Australian peers' smallest reactions such as a smile when he spoke English. Such hyper-awareness combined with his perceived incompetent English proficiency caused Freddy to "*autosuggest*" racism upon seeing those gestures. In the context of aspiration toward Whiteness, Freddy may have felt like he failed to have his cultural capital for national belonging legitimized.

Due to these instances Freddy seemed to think lowly of his social-worthiness, for example, he mentioned feeling unhappy when none of the Vietnamese students paid attention when he shared studying tips derived from his initial struggle in Australia. In collectivist nations like Vietnam, individuals usually construct their distinctiveness from social position with others in this manner, i.e., through friendships, roles and social status (Vignoles, 2011). Furthermore, in terms of narrative identity, a theme of redemption was starting to emerge in Freddy's autobiographical narrative, where he was trying to improve the situation for the wave of VIS arriving after him, albeit it may have not been successful to the extent that Freddy would have preferred.

This perceived lack of social-worthiness has a deeper root than the encounters happening to Freddy in Australia. From the days of his bachelor's degree, Freddy struggled to distinguish himself from peers, "*I tried to study days and nights, yet my grades stopped at medium tier, they were not outstanding like other classmates' grades.*" More importantly, a recent study by Pardede and Kovač (2023) found that social-worthiness has a stronger impact on individuals' sense of belonging compared to social-emotion support. It explains Freddy's lack of satisfaction with his Vietnamese friends' circle in South Australia. Despite their support for one another, he was left wanting for something more meaningful and long-lasting. From a different

angle, this emotional distance also altered Freddy's perception of the difference between himself and his own ingroup, making it stronger thus satisfying his distinctiveness motive (Ormiston, 2016).

The older participants, Ginger and Audrey, did not report significant belonging motive frustration in Australia. One possible explanation would be their marital status, both Ginger and Audrey are married and with children, they moved to Australia with their nuclear families. Living with a spouse and children may provide a better support system for their need of belonging. However, they still faced instances of opposing identity motives satisfaction resulting from their identity formation in Australia.

Ginger avoided discussions about social events in Australia, saying she did not need more friends, which could be a way for her to separate from others to appease her need for distinctiveness (Vignoles, 2011). This need for distinctiveness solidified in the manner Ginger defined how she understands Vietnamese culture. She defined that Vietnamese culture "*came from the family*" of each person, invoking a degree of individuation which is a reasonable definition, yet some intersections on a collective level are still expected. When inquired about her own family's traditions that gave meaning to her personal definition of the Vietnamese culture, Ginger became frustrated and defensive, "*Your thesis wants to get to the bottom of it, then you must do it, but if you ask everyone why they have to do it* [practice Vietnamese cultural traditions], *it's a question that forces them to rack their brains, I think it's difficult to answer, even myself, an educated person, it's hard to explain why I have to do so, because my parents do it so I do it*."

More interestingly, subconsciously, she seemed to associate the meanings behind such traditions with obligation alluding to her wish to separate from them, "*people are doing them because it's their responsibility*", "*to maintain the harmony, cohesion, or luck within the family*." Ginger's decentralization of the Vietnamese cultural identity down to the nuclear family level increased her perception of the differences between the subgroups of her Vietnamese ingroup, therefore satisfying her need for distinctiveness (Ormiston, 2016). Furthermore, upon being pressed for a less deflective answer, Ginger seemed to have felt like the researcher was testing if she knew the '*correct*' answer, rather than gauging her perception which does not fall under the dichotomy of being right or wrong. Therefore, she separated herself from the common "*everyone*", describing herself as an "*educated person*", thus enhancing her self-esteem and distinctiveness motives. On top of it, the stereotype about white people's superiority also led her to keep a distance from Australian peers.

Audrey was the only participant not to show any significant belonging or distinctiveness motives frustration. However, she acknowledged the possible friction and political tension with some members of the Vietnamese community arising from the identity she constructed during her integration into Australia. Particularly, discussing her use of an English name to accommodate native speaker clients better, Audrey recognized that "*it is pretty sensitive*" because "*if we trace back historical factors we used to be colonized by Western nations*" therefore other Vietnamese may find it "*too White dominant*", possibly threatening her belonging to the Vietnamese community. It is likely the most problematic remnant of the aspiration toward Whiteness that causes tension for the VIS's satisfaction of the belonging motive, especially when balancing between belonging to their heritage culture and the receiving culture.

4.5.1.3 The struggle to facilitate autonomous belonging

As Hage (2000) argued, autonomous belonging may find itself at odds with the White nationalists' governmental belonging. This autonomous belonging can also be seen in Norton's (2019a) analysis of EFL learners' strategy to reposition their relationships and negotiate more right to speak. During the time of Hage's (2000) work, he observed the market for national capital, resources for individuals to practice their autonomous national belonging, has broadened leading to more mobility for the migrant community to find their own standing in the nation. This sphere has arguably expanded even more now. However, it still requires active participation from individuals in political and socio-cultural areas to utilize this openness. In other words, it takes personal agency and autonomy to cultivate this national sense of belonging. At the same time, to construct adaptive identities, individuals must also rely on agency and autonomy (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2011). For those reasons, agency and autonomy are important capital for international students to be the governor of their belonging in a multiculturalism context. However, due to negative self-perception about English proficiency and identity motives conflict, most participants were passive in accumulating more national capital.

Due to their identity motives conflict, most VIS in this study demonstrated the tendency to react in their identity formation and participation, or lack thereof, in their autonomous belonging. In the context of studying abroad, participation in autonomous belonging happens through contributing feedback and joining in policy making process related to academic matters. Freddy and Ginger did not utilize channels dedicated to students' voice to address their concerns such as difficulties understanding lectures or wanting a more lenient policy for international students with the use of Artificial Intelligence for academic purposes. A possible explanation

for it would be their perceived lack of social-worthiness. In terms of socializing, Freddy, Ginger and Willie foreclosed any ideas of exploration with members outside of the Vietnamese ingroup due to stereotypes about native-born peers resulting from the aspirations toward Whiteness and their own identity motives conflict.

On the other hand, Jane and Audrey were able to participate more actively and autonomously in governing their own belonging. Jane was active and open in her communication with lecturers about academic struggles. Both participants were flexible in using English names while conversing with native-born interlocutors to accommodate their difficulties with saying Vietnamese names.

It is important to stress that the study is not undermining the salience for native speakers to make effort in pronouncing the correct names of international students, immigrants, migrants, etc., nor suggesting these groups must have English names to adjust well. Rather, the study is drawing attention to the adaptive and dynamic quality of these participants' strategy. In terms of identity formation, the justification and process through which people identify with something is of greater significance than the face value of such content used as devices for identity expression (Vignoles et al., 2011). Furthermore, similar reconceptualization strategies have been used effectively by individuals growing up in multicultural context as well (Huynh et al., 2011).

Jane and Audrey did not perceive using English names as a threat to their personal identity. In fact, it was empowering for them, as discussed previously. It takes innate power and agency to position themselves in the accommodating role towards conventionally perceived dominant speakers. There are two key takeaways from this strategy for success in intercultural interactions (Ahrndt, 2020). First, nobody is in a completely dominating or entirely passive position. Second, the dominating group may refrain from initiating conversations due to concerns about breaking political correctness norms, appearing insensitive or racist. Therefore, the lack of conversation starters from this group may not always be acts of social exclusion or othering.

From a different angle, in this situation, with or without an English name, non-White individuals have more leverage and power to create room for conversations, given that they have enough autonomy to overlook the White superiority stereotype. In fact, unfriendly and racist actions can sometimes come from a place of disempowerment, insecurities and unaddressed loss (Hage, 2000, p. 69) yet this empowered position seems to elude most international students. Understanding these nuances, Jane and Audrey were able to negotiate more powerful identities to speak and do so in a collaborative manner.

Even though it is important to stop idealizing White superiority, it is equally important to stress that not every white person identifies with the aspiration toward Whiteness (Hage, 2000). When the world is deeply polarized and radical movements are on the rise, some young members of traditionally privileged groups such as white men can feel vilified and punished for crimes they did not commit, leaving them vulnerable to being exploited by problematic political agendas (e.g., Campbell & Manning, 2018; McConnell, 2016; Romano, 2020; Young & Sullivan, 2016).Therefore, strategies of collaborative and accommodative nature of Audrey and Jane's strategy are not only empowering for international students but also amicable towards their native-born peers. The worry about polarization was reflected in Jane's reasoning for choosing to study in Australia: "*In terms of socio-political matters, I find Australia is less severe and safer, American society has too many problems for me*", "*It's about politics, they separate into two parties too distinctively, and those conflicts are, like, too obvious to overlook or too obvious not to register their existence*" and "*I find their way, the way Americans talk about it a little bit too extreme, and it affects their behaviors greatly"*.

Additionally, to facilitate autonomous belonging in such a collaborative manner, it is also essential to decrease intergroup bias between acculturating groups and their native counterparts in the receiving culture. Longitudinal research has shown positive intergroup contact emphasizing cooperative interaction and shared goals or overlapping identities can help reduce intergroup bias (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2017). In the academic context, cooperative interaction and shared goals can be facilitated through group projects. For instance, on top of liking each other as friends, being able to collaborate well on group projects with her Vietnamese friends was crucial to Jane's level of social satisfaction despite her initial bad impression of Vietnamese students. However, most participants reported not having a lot of group projects experiences during their time studying in South Australia.

Furthermore, direct engagement with outgroup members is not the only way to reduce intergroup bias. Indirect contact with outgroup members through other ingroup members can also help, even if such contact is limited to simply knowing about a positive relationship between an ingroup member and an outgroup member (Dovidio et al., 2017). However, this area introduces another layer of challenge for VIS, which is the tension among their ingroup, from the closest members such as parents and peers to the extended Vietnamese diaspora in Australia.

4.5.2 The lack of autonomy support during adolescence

Both attachment theory and ego identity development theories emphasize the link between an individual's quality of relationships with significant others during adolescence and their identity formation in young adulthood (Pittman et al., 2011). In this sense, relationships with significant others start primarily with caregivers and gradually extend to neighbors, teachers and peers. Longitudinal research has found autonomy support in these relationships to be the most important for adolescents' identity formation (e.g., Branje et al., 2021).

Furthermore, out of all significant others, autonomy support by parents is the most salient for two reasons. *First*, a secure relationship with caregivers usually lead to positive relationships with other significant others such as peers and teachers (e.g, Lucas-Thompson & Clarke-Steward, 2007; Szewczyk-Sokolowski et al., 2005). *Second*, receiving autonomy support can facilitate adolescents' sense of belonging through recognizing their differences (Green & Werner, 1996) thus affirming their social-worthiness (Pardede & Kovač, 2023) and allow them to develop friendships with peers without compromising close bonds with parental figures (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005). In other words, receiving autonomy support can incline adolescents to a disposition of minimal frustration of belonging and distinctiveness motives later in life.

This disposition lays the groundwork for adolescents to develop skills such as social perspective taking which is the ability perceive people or situations through the viewpoint of another person (Bowlby 1982, as cited in Pittman et al., 2011). As discussed in the previous section, social perspective taking skill is necessary in navigating the tight space between overcoming the aspiration toward Whiteness and avoiding polarizing social conflicts.

All participants of this study appeared to have had their need for autonomy support frustrated at some point during their adolescence. The degree of autonomy frustration for each participant coincided with their degree of identity motives conflict and level of autonomy in their identity formation strategies in South Australia. It shows autonomy support during adolescence has a strong impact on the participants' identity development, especially in comparison to other factors such as perceived English proficiency and support received while in South Australia.

Despite his secure identity as an EFL speaker, Willie separated the most from outgroup members and insisted on interacting with other Vietnamese instead. It appeared to be a compensation for his parents' absence from his childhood. Willie grew up with his grandparents. Even with his parents still in his life, not having them around during childhood left "*something like a hole inside*" of Willie which he could

not "*comprehend or know how to fill up*". Willie's upbringing was also strict, discipline was emphasized, including corporal punishment. He had early curfew and little permission to partake in pastimes with peers. It led his friends in high school to think that he was too serious. Willie did not think any less of his parents and grandparents, yet he still observed "*experience in childhood is the source of other problems later in life*" alluding to "*the lack of affection or something else*" that made his development "*not really normal*". This internal conflict may be at the center of Willie's chronic need for both belonging and distinctiveness.

Freddy had the most autonomy frustration when he quit being a doctor to pursue a different profession. In high school, Freddy did not receive counselling on different career pathways, "*like a straight line if you are in Biology specialized class then you go to medical school*". To this date, career counselling in Vietnam tertiary education needs a lot of improvement (e.g., Giang et al., 2020; Thi, 2017; Huynh et al., 2021). Despite his struggle, Freddy's family did not approve his decision to change majors, especially his father. Staying in medical school out of obligation to his parents not only infringed Freddy's need for autonomy but also his need for competence when he failed to achieve high results effortlessly like others. He recalled a sense of fragmented identity, "*I wanted to live multiple lives, one for my father and one for myself, but I only have one, so I chose to live for myself"*.

Jane also shared a similar struggle as Freddy when pursuing a bachelor's degree in psychology. From parents to friends, she usually received criticism about her choice, "*So exactly what are you studying? Is it easy to get a job? Can you make a living out of it?"* Jane had to overcome self-doubt and defend her choice regularly, resulting in her self-reliant disposition and a general mistrust towards others. From her observation, Vietnamese teachers tend to invest in the "*benefit*" students can bring to them more than in "*the genuine thoughts and feelings*" of students. A similar belief likely informed Freddy's lack of interaction with lecturers in Australia as well. Even though Jane is close to her parents, she receives high expectations and a lot of criticism from them about her professional achievements. To the present time, Jane still struggles with self-doubt and low self-esteem because of these demands.

The reverence and unconditional compliance these VIS show to authoritative figures such as parents and teachers are heavily emphasized by Confucianism and deeply embedded in Vietnam public education for the sake of social cohesion (e.g., Duy, 2021; Khoi Nguon, 2023; Lan, 2022; Underwood, 2020). As Underwood (2020) analyzed, such values are instilled in Vietnamese citizens through moral education

and a banking model of education[6] which uses a teacher-centered approach. This model of education can predispose adolescents to refrain from exploration and individuation in fear of appearing rebellious against authoritative figures, mirrored in Ginger's answer "*Why don't you go ask the ancestors?"* when she deflected the agency to define Vietnamese cultural identity onto figures higher in status than her. Interestingly, Ginger used to work as a public-school teacher in Vietnam before studying in Australia.

Notwithstanding the harmonious values and communal solidarity it brings, overemphasizing social cohesion may inadvertently frustrate adolescents' psychological well-being and lead to long-term problems including emotional distance from parents (Truong & Underwood, 2023), low levels of trust towards ingroup members such as friends and teachers (Khoi Nguon, 2023) and a sense of forgotten identities (Underwood, 2020).

Audrey was the only participant to receive high quality of autonomy support from parents. Like Freddy and Jane, Audrey's significant others in her adolescence did not understand her passion for working with non-governmental organizations, even thinking it was not a real career. However, her family was "*pretty democratic*[7]" so even when they did not understand it, she was allowed to pursue her passion. Audrey also received encouragement and advice from colleagues to further her education in Australia.

Most interesting of all, even though her father passed away when she was only three, his wish for her to "*live freely, do whatever you want*" embedded in the name he chose for her stays with Audrey to the current time. This intangible gift to "*become who you choose to be*" is at the center of Audrey's flexibility and openness in her identity formation in Australia. In other words, while studying abroad, Audrey's stable sense of identity served as an anchor on which she pivoted to resolve social challenges in a collaborative and adaptive manner. This finding is in alignment with Erikson's (1968) theory that a secure sense of identity is necessary for building intimate relationships with others thanks to which individuals can withstand the initial and temporary identity threats that intimacy entails.

4.5.3 Political tension among the Vietnamese diaspora

[6] For details about the banking model of education, see Freire (1997, 1970).

[7] This is a casual and humorous way that Vietnamese often use to describe an open and freedom-respecting parenting style.

In this section, the Vietnamese diaspora in Australia refers to the broad definition used by Baldassar and Ben-Moshe's (2017) study including Vietnam War immigrants, Australian-born Vietnamese, and Vietnamese international students or skilled migrants arriving in recent times. For new Vietnamese arrivals, the other members in this diaspora who have had a longer settlement in Australia are crucial in facilitating the former group's autonomous belonging for two reasons. *First*, settled members of the diaspora are a social safety net that its new arriving members can rely on for successful integration (Hage, 2000). *Second*, due to their extended time living in Australia, these veteran members can help tremendously in mitigating new arrivals' perceived differences between Vietnamese ingroup and outgroup by providing positive indirect contacts with outgroup members (Dovidio et al., 2017).

However, there is multilayer tension among all three subgroups of the Vietnamese diaspora due to social and political reasons that leaves new arriving VIS vulnerable to isolation due to the lack of community support (Baldassar & Ben-Moshe, 2017). In particular, the older generation perceive new arrivals to be in alignment with the Vietnamese government and lacking gratitude for the foundation they have built for the Vietnamese Australian community. In extreme cases, senior members of the diaspora operating under a victim identity can even perceive new arrivals to be responsible for their past of being exiled from Vietnam (Baldassar & Ben-Moshe, 2017; Leary et al., 2006). Furthermore, the Australian-born Vietnamese being closer in age to VIS and less occupied by political conflict are generally not perceived as Vietnamese ingroup members by most participants of this study; despite the sense of Vietnamese identity and sentimental connection to Vietnam still being relatively strong for most of the Australian-born Vietnamese (Baldassar & Ben-Moshe, 2017).

More importantly, tension from the Vietnamese Australian community is not the only obstacle VIS face, they also face pressure from the Vietnamese community back home. From the perspective of VIS, there seems to be a taboo around engaging and interacting with Vietnam War immigrants and their descendants. Discussing this feeling of taboo, Audrey alluded to the fear for personal and family's safety, "*for example, right now you are seeing it happening a lot in Vietnam*[8]*, right? People are subjected to some sort of cyber violence, right? There, because of different political views, or just because of a picture of the three-stripes flag, it would cause people to feel troubled in… even when they themselves don't mind it, for instances, when you are a singer performing, or when you attend an event or a fair market, it's such a*

[8] The participant was referring to the wave of backlash and boycott many Vietnamese celebrities faced around September 2024 in relation to the South Vietnamese Flag. Earlier in 2023, an Australian-born Vietnamese celebrity also faced a similar wave of backlash. For more details, see Maung (2024), Nguyen (2023), etc.

normal thing when you live overseas, different religious and political views and all that, we can't just demand them to take it [the flag] *down as a requirement for our attendance if not then we won't participate, right?*"

Therefore, at times VIS actively maintain a distance from the Vietnamese diasporic community and avoid any discussion about politics for self-preservation as well. As Jane observed "*obviously most Vietnamese don't care a lot about politics, that's because in Vietnam we don't have to care too much about politics*". In fact, discussion about politics is not only unappealing but also stigmatized among Vietnamese (Pham & Kaleja, 2021). This is evident through the way Audrey apologetically retracted the discussion about politics after bringing it up when sharing about the Australian-born Vietnamese she has worked with, "*actually, they also have similar senses as their parents, as in their political views, their perception about Vietnam, oh well I shouldn't talk about this, it's a little…"* and only continued after receiving reassurance, "*if it's important to you then I'll continue, but if it's irrelevant please let me know"*. Audrey is well-versed in politics and traversing turbulent conversations due to her experience as a social worker. The same knowledge, however, cannot be expected from an average VIS. It is unsurprising they would avoid interactions such as these altogether. This reservation and avoidance, albeit justifiable and reasonable, can appear as rejection to some members of the Vietnam War immigrant community, broadening the rift between these two subgroups of the Vietnamese diaspora.

Furthermore, the explicit focus and enforcement of the Vietnamese national identity in public education did not prepare VIS well for this political tension among the Vietnamese diaspora either. Along with the responsibility to maintain social cohesion instilled in VIS through moral education, there is a connotation of the need to resist foreign corruption as well (e.g., Duy, 2021; Lan, 2022). Repeatedly being exposed to negative information about an outgroup (Dovidio et al., 2017) and affirmation about one's ingroup (Ehrlich & Gramzow, 2015) can lead individuals to develop implicit intergroup bias that is subconscious and difficult to mitigate through strategic control. More importantly, it could make a person with a chronic need for both belonging and distinctiveness be prone to national ingroup favoritism (Vignoles & Moncaster, 2007). For instance, Willie's emphasis on the importance of his own Vietnamese nationality led to his bias against Australian-born Vietnamese, excluding them from his Vietnamese ingroup, even though this subgroup retains a strong sense of Vietnamese identity including high competence in Vietnamese language use.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of findings

Rather than English proficiency, the conflict between satisfying two identity motives, the belonging motive and the distinctiveness motive, is the most central and deep-rooted challenge for VIS's identity formation of this study. Individuals can achieve optimal balance between the satisfaction of these two identity motives by establishing a sense of belonging to a small group and a sense of distinctiveness from the composition of a larger group (Brewer, 1991). However, virtually all participants reported estrangement from the ingroup, from the closest members in their life such as parents and Vietnamese-born peers in Australia to the outer members in the Vietnamese diaspora.

The inner ingroup tension is caused by the lack of support from prominent figures for the VIS's psychological needs in adolescence, especially the need for belonging and autonomy. An optimal sense of belonging is established when individuals receive acceptance of their differences and accommodation for their autonomy so that they feel a sense of social-worthiness and can individuate from others without becoming defensive (Green & Werner, 1996; Pardede & Kovač, 2023; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005). In the family sphere, most participants suffered from parental absence, restrictive and highly critical upbringing, lack of support for or objection against career choice. It is likely a leftover effect from Vietnam's 1981 reform education policy thereby undermining the values of traditional humanities professions (Wright, 2020). In education settings, participants faced loneliness and neglect for not conforming to peer pressure and teachers' expectations. This period of adolescence predisposed the participants to a defensive identity formation strategy and insecure sense of belonging to the ingroup when they move to Australia.

Moving to Australia adds the aspiration to Whiteness as an overarching layer to the equation of identity challenges for VIS. This aspiration works to exacerbate the VIS's frustration of the belonging motive and distinctiveness motive. In Australia, optimal sense of belonging for VIS can be established through active engagement with a larger ingroup such as universities and the Vietnamese diaspora to govern their reality as well as bypassing the aspiration to Whiteness to be a self-determined member of Australian multiculturalism. However, either knowingly or unknowingly, most VIS in this study conformed to this aspiration and developed intergroup bias such as stereotyping White peers and non-White peers or perceiving racism due to insecurities about English accent. This intergroup bias led to reactive and foreclosing

strategies, difficulty in taking initiative, confining themselves socially to only Vietnamese students and avoiding exploration with other peers. More importantly, residual political conflict from the Vietnam War also intensified the VIS's risk of isolation from the larger community of Vietnamese in Australia.

Participants reported the use of strategies to mitigate challenges in three main areas including English learning, academic adjustment to Australian learning culture, and social exploration of Australian culture. In terms of English learning, the most effective strategy was embedding personal identities such as hobbies in learning. Academic adjustment strategies included metacognition planning such as expectation and time management as well as open and proactive communication with lecturers. Finally, participants explored Australian culture through work experience, participating in social gatherings and events, such as religious community events. All male participants reported meaningful interactions with outgroup members through religious discussion as a medium. It is promising for future research to explore the relationship between religion and Vietnamese young men in contemporary times. Social media also played an important role in mitigating perceived differences between the two cultures, for instance, even though they did not have many interactions with the Australian-born Vietnamese, thanks to social media participants were able to paint an overall picture of this subgroup.

Overall, the effectiveness of their strategies was decided by two factors, the degree of autonomy VIS exercised and the level of identity motive frustration they experienced in Australia. Optimal effectiveness was achieved when the VIS demonstrated both a high level of autonomy and a low level of identity motive frustration, the latter of which depends greatly on the relationships established with significant others during adolescence. The findings suggest personal identity can serve as an anchor to stabilize and help VIS engage with a foreign environment in an adaptive manner. More importantly, the findings accentuate the role of social institutions in developing a stable sense of personal identity. Therefore, VIS's identity formation needs to be investigated on a wider scale that can address the interconnectedness of all three levels of identity.

5.2 Recommendations

Whether studying abroad is in their plan or not, every Vietnamese student can benefit from incorporating more personal interest or pop culture into their English learning routine. In general, interest is at the heart of academic success (Harackiewicz et al., 2016), not only in English learning. In terms of English learning, playful topics such as pop culture can help generate motivation (Murray, 2008). More importantly,

learning a language through pop culture can facilitate a sense of belonging to the target community (Murray, 2011); interest can counter exhaustion from prolonged learning and replenish motivation (Reeve, 2018; Thoman et al., 2011). Therefore, utilizing personal interest in English learning is especially relevant for international students who must usually divide their time for various commitments.

Local students can help VIS's integration by taking the initiative to create accommodation in conversations. VIS in Taiwan reported to be benefiting from efforts to create accommodation in conversations or show interest in the Vietnamese culture, even if they were just random, spontaneous gestures (Nguyen, 2021). The quality, more than quantity, of positive interactions with outgroup members, especially individuals perceived to be typical representatives of the outgroup, is salient in decreasing intergroup bias (Dovidio et al., 2017). Group projects, collaborative tasks and paired discussions during lectures, especially when pairs are decided randomly, can also facilitate accommodation for VIS. However, it is an important note for VIS that these accommodation strategies can only yield optimal results when they are willing to meet other students in the middle.

Finally, there seems to be a sense of fragmentation and collective trauma around the Vietnamese collective identity. Interdisciplinary studies are needed to investigate the issues more holistically. For example, the challenges for identity development of VIS stemming from colonization aftermath or political conflicts or intergenerational conflicts (e.g., parent-child, teacher-student) could be addressed under the integrated framework including social identity approach, the construct of collective suffering with the aim toward intergroup forgiveness (Dinnick & Noor, 2019) and insights from studies on trauma and adult English language learners (e.g., Bhattacharyya et al., 2020; Johnson, 2018). Most of the studies on trauma and English language learning have only focused on newly arriving refugees, and it is rightfully so given the life-altering nature of their trauma. While the VIS cohort does not suffer trauma to such a severe degree, many studies found that trauma can be shared among the collective beyond geographical boundaries and generations (e.g, Lickel et al., 2006; Noor et al., 2008; Wohl & Branscombe, 2008; Wohl & van Bavel, 2011). For the foreseeable future, VIS will benefit from more customizable vocational counseling services and parenting style centered around coaching and negotiation.

5.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

First, the study only focuses on identity formation at the personal level even though in practice identity formation happens in an interwoven manner among all three levels of personal, relational and collective. There were aspects of the VIS's perceptions

that the researcher could not explore due to the limited scope of the study, such as ideologies and beliefs, especially in relation to politics, that participants internalized from the public education system in Vietnam or their families, unless participants initiated the topics themselves, which again demonstrates the interconnectedness of all three levels.

Second, the study was conducted in a limited time frame with a small sample size consisting of only postgraduate students whose opinions and habits may not be representative of undergraduate students. Furthermore, identity formation is a complex process that needs to be observed and investigated in an extended period.

Third, students who pursue higher education abroad are generally high achievers and parents usually have high expectations for them, therefore their thresholds of distinctiveness identity motive and autonomy frustration cannot be generalized to every Vietnamese student.

Finally, the investigation is limited to only the perception of the students in Australia, without inputs from other significant socializing agents of this cohort such as parents, local peers, lecturers and other members of the Vietnamese diasporic community.

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APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

A. INTRODUCTION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND INFORMED CONSENT

1. Self-introducing and outlining the aim of the interview and research questions

Hello, my name is Quy, I am a student researcher of the Master in TESOL program in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at Flinders University. Thank you for coming and agreeing to participate in this interview session for the research project on *Vietnamese International Students' Identity Formation During Integration into Australia: Perceived Challenges and Strategies.* I would like to collect one hard copy of the signed Consent Form, you can keep the other copy and the Information Sheet for future reference. Before we begin, I am going to give you a brief review of the research project and a walk-through of the interview protocol. Please do not hesitate to voice any question you may have right away.

As we have discussed during the recruitment stage and as provided in the Information Sheet, you are invited to participate in this research project based on the following criteria: (1) Being at least 18 years of age; (2) Holding a Vietnamese citizenship; (3) Coming from a non-native English-speaking background; (4) Currently enrolled as a postgraduate student under a valid international student visa at Flinders University in South Australia; (5) You are a commencing student and have successfully completed at least 1 first year of studies at Flingers University; (6) Having lived in Adelaide, South Astralia for at least 1 year; (7) Having provided written consent on voluntary participation after being informed of the details of this research project and having spent time considering and discussing participating with loved ones and close associations.

This project focuses on the Vietnamese international postgraduate students' (VIS) identity formation process during their time studying at Flinders University, particularly the unique challenges and strategies of each participant. A person's identity is how they answer the question: "Who are you?", how they relate to the community around them and how they give meaning to their own existence. As you can imagine, the most common and effective way we express ourselves is through the use of language. Therefore, when people have to speak in a language that is not their native, their identity expression may feel frustrating. Overcoming such frustration is one way we can engage in identity formation. Even though we all have identity, we do not construct them in the same way or at the same pace. A person's motivation and how they practice personal agency have a great impact in their identity formation process. **This research seeks answer to the main research questions of:**

RQ1. What challenges do VIS perceive in their identity formation during integration into Australia?

RQ2. What strategies do VIS use to counter identity formation challenges perceived during integration into Australia?

RQ3. How autonomous is the motivation for identity formation of the VIS and to what extent do they practice personal agency in their identity formation?

2. Walk-through of Interview Protocol

To answer the research questions, you will be asked to provide your views on three main topics: (1) Your motivation to pursue higher education in Australia, the decision-making and preparation process before arrival; (2) Social challenges and successes you have experienced during your study at Flinders Univeristy as well as in your daily life; and (3) Strategies you have used to cupe with these challenges and any recommendations you may have to improve your and other students' experiences.

The interview will be audio recorded and recording only starts when you are ready. You can ask me to pause recording at any time. During the interview, you may be prompted to recall past experiences where you may have felt like you were subjected to discrimination or unfair treatments. I understand that it can be uncomfortable and upseting for you. However, please know that your authentic experiences and opinions will contribute a lot to the success of the research project. The data collected will be kept confidential, and presented anonymously with pseudonyms in the final report. You will be able to proof-read the final transcript before we use it in the final report as well. Therefore, I hope you can feel safe and supported to be honest to the extent you are comfortable with.

Nonetheless, you can always refuse to answer any questions and I will change to a different question. I will remind you of this before asking any questions that may trigger negative feelings. Most important of all, you can stop the interview unconditionally at any time if you are not comfortable with continuing. You can also withdraw from the research project at any time unconditionally. If you wish to do so, all you need to do is to inform me of your decision and we will arrange to have the data collected destroyed safely to ensure your confidentiality.

Is there any questions or clarification you need me to answer before we begin?

B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Stages (Narration Stages)	Main Questions	Sub-interview questions/prompts	Relevance of each interview questions/sub-questions for the specific
PART 1 **INTRODUCTION: PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND** *(Before departure for Australia – purposes, motivation)*	**QUESTION 1:** Why do you decide to come to Flinders University to pursue your postgraduate degree South Australia?	**PROMPTS:** ● When did you think about studying in South Australia? How long did you plan for studying here? ● What are the benefits of studying in South Australia for you? ● How would you describe your previous study experiences with secondary education (or tertiary education) in Vietnam? ● Why did you choose South Australia? Why not other states and other countries? ● Why did you choose Flinders University? ● Why did you choose your current major for your postgraduate degree? ● Did you make the decision on your own? Were there any external influences in making this decision? ● What was the future you envision before arriving in Australia? ● What did you do (e.g., your English language proficiency, your academic preparation, etc.) to prepare before arriving in Australia?	- Briefly gauge participants' identity status. Establishing a brief overview of how autonomous their exploration and commitments are. What are the values, motives, and beliefs upon which they are functioning. - Identifying contributing factors such as parenting style, peer relationships, previous experiences, and preconceptions about education in Vietnam.

PART 2 **MAIN OPEN-ENDED QUESTION** *(During integration into Australia – conflicts, challenges)*	**QUESTION 2:** How close are you now to your envisioned future?	**PROMPTS:** ● How are you feeling now after living in South Australia for a year now? ● How has your studying been going over the past year now? ● How has your social life been over the past year now? ● To what extent have your preparations before departure helped you? Were they enough? Why/Why not ● What if someone comes to you now for advice on whether they should study in Adelaide, how would you tell them? ● Can you share with me at least one memorable moment where you felt the most rewarding and fulfilling since your arrival? It could be anything from studying at university, to social experiences outside of classroom. What do you think are the factors leading to such rewarding moments? ● Can you share with me one moment where you felt the most challenging and difficult since your arrival? How have you overcome this challenge? How helpful are your friends, university staff, local community here in Australia, even family back home to help you address your own challenges? ● How effective is Flinders University in helping you overcome your challenges, both in learning and outside of classroom experiences? Who/what services did you find effective/ineffective?	- Depicting the perceived challenges and adopted strategies to overcome challenges of each participant after arriving in Australia. - Depicting the identity development style of each participant through their stories of how they overcome social challenges and conflicts. Was there any theme of integrating? Was there any theme of separation and maladaptive behaviors? How autonomous they are in resolving identity conflicts? Which are the support systems that they relied on? How effective were they?

PART 3 **CONCLUSION** *(Future plan and lessons learned – overcoming challenges, redemption)*	**QUESTION 3:** If you could change anything, be it in the past, right now, or in the future, what would you have done differently? Is there any advice you want to give to future students planning to study in Australia?	**PROMPTS:** ● Were there any factors from your upbringing that may have affected your academic and social life here at Flinders University (relationships with parents, relationships with peers, relationships with Vietnamese teachers)? To what extent are they contributing to your challenges or helping you overcome challenges? ● If you could go back in time, what would you have done differently regarding your decision and plan to study in Adelaide, South Australia to achieve better results? ● What is your current plan after studying? How confident are you in achieving this plan? What are you going to do to achieve such plan? Is there any support you need from your peers, Flinders University resources, local community in Australia, family back home? ● Is there any advice for Flinders University, from teaching to extra-curriculum aspects, to improve future students' performances and experiences at Flinders University?	- Investigating whether contributing factors such as parenting, peer culture and preconceptions about education back home are connected to the participants' identity challenges and conflicts in Australia. - Identifying possible solutions and recommendations. - Making recommendations and suggestions for future research.

APPENDIX 2 – INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM
THÔNG TIN THAM GIA NGHIÊN CỨU VÀ MẪU ĐƠN CHẤP THUẬN

Title: Vietnamese International Students' Identity Formation During Integration into Australia: Perceived Challenges and Strategies
Đề tài: *Quá trình hình thành Bản dạng của Du học sinh Việt Nam khi hoà nhập vào Úc: Thách thức và Giải pháp của từng cá nhân*

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Sđt: (identification data has been removed)

My name is Hai Quy Pham and I am a Flinders University Masters student. I am undertaking this research as part of my degree. For further information, you are more than welcome to contact my supervisor. Her details are listed above.
Tôi là Phạm Hải Quỳ, hiện đang là sinh viên bậc thạc sĩ tại Đại học Flinders. Nghiên cứu này là một phần trong chương trình học của tôi. Để biết thêm chi tiết, vui lòng liên hệ cố vấn của tôi theo thông tin cụ thể như trên

Description of the study
This project will investigate the experiences of Vietnamese international postgraduate students during their integration into Australia. This project is supported by Flinders University, College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences.
Nội dung nghiên cứu
Dự án này xoay quanh trải nghiệm của du học sinh Việt Nam bậc sau đại học trong quá trình hoà nhập vào xã hội Úc. Dự án này được chấp thuận bởi Đại học Flinders, Khoa Nhân văn, Nghệ thuật và Khoa học xã hội.

Purpose of the study
This project aims to investigate the identity formation challenges perceived by Vietnamese international postgraduate students during their integration into Australia and the strategies used to counter these challenges.
Mục đích nghiên cứu
Dự án này hướng đến phân tích những thách thức mà du học sinh Việt Nam bậc sau đại học gặp phải trong việc hình thành bản dạng khi hoà nhập vào xã hội Úc và những chiến thuật họ đã sử dụng để khắc phục khó khăn.

Benefits of the study
The sharing of your experiences will help to contribute knowledge to the big picture of Vietnamese international students' social experiences when pursuing higher education overseas and provide recommendations for improvements where appropriate. By elucidating the nature of this cohort's social integration challenges, the study will draw attention to the need for future research to approach these challenges from a more holistic perspective. More importantly, your experiences will be helpful in supporting international students from other Southeast Asian countries as well, a cohort that remains under-studied.
Giá trị nghiên cứu
Khi chia sẻ trải nghiệm của mình, bạn sẽ góp phần xây dựng bức tranh toàn cảnh về trải nghiệm xã hội của du học sinh Việt Nam khi theo học bậc cao học tại nước ngoài và đóng góp lời khuyên để cải thiện tình trạng này trong khả năng phù hợp của mình. Dự án này mong muốn làm sáng tỏ bản chất của những khó khăn mà nhóm đối tượng này gặp phải khi hoà nhập vào một xã hội mới, và thông qua đó tạo tiền đề cho những dự án khác trong tương lai có thể tiếp cận những thách thức này từ một góc nhìn bao quát hơn. Quan trọng hơn hết, những chia sẻ của bạn sẽ giúp ích rất nhiều trong việc hỗ trợ du học sinh đến từ các quốc gia Đông Nam Á khác, một cộng đồng chưa nhận được nhiều sự quan tâm từ các dự án nghiên cứu.

Participant involvement and potential risks
If you agree to participate in the research study, you will be asked to:
Yêu cầu đóng góp và rủi ro cho người tham gia nghiên cứu
Nếu bạn đồng ý tham gia nghiên cứu này, bạn sẽ phải đáp ứng các yêu cầu sau:

- attend a one-on-one interview with a researcher that will be audio recorded. The interview will take approximately 1 hour.
  tham gia một buổi phỏng vấn trực tiếp 1-1 với đồng nghiên cứu viên, nội dung phỏng vấn sẽ được ghi âm lại. Buổi phỏng vấn này sẽ kéo dài khoảng 1 giờ.

- respond to questions regarding your views about three main topics:
  trả lời câu hỏi và cung cấp quan điểm của bạn về ba chủ đề chính:

1. Your motivation to pursue higher education in Australia and the decision-making as well as preparation process before arrival.
   Động lực của bạn khi đăng ký học bậc sau đại học tại nước Úc và quá trình đưa ra quyết định cũng như là quá trình chuẩn bị trước khi nhập học.
2. Social challenges and successes you have experienced during your study at your university as well as in your daily life.
   Những thách thức trên phương diện xã hội và thành công bạn đã trải qua trong quá trình học tập cũng như trong cuộc sống hàng ngày.
3. Strategies you have used to cope with these challenges and any recommendations you may have to improve your and other students' experiences.
   Những giải pháp bạn đã sử dụng để đối mặt với các thách thức này và lời khuyên để cải thiện trải nghiệm của chính bạn và của những sinh viên khác.

- participate in a follow-up focus group interview if there is any discrepancies in the answers given by interviewees during one-on-one interviews. In this case, you will be contacted by the co-investigator and receive further information.
  tham gia một buổi phỏng vấn nhóm nếu chúng tôi ghi nhận sự không đồng nhất trong câu trả lời cung cấp bởi người tham gia nghiên cứu trong quá trình phỏng vấn trực tiếp 1-1. Trong trường hợp này, đồng nghiên cứu viên sẽ liên hệ và cung cấp thông tin cụ thể cho bạn.

During the interview, you may be prompted to recall past experiences where you may have felt like you were subjected to discrimination or other forms of unfair treatments. It can cause you to feel uncomfortable and upset. Our team will try our best to approach the topic tactfully, together with the duty of an investigator, the researcher will try the best to her reasonable ability to assume the role of a confidant who is from the same background and sharing the same international student status with the project's participants. Before asking any question that may trigger negative feelings, the researcher will provide trigger warnings and reminders that you can always decline answering any questions. At any time, you can always ask to stop the interview. The researcher will stop the interview if there is any visible sign of your emotional distress as well.
Trong quá trình phỏng vấn, chúng tôi có thể yêu cầu bạn nhớ lại những trải nghiệm trong quá khứ khi mà bạn bị phân biệt đối xử hoặc phải chịu đựng những hình thức đối xử bất công khác. Điều này có thể khiến bạn khó chịu và buồn bực. Nhóm nghiên cứu sẽ cố gắng hết sức để tiếp cận chủ đề này một cách cẩn trọng, bên cạnh nghĩa vụ của một nhà nghiên cứu, nghiên cứu viên sẽ nỗ lực tối đa trong khả năng của mình để đóng vai trò của một người bạn tâm giao, một người đồng hương và có chung trải nghiệm của một du học sinh, trong khi phỏng vấn người tham gia. Trước khi đưa ra bất kỳ câu hỏi nào có thể đem lại cảm giác tiêu cực, nghiên cứu viên sẽ thông báo về tính nhạy cảm của câu hỏi và lưu ý người tham gia phỏng vấn về quyền từ chối trả lời bất kỳ câu hỏi nào khiến bạn cảm thấy không thoải mái. Vào bất kỳ thời điểm nào, bạn hoàn toàn có thể yêu cầu dừng buổi phỏng vấn. Nghiên cứu viên cũng sẽ dừng buổi phỏng vấn nếu nhận thấy bất kỳ biểu hiện kích động nào từ phía người tham gia phỏng vấn.

Due to the small sample size, anonymity cannot be guaranteed. However, the data will be screened and anonymized to the best extent possible. Furthermore, you will have the chance to proof-read the final transcript of your interview and make request for editing, if any, before it is being used for the report.
Bởi vì số lượng người tham gia nhỏ, dự án này không thể bảo đảm tuyệt đối tính ẩn danh cho người tham gia nghiên cứu. Tuy nhiên, dữ liệu đã thu thập sẽ được sàng lọc và ẩn danh tối đa trong phạm vi cho phép. Hơn nữa, bạn sẽ được đọc bản ghi chép dữ liệu cuối cùng đã qua xử lý và yêu cầu chỉnh sửa, nếu có, trước khi dữ liệu được sử dụng trong bản báo cáo nghiên cứu.

If you experience feelings of distress as a result of participation in this study you can contact the following services for support:
Nếu bạn gặp phải những cảm xúc tiêu cực sau khi tham gia nghiên cứu này, bạn có thể liên hệ các dịch vụ sau để được hỗ trợ:

- **Flinders University's counselling services**
  (https://students.flinders.edu.au/support/hcd/counselling)
  Dịch vụ Tư vấn của Đại học Flinders
  *(*https://students.flinders.edu.au/support/hcd/counselling*)*

For new clients please complete the form provided in the link above.
Existing clients can book an appointment by calling 8201 2118.
For after-hours crisis support line, please call 1300 512 409 or text 0488 884 103.
There are remote services and counselling can also be provided via phone and Skype.
Nếu đây là lần đầu tiên bạn sử dụng dịch vụ này, vui lòng đăng ký theo mẫu đơn trong đường link trên.
Nếu bạn đã sử dụng dịch vụ này trước đó, bạn có thể đặt lịch hẹn bằng cách gọi số 8201 2118.
***Để được hỗ trợ khẩn cấp ngoài giờ hành chính**, vui lòng gọi số 1300 512 409 hoặc nhắn tin số 0488 884 103.*
Dịch vụ hỗ trợ và tư vấn cũng được cung cấp từ xa, thông qua điện thoại và Skype.

- **Lifeline** – Phone 13 11 14 for crisis support if you need to talk to someone immediately.
  ***Lifeline** – Gọi số 13 11 14 để được hỗ trợ khẩn cấp nếu bạn cần một ai đó ngay lập tức.*

- **Healthdirect** – Phone 1800 022 222 for health advice by registered nurses, available 24/7.
  ***Healthdirect** – Gọi số 1800 022 222 để được tư vấn sức khoẻ bởi các y tá đã qua đào tạo, có mặt 24/7.*

- Beyond Blue – Phone 1300 22 4636 for support service or chat online to a counsellor via the link provided on the website (https://beyondblue.org.au/about/contact-us).
  Beyond Blue *– Gọi số 1300 22 4636 để được hỗ trợ hoặc chat trực tuyến với một tư vấn viên thông qua đường link cung cấp tại website (*https://beyondblue.org.au/about/contact-us*).*

- Visit the website **Embracementalhealth**
  (https://embracementalhealth.org.au/index.php/community/mental-health-services)
  Truy cập trang web **Embracementalhealth**
  *(*https://embracementalhealth.org.au/index.php/community/mental-health-services*)*

- **Women's and Children's Health Network** (https://wchn.sa.gov.au/our-network/camhs/camhs-multicultural-information) – Phone 1300 222 647 for support (click here for an instructional video in Vietnamese)
  Women's and Children's Health Network *(*https://wchn.sa.gov.au/our-network/camhs/camhs-multicultural-information*) – Gọi số 1300 222 647 để được hỗ trợ (mở đường* link *này để xem video hướng dẫn bằng tiếng Việt)*

If you need an interpreter to assist in contacting these services, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450 or visit the website for more information (https://tisnational.gov.au).

Nếu bạn cần một thông dịch viên để liên hệ các dịch vụ này, vui lòng gọi Dịch vụ Biên dịch và Thông dịch (TIS National) qua số 131 450 hoặc truy cập website để biết thêm chi tiết (https://tisnational.gov.au).

Withdrawal Rights

You may decline to take part in this research study. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you may withdraw at any time without providing an explanation. To withdraw, please contact the Chief Investigator to have your data removed from the study or you may just refuse to answer any questions. Any data collected up to the point of your withdrawal will be securely destroyed.

Quyền ngừng tham gia nghiên cứu

Bạn hoàn toàn có thể từ chối tham gia nghiên cứu này. Trong trường hợp bạn đã quyết định tham gia và sau đó đổi ý, bạn có thể rút khỏi dự án tại bất kỳ thời điểm nào không cần phải giải trình lí do. Để rút khỏi dự án, vui lòng liên hệ Trưởng nghiên cứu viên để tiến hành thu hồi các dữ liệu bạn đã cung cấp hoặc bạn có thể từ chối trả lời bất kỳ câu hỏi nào trong quá trình phỏng vấn. Bất kỳ dữ liệu nào đã được thu thập tính đến thời điểm bạn rút khỏi dự án nghiên cứu đều sẽ được huỷ bỏ một cách an toàn và bảo mật.

In case you are invited to participate in the follow-up Focus Group interview, you can also leave the focus group interview at any time without providing an explanation. Data recorded during focus group discussion may not be able to be destroyed due to it being collected in a group discussion. However, the data will not be used in this research study without your explicit consent.

Trong trường hợp bạn được mời tham gia buổi phỏng vấn nhóm, bạn cũng được quyền rời buổi phỏng vấn này bất kỳ lúc nào mà không cần giải trình lí do. Có khả năng dữ liệu được ghi nhận trong quá trình thảo luận nhóm sẽ không thể được huỷ bỏ triệt để do đã được chia sẻ cho một nhóm người tham gia phỏng vấn. Tuy nhiên, các dữ liệu này sẽ không được sử dụng cho mục đích của nghiên cứu này khi chưa có sự đồng ý của bạn.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Only researchers listed on this form have access to the individual information provided by you. Researchers will take all possible steps to ensure privacy and confidentiality will be adhered to at all times. Focus group participants are requested to maintain confidentiality and not disclose to a third party any issues discussed during the focus group discussion.

Bảo mật và Quyền riêng tư

Chỉ những nghiên cứu viên được liệt kê trong bản thông tin này có quyền truy cập vào các thông tin cá nhân bạn đã cung cấp. Những nghiên cứu viên này sẽ thực hiện tối đa những bước cần thiết để bảo đảm sự riêng tư và bảo mật thông tin cho người tham gia nghiên cứu tại mọi thời điểm. Người tham gia tại buổi phỏng vấn nhóm được yêu cầu bảo mật thông tin và không tiết lộ cho bất kỳ bên thứ ba nào về bất kỳ chủ đề nào đã được đề cập trong lúc thảo luận nhóm.

The research outcomes may be presented at conferences, written up for publication or used for other research purposes as described in this information form. You will not be named, and your individual information will not be identifiable in any research products without your explicit consent.

Kết quả nghiên cứu có thể được trình bày tại các buổi hội thảo, trình bày bằng văn bản in ấn hoặc sử dụng cho các mục đích nghiên cứu khác như đã trình bày trong bản thông tin này. Tên của bạn sẽ không được đề cập, và thông tin cá nhân của bạn sẽ không được tiết lộ trong bất kỳ sản phẩm nghiên cứu nào mà không có sự đồng ý của bạn.

Due to the small sample size anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

Do dự án này có số lượng người tham gia ít, sự ẩn danh cho người tham gia có thể không được bảo đảm hoàn toàn.

No data, including identifiable, non-identifiable and de-identified datasets, will be shared or used in future research projects without your explicit consent. Please provide your consent to this by ticking the appropriate box on the Consent Form at the end of this form.

Các dữ liệu thu thập được, bao gồm thông tin cá nhân, dữ liệu ẩn danh và thông tin cá nhân đã được xử lý để ẩn danh, sẽ không được chia sẻ hoặc sử dụng trong các dự án nghiên cứu trong tương lai mà không có sự cho phép của người tham gia dự án nghiên cứu này. Trong trường hợp bạn đồng ý với việc chia sẻ các loại dữ liệu, thông tin nói trên, vui lòng đánh dấu vào ô thích hợp trong Đơn Chấp thuận tại phần cuối cùng của bản thông tin này.

Data Storage

The information collected will be stored securely on a password protected computer and/or Flinders University server throughout the study. Any identifiable data will be de-identified for data storage purposes unless indicated otherwise. All data will be securely transferred to and stored at Flinders University for 12 months after the completion of the project. Following the required data storage period, all data will be securely destroyed according to university protocols.

Lưu trữ Dữ liệu

Những thông tin được thu thập trong quá trình thực hiện nghiên cứu này sẽ được lưu trữ trên một máy tính bảo mật bằng mật khẩu và/hoặc trên hệ thống server của Đại học Flinders trong suốt thời gian nghiên cứu. Mọi thông tin cá nhân sẽ được xử lý để ẩn danh khi đưa vào hệ thống lưu trữ, trừ trường hợp các bên đã thống nhất từ trước sẽ không xử lý ẩn danh. Mọi dữ liệu sẽ được chuyển giao và lưu trữ tại Đại học Flinders trong vòng 12 tháng sau khi dự án này kết thúc. Sau thời gian này, mọi dữ liệu sẽ được huỷ bỏ một cách bảo mật và an toàn theo quy chuẩn của trường đại học.

Recognition of Contribution and Participation Time

If you would like to participate, in recognition of your contribution and participation time, you will be provided with a $30 voucher. This voucher will be provided to you face-to-face on completion of the interview.

Ghi nhận Đóng góp và Thời gian tham gia nghiên cứu

Nếu bạn đồng ý tham gia nghiên cứu, để ghi nhận đóng góp và thời gian bạn dành ra, bạn sẽ được nhận một voucher trị giá $30. Bạn sẽ được nhận voucher này vào cuối buổi phỏng vấn trực tiếp 1-1, sau khi hoàn thành phỏng vấn.

How will I receive feedback?

On project completion, a short summary of the outcomes, written in English and Vietnamese, will be provided to all participants via email. Participants can also request a face-to-face session with the co-investigator for individualized feedback if they wish to.

Người tham gia nghiên cứu sẽ nhận phản hồi bằng cách nào?

Sau khi dự án kết thúc, người tham gia nghiên cứu sẽ nhận được một bản tóm tắt kết quả nghiên cứu, trình bày bằng tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt, thông qua email. Nếu có nhu cầu, người tham gia nghiên cứu cũng có thể yêu cầu một buổi gặp mặt trực tiếp với đồng nghiên cứu viên để thảo luận cụ thể về kết quả nghiên cứu.

Ethics Committee Approval

The project has been approved by Flinders University's Human Research Ethics Committee (Project ID 7419).

Chấp thuận của Hội đồng Đạo đức

Dự án nghiên cứu này đã được chấp thuận bởi Hội đồng Đạo đức trong nghiên cứu của Đại học Flinders (Mã số Dự án 7419).

Queries and Concerns

Queries or concerns regarding the research can be directed to the research team. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this study, you may contact the Flinders University's Research Ethics and Compliance Office team either via telephone (08) 8201 2543 or by emailing the Office via human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

Câu hỏi và Phản hồi

Nếu bạn có bất kỳ câu hỏi hoặc phản hồi liên quan đến nghiên cứu này, vui lòng liên hệ nhóm nghiên cứu. Nếu bạn có khiếu nại hoặc lo ngại về việc tuân thủ đạo đức của nghiên cứu này, bạn có thể liên hệ đội ngũ Văn phòng Giám sát Đạo đức nghiên cứu của Đại học Flinders bằng cách gọi số (08) 8201 2543 hoặc gửi email đến địa chỉ human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet which is yours to keep.
If you accept our invitation to be involved, please sign the enclosed Consent Form.
Cảm ơn bạn đã dành thời gian đọc bản thông tin này, bạn có thể giữ một bản cho riêng mình.
Nếu bạn chấp nhận đề nghị mời tham gia nghiên cứu, vui lòng ký tên vào Mẫu Đơn Chấp thuận đính kèm.

CONSENT FORM
ĐƠN CHẤP THUẬN

Title: Vietnamese International Students' Identity Formation During Integration into Australia: Perceived Challenges and Strategies
(HREC Project ID 7419).
Đề tài: *Quá trình hình thành Bản dạng của Du học sinh Việt Nam khi hoà nhập vào Úc: Thách thức và Giải pháp của từng cá nhân*
(Mã số dự án HREC 7419)

Consent Statement
Tuyên bố Chấp thuận

☐ I have read and understood the information about the research, and I understand I am being asked to provide informed consent to participate in this research study. I understand that I can contact the research team if I have further questions about this research study.
Tôi đã đọc và hiểu thông tin về nghiên cứu này, và tôi hiểu rõ mình cần phải cung cấp sự chấp thuận, sau khi được phổ biến thông tin đầy đủ, cho việc tham gia vào dự án nghiên cứu này. Tôi hiểu mình có quyền liên hệ nhóm nghiên cứu nếu tôi có thêm bất kỳ câu hỏi nào về dự án này.

☐ I am not aware of any condition that would prevent my participation, and I agree to participate in this project.
Theo hiểu biết của tôi, không hề có bất kỳ điều kiện nào ngăn cản tôi tham gia vào nghiên cứu này, và tôi đồng ý tham gia dự án nghiên cứu này.

☐ I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time during the study.
Tôi hiểu mình hoàn toàn có quyền rút khỏi dự án này tại bất kỳ thời điểm nào.

☐ I understand that I can contact Flinders University's Research Ethics and Compliance Office if I have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this study.
Tôi hiểu mình có quyền liên hệ Văn phòng Giám sát Đạo đức nghiên cứu của Đại học Flinders nếu tôi có bất kỳ khiếu nại hoặc lo ngại nào về việc tuân thủ đạo đức của dự án này.

☐ I understand that my involvement is confidential, and that the information collected may be published. I understand that I will not be identified in any research products.
Tôi hiểu thông tin về việc tôi tham gia nghiên cứu này sẽ được bảo mật, và thông tin được thu thập có thể được đăng tải công khai. Tôi hiểu rằng tôi sẽ không được nêu tên trong bất kỳ sản phẩm nghiên cứu nào.

☐ I understand that I will be unable to withdraw my data and information provided during focus group interview.
Tôi nhận thức rằng mình sẽ không thể thu hồi dữ liệu và thông tin đã cung cấp trong quá trình phỏng vấn nhóm.

☐ In case of withdrawing from focus group interview, I also understand that the data and information already provided **will be used** for this research study (only choose if you consent, leave empty if you do not consent).

*Nếu tôi chọn ngừng tham gia phỏng vấn nhóm giữa chừng, tôi hiểu rằng những dữ liệu và thông tin đã cung cấp **sẽ được sử dụng** cho nghiên cứu này (chọn nếu bạn đồng ý, để trống nếu bạn không đồng ý).*

I further consent to:
Ngoài ra tôi cũng chấp thuận:

☐ participating in an interview
tham gia một buổi phỏng vấn

☐ participating in a focus group discussion (if invited)
tham gia một buổi phỏng vấn thảo luận nhóm (nếu được yêu cầu)

☐ having my information audio recorded
cho phép ghi âm thông tin tôi cung cấp trong các buổi phỏng vấn

☐ sharing my de-identified data with other researchers (only choose if you consent, leave empty if you do not consent)
chia sẻ các dữ liệu của tôi đã được xử lý ẩn danh cho các nghiên cứu viên khác (chọn nếu bạn đồng ý, để trống nếu bạn không đồng ý)

☐ my data and information being used in this project (no more than 12 months after the completion of the project)
dữ liệu và thông tin tôi cung cấp sẽ được sử dụng cho nghiên cứu này (trong thời gian không quá 12 tháng kể từ thời điểm này kết thúc).

Signed:
Chữ ký

Name:
Họ tên

Date:
Ngày

19 September 2024

APPENDIX 3 – ETHICS APPROVAL NOTICE

Flinders University

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

MODIFICATION APPROVAL NOTICE

Dear Dr. Shvetal Vyas Pare,

The modifications to the below project have been **approved** on the basis of the information contained in the application and its attachments.

Project No:

7419

Project Title:

Vietnamese International Students' Identity Formation During Integration into Australia: Perceived Challenges and Strategies

Chief Investigator:

Dr. Shvetal Vyas Pare

Approval Date: 05/07/2024

Modification Approval Date: 19/09/2024

Annual Report Due Date: 15/12/2024

Expiry Date: 15/12/2024

Approved Co-Investigator/s:

Ms Hai Quy Pham

The following documents have been approved:

File Name	Date	Version
Interview Protocol and Questions	20/05/2024	1.0
Focus Group Discussion Questions	20/05/2024	1.0
Information Sheet and Consent Form (v3.0)	03/09/2024	3.0
Research Advertisement Flyer (English)	03/09/2024	2.0
Research Advertisement Flyer (Vietnamese)	03/09/2024	2.0

Yours sincerely,

Camilla Dorian

on behalf of

Human Research Ethics Committee
Research Development and Support
human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

Flinders University
Sturt Road, Bedford Park, South Australia, 5042
GPO Box 2100, Adelaide, South Australia, 5001