

School of Occupational Therapy and Social Work

**Growing up Australian: Exploring the Ethnic Identity
Negotiation of Second Generation Vietnamese Youth in Perth**

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

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December 2012

Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of the ethnic identity negotiation of a group of second generation Vietnamese young persons in Perth, and aims to uncover the content of ethnic identity; in other words, “what it means” and “what it looks like” to be Vietnamese or Australian. Adopting an interpretive narrative approach as research methodology, this research focuses on the familial and social experiences of this group of participants in uncovering dimensions of their ethnic identification and ethnic identity formation. Twenty second generation Vietnamese youth were invited to share their stories of growing up in Australia; this included ten male and ten female young persons. Using unstructured narrative interviews, this research explores the socio-cultural dimensions of their life experience as they navigate their transition into adulthood.

Findings from this research suggest that the participants identify concomitantly as Vietnamese and Australian, giving strength to the notion that ethnic identity is but one of a multitude of social identities. The participants’ narratives also reveal that country of birth; cultural values and practices; ethnic socialization; and language spoken are dimensions salient to their ethnic identity formation process. In exploring their familial experiences, it was revealed that a disparity in values existed between the participants and their parents. This disparity often resulted in parent-child conflict during the participants’ adolescent years, in turn affecting their ethnic identity negotiation.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the participants’ stories are not representative of all second generation Vietnamese youth in Perth, I argue that the Vietnamese in Perth are on an upward trajectory and have successfully integrated into the Australian mainstream culture. More importantly, their stories demonstrate that these young persons are skilful navigators as they negotiate between the two cultures. That is, rather than being caught “between” two cultures, these young persons are active members of both.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis is a narration of lived experiences as told by twenty Vietnamese young persons in Perth. This group of second generation Vietnamese youth shared stories of growing up in Perth with immigrant parents; of childhood memories of their parents working long hours at physically demanding jobs; of their relationships with their parents and siblings; and stories of their friends. The interview data is used as the basis for uncovering the ethnic identity negotiation of these second generation Vietnamese youth. Given that at least 25 per cent of persons with Vietnamese ancestry report to be second generation Vietnamese (Australian Bureau of Statistics; ABS, 2003), and that at least eight per cent of the Vietnam-born population in Australia is between the ages 15 and 24 (Department of Immigration and Citizenship; DIAC, 2008a), it is important to engender a deeper knowledge and understanding of the experiences of young Vietnamese Australians and how they negotiate between two cultures.

This research journey was motivated by particular personal, cultural, social and institutional positioning. Arriving in Perth in 1997 as an international student from Singapore, I was sat down during Orientation Week with other new arrivals by those who came before us and given sage advice on how to survive in Perth. “Avoid the Vietnamese, they’re trouble” we were told, they apparently all “fight, steal, deal drugs.” The media continued this message by bombarding us with the stereotype of the criminal, violent Vietnamese person. Over the years, I inevitably befriended a few Vietnamese youth, some of whom I continue to consider close friends. Sure, I knew of some Vietnamese youth that would get into the occasional scuffle; perhaps some dabbled with the occasional recreational drug, but was such delinquent behaviour exclusive to the Vietnamese community?

With a background in psychology and a long standing interest in juvenile delinquency, I began my doctoral journey wanting to explore the relationship between family interactional patterns and anti-social behaviour amongst Vietnamese youth in Australia. In particular, how family and traditional

Vietnamese values may mediate one's self-concept, and in turn, influence one's behaviour. Whilst researching the topic, it dawned on me that existing literature was not only dated, but it appeared to capture a very different demographic from the young Vietnamese population in contemporary Perth.

Many of the existing studies have researched the experiences of those arriving in Australia under the refugee resettling program (Klimidis, Minas & Ata, 1994; Thomas, 1999; Thuy, 1976; Viviani, Coughlan & Rowland, 1993), with relatively little research on the experiences of the individuals who were born in Australia or had arrived in Australia in infancy. Existing literature has portrayed the Vietnamese person in Australia as uneducated, unable to speak English, and poor (Thomas, 1999). In contrast, I have met many Vietnamese youth currently pursuing a tertiary education, or successful within their chosen fields of employment. All speak fluent English with very distinct Australian accents. Interestingly, the 1996 Census indicated that 4.2 per cent of the second generation Vietnamese children in Australia spoke only English at home, and almost 60 per cent spoke English very well (Khoo, McDonald, Giorgas & Birrell, 2002).

The lack of current research led to the realisation that not much is known about the Vietnamese young person in Australia today. According to the 1996 Census, there were 43 441 persons of Vietnamese ancestry in Australia between 0-14 years of age (Khoo et al, 2002). Given that this group of adolescents would now be between 16 and 30 years old, and constitute the second generation Vietnamese youth today, it is essential that our knowledge and understanding of this group of young persons is not founded on knowledge derived from a very different demographic. With a change in direction, my research focus shifted to exploring the lived experiences of Vietnamese youth in Perth. In particular, how they negotiate an ethnic identity as a Vietnamese person in Australia. In other words, I was interested in how they negotiate any tensions in identifying as Australian and/or Vietnamese.

Part of an adolescent's learning process involves discerning the range of ethnic options available to them and how they feel about these options; in this case, Australian, Vietnamese, Vietnamese-Australian, or Australian-

Vietnamese. Adolescents also have to negotiate the importance they assign to their ethnicity as a component of their overall sense of self (Fuligni, Witkow & Garcia, 2005). This may be particularly salient for adolescents from ethnic minority backgrounds, such as the Vietnamese youth in Australia, as they find their place in the larger society. Viewed as crucial to the self-concept of members of ethnic minority groups, ethnic identity has been defined as an aspect of an individual's self-concept that is derived from membership and belonging to a social or cultural group, as well as with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Tajfel, 1981; Phinney, 1990).

For ethnic minorities, ethnic identity formation may involve cultivating an understanding, as well as an acceptance of their own group in the face of marginalization and societal stigmatization (Phinney, 1991). While Australia has come a long way since the first arrival of refugees on Australia's shore, media representations of Vietnamese in the 90s promulgated the stereotype of Vietnamese as violent and criminal, as victims, or as acceptable only when adopting Australian mainstream values which deny their ethnicity (Thomas, 1999). Research has indicated that such stereotypes and representations have resulted in on-going experiences of discrimination, marginalisation and everyday racism (Dunn, 2004; Lange, 2004; Lange & Nisbet, 2000; Teo, 2000). Tan Le, a refugee from Vietnam recounts being teased by other students who pulled their eyes in slits (Lange, 2004). In another interview in Lange and Nisbet's (2004) research, Tuyet, also a refugee, shared that she was the only Vietnamese student in her suburban school and was often subjected to racist remarks from both teachers and students, and often wished she could bleach her skin and become White.

Thomas (1998, p.74) suggested that Vietnamese exclusion is not only felt at the "abstract ideational level of consciousness", but is also experienced through bodies as the "body becomes the root of marginality because of the ready stigmatisation of corporeal difference". Through questions such as "Where are you from?" Australians of Asian background are continually reminded of their bodily difference from the European-Australian mainstream; through such questions an outsider status is suggested.

The present study poses the question “What do you say when people ask where are you from?” to a group of second generation Vietnamese youth to explore their perception of belonging to Australia, and perhaps, Vietnam. While I acknowledge that the question may reinforce their implied foreignness, I argue that the question may also serve as a measure of their Australian-ness. In turn, it is hoped that the participants’ narratives will allow a better understanding of the process of ethnic identity formation in this group of second generation Vietnamese youth. Moreover, this research may reveal if this group of Vietnamese young people have faced the discrimination and racism recorded in existing literature.

Adolescents from ethnic minority backgrounds are often raised by their immigrant parents with cultural traditions and values that differ from the dominant society. On the one hand, second generation Vietnamese youth would have grown up with parents who carry with them the language, values and customs of Vietnam. On the other hand, these young people would have been educated within the Australian school system which emphasizes proficiency in English. They would also have been socialized within Australian customs and values through the media and other social interactions. Furthermore, Vietnamese youth would typically be socialized to traditional Vietnamese family values and traditions that place great emphasis on collectivism, family harmony, filial piety, and respect. This is often in contrast to the dominant Australian culture that promotes individualism and independence.

Hofstede (1980) identified individualism as a tendency to place one’s needs above the needs of one’s own ingroup. This is in contrast to collectivism which has been defined as the tendency to place the needs of one’s ingroup above one’s own needs. Literature has suggested that these conflicting values may often prove challenging to ethnic identity development as youth negotiate between two cultures; that of their parents and ethnic community, and the dominant culture (Berry, 1980; Berry, Phinney, Sam & Bedder, 2006; Buchanan, 2001; Choi, He & Harachi, 2008; Dinh & Nguyen, 2006; Easter, Dinh, McHale, & Valsiner, 2009; Farver, Bakhtawar & Narang, 2002; Kim,

1981; Nguyen & Williams, 1989; Phinney, Berry, Vedder & Liebkind, 2006; Syed & Azmitia, 2008; Tseng & Fuligni, 2000; Yip & Fuligni, 2002; Zhou, 1997; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). As a result, second generation ethnic minority youth report more daily hassles, in-group conflict, lowered self-esteem and psychological well-being (Atzaba-Poria & Pike, 2005; Phinney, 1989; Phinney, Cantu & Kurtz, 1997; Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997; Yasui, Dorham & Dishion, 2004).

The ethnic identity development of ethnic youth may also be compounded by the disparity in levels of acculturation between them and their parents. Referring to a process of adaptation to a new, dominant culture, acculturation is often used to define changes that occur in members of a minority group in contact with another dominant culture (Lee, Sobal & Frongillo, 2004). In general, the rate of acculturation for children and youth occurs more rapidly than that for their parents which results in the gradual divergence of values and perspectives (Buchanan, 2001; Buki, Ma, Storm & Strom, 2003; Cheng & Kuo, 2000; Chiu, Feldman & Rosenthal, 1992; Choi, He & Harachi, 2008; Fuligni, 1997; Le & Stockdale, 2008; Matsuoka, 1990; Nguyen & Williams, 1989; Phinney, Berry, Vedder & Liebkind, 2006; Phinney, Romero, Nava & Kuang, 2001; Rumbaut, 1994; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980, 1993; Wu & Chao, 2005).

Research suggests that as children grow older and assimilate at a more rapid rate than their migrant parents, they adopt the language and values of the dominant culture while experiencing decreased ties to their traditional culture. A study by Nguyen and Williams (1989) found that among Vietnamese Americans, there was a substantial gap between adolescents and their parents with respect to endorsement of traditional values (e.g. obedience to parents, respect for authority) and that this gap was highly correlated with length of residency in the United States. Similarly, a study by Ranieri (1992) found that the longer adolescents were in Australia, the lower their endorsement of traditional Vietnamese values and the greater their endorsement of adolescent independent values.

Ethnic minority youth, such as Vietnamese youth, may also be particularly at risk for alienation from their parents because of acculturative dissonance. This occurs when the first and second generations learn the ways of the host culture at different rates; parents cling to traditional cultural values, in contrast to their children who tend to adopt the values and lifestyles of the dominant culture (Szapocznik & Hernandez, 1988). Acculturative dissonance or intergenerational cultural dissonance differs from typical parent-adolescent conflict in that the conflict stems from differences in beliefs and values associated with the immigration and acculturation processes, rather than the normal developmental processes of individuation and autonomy (Le & Stockdale, 2008). However, existing literature examining the link between acculturation dissonance and parent-adolescent relationships have yielded mixed results. Some studies support a relationship between acculturation dissonance and strained parent-adolescent relationships (Buki, Ma, Strom & Strom, 2003; Farver, Narang & Bhada, 2002; Lee, 1997; Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000; Rumbaut, 1994; Ying & Chao, 1996) whilst other studies fail to support such a link (Buchanan, 2001; Fuligni, 1998).

As recent migrants to Australia, the participants' parents would have been confronted with different cultural values, especially when the participants presented with behaviours and attitudes that did not align with their own. For the purpose of this study, I will use the terms "intergenerational cultural dissonance" to refer to the disparity in values. As conceptualized by Choi and colleagues (2008), the notion of intergenerational cultural dissonance may be a more accurate means of capturing generational acculturation gaps as it is essentially cultural value discrepancies between adolescents and their immigrant parents. While it is acknowledged that the participants' parents had to experience a degree of acculturation as recent immigrants to Australia, I argue that this group of second generation youth may not have "acculturated" to the Australian culture. Born and / or raised in Perth, it is proposed that they did not "acculturate" to the Australian culture; growing up in Australia, their ethnic identity or culture may not be clearly distinct from the dominant Australian culture. In light of this, I will adopt the term "cultural orientation" as adopted by Ying (1995) to refer to the participants' negotiation of values.

It needs to be emphasized that this research journey is not grounded within a specific theory of ethnic identity formation. For the purpose of this study, a general perspective on ethnic identity formation is adopted rather than a more specific and dimensionally augmented approach to ethnic identity (i.e. incorporating specific dimensions of ethnic identity). It is adopted specifically for its potential for theoretical parsimony, and its potential transferability to other ethnic groups. In exploring their lived experiences and their ethnic identity, the emic nature of the present study allows us to not only better understand the process of one's ethnic identity negotiation, but also the content of one's ethnic identity(s); that is, "what it means" to the participants to be Vietnamese or Australian, and "what it looks like".

Referring to the meanings made of a cultural scene by natives of that scene, emic studies aim to understand and uncover meaningful experience from within through the use of thick descriptions (Crawford, 1994). As Fraser (2004, p.182) writes, "narrative research should not only reflect reality but also challenged taken-for-granted beliefs, assertions and assumptions including those made by revered social theorists." As such, the narrative approach provides a conceptualization of content that is tied to the developmental experiences of this group of young people. The methodology prescribes that the participants decided what stories to share; that is, what parts of their identity they were willing to reveal. Accordingly, the participants' stories revealed dimensions that were salient to their ethnic identity formation.

Having Vietnamese friends, I entered this research journey believing that I had an understanding of Vietnamese culture and values. This was in part due to the similarities between Vietnamese and Chinese culture, which I claim to embrace and was immersed in. My knowledge included the emphasis on collectivism, filial piety, respect for elders, and deference to one's parents. As an Asian young person who spent much of my adolescent years in Perth, I believed I had similar social and familial lived experiences, such as being one of the few Asians in school, and subject to high academic expectations. Furthermore, there was the disparity in traditional Chinese values between my parents and I, and the strict rules I was subject to. As a female from a Chinese

family growing up in an increasingly globalized city, I believed that I too, experienced the different expectations and sites of tension faced by some of the female Vietnamese youth. Specifically, the preferential treatment I believed my parents accorded my older brother. In a way, I perceived myself to be almost an insider, but not.

In contrast to the participants, my early formative years were spent in Singapore, where the Chinese community constitutes a majority of the population. Born in Singapore, I was neither a migrant to a foreign land nor an ethnic minority, and my parents were neither refugees nor recent migrants. I am also conscious that even though Vietnamese culture was strongly influenced by the Chinese, there remain differences between the two cultures that should not be ignored nor overlooked. With this in mind, I entered the research journey, careful to consciously tread the line between insider and outsider, and to remain aware of my positioning in laying claim to insider knowledge. As Hayano (1979) cautioned, “an insider’s position is not necessarily an unchallengeable ‘true’ picture; it represents one possible perspective” (p.102). Through this research, I have not only come to challenge academic literature on what it means to be Vietnamese in Australia, I have also challenged personal beliefs on what it means to be Chinese in Australia.

Significance of Study

In light of existing literature on ethnic identity negotiation of ethnic minority youth, I sought to explore the ethnic identification of the Vietnamese young person in Perth, and the content of their ethnic identity negotiation. A review of existing literature has demonstrated that most of the research has been conducted in Victoria or New South Wales. As such, I hoped to discover whether some of the experiences identified by the participants may be exclusive to Perth; that is, if growing up in Perth has encouraged particular ethnic identity negotiation processes.

I also wanted to uncover whether intergenerational cultural dissonance is indeed present between parent and child, and more importantly, how the effects of a disparity in values impacted upon the parent-child relationship.

Therefore, the specific objective of the present study is to provide a deeper and more nuanced understanding of ethnic identity negotiation in a group of second generation Vietnamese youth in Australia by exploring (a) their familial and social lived experiences, (b) how these experiences relate to the process of ethnic identity negotiation.

In addition, the contribution of this research project is to update and expand empirical knowledge about second generation Vietnamese youth in Perth. A review of the services available in Australia indicate that Vietnamese young people seek help for issues with drugs and alcohol, gambling, family support, employment, education, accommodation and legal worries. The Vietnamese Community in South Australia has developed programs to help their young people smooth their integration into Australian society (www.sa.vnca.org.au). In particular, the Youth At-Risk program to help youth with drugs and alcohol abuse and early school leavers; Reconnect, to prevent intergenerational conflict and Youth Outreach programs for those with significant personal and social issues. A review of Vietnamese organizations or community groups has shown that there is a lack of such programmes in Perth. In conducting this research, it is hoped that the findings will inform contemporary social work and human service practice in Perth, such that persons working with second generation Vietnamese youth will be equipped to better address their needs.

For the purpose of this study, second generation Vietnamese youth refer to female and male persons aged between 21 and 32 years, born in Australia, or born in Vietnam and migrated to Australia between 1985 and 1990. Arriving at a young age, it is surmised that the Vietnam-born youth bears little or no memory of Vietnam, suggesting that their life stories are very different to those addressed in previous research. Having attended primary and high school here in Perth, these Vietnam-born youth would have shared similar experiences to Australia-born Vietnamese young persons.

I adopted a reflexive narrative approach in exploring and re-telling the stories of the twenty Vietnamese youth that agreed to travel with me along my research journey. This was chosen as stories express a kind of knowledge that uniquely describes human experience. As the participants speak from the edge

of consciousness of what it means to be Vietnamese in Australia, the narratives presented in this thesis reveal insights about this group of second generation Vietnamese youth, as well as of Australia. In a way, it reveals not only how these youth have positioned themselves in society, but also offers a critique of the current racial and ethnic relations in Australia. While there may be similarities in the experiences or stories told here, these stories do not claim to represent all Vietnamese persons in Australia. Rather, these are their stories; stories that the participants shared on behalf of their own specific personal, social and cultural perspectives and experiences. I also acknowledge that no one person or group's voice is seen as typical, and that the text produced from the participants' narratives is open to differing interpretations.

An Overview of the Thesis

In Chapter Two, "Background and Theoretical Grounding", I provide the social context in which this research takes place. It provides an overview of existing literature and statistics on the Vietnamese in Australia, setting the scene for this research study. It then elaborates on the theoretical underpinnings of ethnic identity; it explores how previous literature has explained the concept of ethnic identity. I then introduce essentialist ideas of being Vietnamese, and the traditional Vietnamese values as suggested by existing research.

Chapter Three then details the methodology that has guided this research journey. Due to the lack of an emic understanding of the ethnic identity negotiation of second generation Vietnamese youth in Australia, I have adopted an interpretive narrative approach with the aim of expanding existing knowledge. This chapter considers the importance of meaning-making in exploring the stories of this group of young people. It also outlines the procedure taken on this research journey, and introduces my co-travellers.

Chapter Four "Growing Up in Perth" explores the lived experiences of this group of second generation youth. It begins with their childhood memories, as they share their stories of growing up with parents that worked long hours to support the family. The second section then explores sites of tension between

the participants and their parents in their adolescent years; namely the intergenerational cultural values gap between parent and child, their demand for academic excellence, their parents adopted parenting style, their penchant for physical discipline, and the perceived preferential treatment accorded to the males in the family. Finally, it explores episodes of discrimination, and the effects these experiences had on the participants.

I then explore the content of ethnic identification of this group of young persons in Chapter Five, “I’m Australian, but I’m Vietnamese”. I started the discussion by asking the participants “what do you say when people ask you where you are from?” The premise being that their self-identification would reflect their ethnic identity. It also explores the different dimensions of their ethnic identity; namely how language may be a symbol of the participants’ ethnic identity.

Chapter Six extends our knowledge of the processes of ethnic identity formation of second generation Vietnamese youth in Perth; it explores the negotiation of the participants’ ethnic identity. It introduces the phases of ethnic identity negotiation, and how the participants’ choice of friends appears to mirror the different phases. I argue that their pre-dominantly White Australian social network in primary school may be a reflection of an unexamined ethnic identity, as compared to a largely Vietnamese-only social group in high school as they explore their ethnic identity. Their current achieved ethnic identity is reflected in their social network consisting persons of mixed ethnicities.

Chapter Seven explores incidental themes that emerged from the participants’ narratives. In particular, it highlights the non-homogeneity of the Vietnamese population in Perth. The first section captures narratives alluding to “fobs”, Vietnamese persons who are “whitewashed”, as well as stories of younger siblings. The second section highlights the upward trajectory of the Vietnamese community in Perth, contradicting existing literature and statistics in that they are neither uneducated nor disadvantaged.

This thesis concludes with Chapter Eight which retraces the research journey, and discusses the contributions, implications and limitations of this study.

Chapter Two: Background and Theoretical Grounding

This chapter provides the historical background of the Vietnamese population in Australia; it introduces traditional Vietnamese values; as well as conceptualizations of ethnic identity. In order to have a better understanding of the second generation Vietnamese youth in Perth, it is necessary to first provide the social context in which this study takes place. The Vietnamese in Australia are relatively recent migrants, with the bulk of the Vietnamese community arriving between 1977 and 1992. Arriving under refugee status or via sponsorship by family members arriving earlier, the migration pattern of the Vietnamese community was unique in that they arrived in large numbers within a short period of time. The influx of Vietnamese immigrants to Australia's shores was heralded by extensive anti-Asian sentiments, with many Australians believing that the Vietnamese were too different to assimilate, and were a threat to Australia's Anglo-Celtic culture. As the reactions from the larger society would have inevitably shaped the participants' experiences, it is important to understand the context of their arrival.

The following section introduces the arrival of the Vietnamese refugees on Australian soil; after the fall of Saigon in 1975 and the declaration of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in 1976, mass numbers of Vietnamese fled their country. The first wave of refugees reached Australia in 1975, with numbers rapidly reaching a peak of 13 000 in 1979-1980 (White, Perrone, Guerra & Lampugnani, 1999). This influx of Vietnamese refugees raised fears and discord amongst many in Australia; not only was it the first time in Australia's history that such a large number of Asian refugees were settled, it also coincided with the de-establishment of the White Australia Policy. The arrival of the Vietnamese refugees also rekindled political divisions of the Vietnam War; on the one hand, some Australians believed that Australia had a moral responsibility to accept the fleeing Vietnamese due to her involvement in the Vietnam War. In contrast, there were those who argued that Australia had no responsibility due to her failed military intervention in the war. The "far-

reaching” effects that the refugees had on many Australians will subsequently be explored.

The second section will begin by providing demographic information about the Vietnamese community in Australia. The demographics of the Vietnamese community in Perth will then be presented. As noted previously, the majority of existing scholarship has been conducted in Victoria and New South Wales. Accounting for at least six per cent of the state’s population, it is imperative that we have a deeper understanding of the Vietnamese population in Western Australia (DIAC, 2008b).

The third section, “Traditional Vietnamese Values” presents values prescribed by traditional Vietnamese culture. In exploring the cultural orientation of this group of second generation Vietnamese youth, it is important to have an understanding of what traditional Vietnamese values are. Similarly, before exploring possible intergenerational cultural dissonance between this group of young persons and their parents, it is useful to know what traditional values their parents may continue to uphold and how the values of these young persons may differ.

The fourth section, “Theories of Ethnic Identity” introduces various conceptualizations of ethnic identity; the process of ethnic identity formation has been researched by psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and this section introduces the different definitions of ethnic identity employed within the various fields. Included are Erikson’s Theory of Identity Development, social identity theory, ethnic identity from a sociological perspective, Phinney’s model of ethnic identity, and acculturation theories. This section then addresses the limitations of existing scholarship. It concludes by introducing the concept of identity within a narrative approach.

The Arrival of the Vietnamese in Australia

The interest in Vietnamese refugees has its roots in Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War, a war which culminated in the reunification of North Vietnam with South Vietnam in April 1975. After almost a decade of involvement, the American army eventually withdrew from Vietnam in 1973

when North Vietnamese troops invaded the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon, uniting the nation under communist rule. During this period, Vietnam's economic development suffered greatly, with great poverty and scarcity of resources. With a new communist government at the helm and a series of natural disasters, many Vietnamese found themselves facing a food shortage. Persons in the south who were found to have a strong association with the former regime were sent to re-education camps and often had their homes and other assets confiscated. In 1975, the mass exodus of Vietnamese refugees began. Between the late 1970s and early 1980s, a quarter of a million Vietnamese citizens of ethnic Chinese origins went voluntarily or were forced across the border to China, and around 400 000 Vietnamese took to boats and sought refuge in Southeast Asia, Hong Kong and Japan (Viviani,1996). According to the 2006 Census, the Vietnamese population in Australia ranks as the fourth largest in the world outside of Vietnam, with a population of 159 848 (Ben-Moshe & Pyke, 2012).

The end of the Vietnam War coincided with a liberalisation of Australia's immigration policy towards Asia-born people, as a well as a greater involvement with the Asian region (Thomas, 1997). Australia's initial response to the Vietnamese refugees was described by Viviani (1984) as "belated", "niggardly" and "churlish". Under pressure from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Australia received the first boat carrying refugees from Vietnam on 20th June 1975. In the financial year 1975-1976, Australia accepted 539 Vietnamese refugees. In May 1975, two Australian officers of the Department of Labour and Immigration went to Guam and selected, under restricted guidelines stipulated by the Prime Minister, E.G. Whitlam, a small group of refugees for resettlement in Australia (Lewins & Ly, 1985). This was followed by another visit to Hong Kong in June, where 201 refugees were selected. The criteria this time was humanitarian rather than restrictive; "that the persons selected should be without prospects for resettlement in any other country if not selected for resettlement in Australia; and that those selected should be most in need of assistance of all the refugees encountered" (p.14). A month later, another

group of refugees were picked from staging camps in Singapore and Malaysia, and resettled in Australia,.

These people would make Australia's "first" Vietnamese refugees. A press release made at that time described the first wave of refugees as having "no recognised skills or qualifications and under normal migration criteria would not be eligible for entry to Australia. They would need extensive long-term assistance from the Australian government and the community." (Lewins & Ly, p.15) This is in marked contrast to how Viviani (1996) described the same wave of refugees. According to Viviani, the first wave of refugees to reach Australian shore in 1975 comprised mainly of well-educated ethnic Vietnamese people and some ethnic Chinese with political, bureaucratic and military connections to the South Vietnamese government and the Americans. The contradictory descriptions of this group of refugees is perhaps suggestive of the lack of authoritative knowledge we have of Australia's first Vietnamese refugees. As Lewins and Ly (1985) wrote, although chosen based on humanitarian tests, the needs of these refugees were those perceived by "somewhat inexperienced, if well-meaning Australian officers" (pg. 16). Furthermore, in their research, Lewins and Ly suggested that allowance must be made for inaccuracy caused by misunderstanding or fear on the part of the refugees themselves. A recurrent theme in their research was how fear in the face of authority had made inaccurate self-description an accepted mode of protection. Men had become accustomed to lie about their ages to escape conscription to the army; to secure protection or favoured treatment in selection for resettlement, friends or acquaintances in refugee camps naturally fabricated family relationships.

From 1975 onwards, Australia accepted increasing numbers of refugees fleeing the communist regime in the reunified Vietnam. The second wave of refugees arrived between 1976 and 1978, and comprised of predominantly ethnic Vietnamese people who had been caught in refugee camps from the first wave as well as people experiencing difficulties from the political and economic changes by the new Vietnamese government (Viviani, 1996). By 1981, there were approximately 50 000 people from Vietnam in Australia. The

third wave of refugees arrived after 1985, and consisted mostly of family members of Vietnam-born Australian residents who gained entry under the family reunion program (Thomas, 1997). The Vietnam-born persons who arrived during the third wave were a mass exodus of ethnic Chinese, who “unskilled by Australian standards, formed the trading nucleus that is now such an obvious feature of the areas of residential concentration” (Viviani, 1996, p.103). The Vietnam-born population is thus unusual compared to other migrant groups for having arrived in large numbers over a short period of time.

Enduring considerable hardship, most of the Vietnamese refugees left Vietnam in small boats, with little guarantee of safety. Knudsen (1988, 1992) described the escape process as desperate and dangerous. The journey out of Vietnam was often undertaken at short notice to avoid detection by authorities. The boats were also often unseaworthy and powered by engines that sometimes ceased functioning soon after the boat reached the open seas. In addition, boats were under-resourced with food and water, and were frequently attacked by pirates. As narrated by Loc Mai, a contributor in Hoang’s (2010) collection of personal stories from the Vietnamese exodus,

The problems began almost as soon as we had made it out to the open sea: on the very first day we encountered a severe storm that crippled the boat’s engine and left us drifting. We could see nothing but the horizon. No land, no sign of life. Just twenty-one boat people consumed with the thought that they might die at any moment. But we weren’t alone for long... We were violently stripped of our clothing as they searched for valuables. The men were then separated from the women and girls and told to remain on our boat while they forced the women onto theirs... For five days they raped the girls and the women over and over and over... Eventually they released us, but three days later we were captured by another group of pirates. The fact that we now had nothing left for them to steal made them very angry, and they pulled out our gold teeth with pliers and bashed us senseless afterwards... (p.15)

Those who survived the boat journey found themselves in overcrowded refugee camps across Asia (e.g. Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Hong Kong). Compounding their hardships, families whose members had left Vietnam together found that only some of the group were eligible to enter Australia. This further divided and separated family members that had reached refugee camps after a harrowing journey. In addition, many Vietnamese who were already residents in Australia were allowed to sponsor only their aged parents to enter Australia. This was however unacceptable to the older parents, preferring to endure life in a refugee camp than leaving without the rest of the family (Thomas & Balnaves, 1993).

The Fraser Government eventually liberalised these restrictive rulings in the early 1980s, with a shift in focus towards a more controlled immigration programme. A bilateral agreement with the Vietnamese government was established, with the implementation of a more orderly family reunion (Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, 1988). The Vietnamese Family Migration Program allowed Vietnamese persons with family members residing in Australia to migrate directly from Vietnam after having satisfied the standard immigration criteria. These changes in the immigration policies resulted in changes in the composition of Vietnamese immigrants.

During the period 1975-1985, almost all of the 95 000 Vietnamese that arrived in Australia were refugees. However, in the period 1986-1991, 45.1 per cent of the 45 000 Vietnamese who arrived were refugees. From 1991 to 1993, only 22.7 per cent of the 15 000 Vietnamese who settled in Australia were refugees (Viviani, Coughlan & Rowland, 1993). In summary, the history of Vietnamese immigration to Australia can be divided into three main stages; the first stage, from 1975 to early 1978, when Australian governments avoided making a major commitment to the acceptance of Vietnamese refugees. The second stage, from early 1978 to mid 1979 was the height of the refugee crisis. This was communicated to Australians not only through media portrayal of the strife faced by those in Vietnam, but also by refugees arriving directly on Australia's shores. A year of political struggle resulted in the acceptance of

significant numbers of Vietnamese refugees. The third stage, after 1979, the issue was removed from the public agenda and the need for increasing numbers of resettlement places diminished. However, this did not abate fears of further refugee arrivals (Viviani, 1984).

Effects of the Arrival of the Vietnamese on Australia

Although it was not the first time refugees were accepted by Australia, this was the first instance in which a group of people in whom the characteristics of race and politics combined to distinguish them from other migrants and refugees (Viviani, 1980). The demand that Australia should settle significant numbers of Vietnamese rekindled political divisions of the Vietnam War period. Although a majority of Australians had supported American and Australian military intervention in the Vietnam War, by the early 1970s, opinions had shifted and successive Australian governments withdrew Australian troops from Vietnam. Australians who had supported military involvement in Vietnam argued that the Vietnamese who had been involved should be given entry, together with others who were under threat from the new regime. Other Australians believed that the claims of refugees should be answered on humanitarian grounds. In essence, they believed that because of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, she had a moral responsibility to accept those persons who faced peril (Viviani, 1984).

However, there was another very dominant discourse that opposed the entry of refugees from Vietnam. It was argued that a bloodbath would not occur and that while the United States would clearly take many people, Australia had no responsibility to accept refugees since its military intervention had been an appalling blunder. On 8 April 1975, Gough Whitlam, in his statement, argued that Vietnam had evoked a special kind of emotion and concern in Australians because "the intervention into which they were led was disastrously wrong, that it only increased and lengthened the agony of Vietnam" (as quoted in Viviani, 1984, pp.57). More importantly, it was feared that allowing entry to significant numbers of anti-communist Vietnamese to Australia would distort

the political balance between the conservatives and the Labor Party in Australian domestic politics (Viviani, 1980).

The resettlement of the Vietnamese refugees also served to raise Australian sensitivities about Asian migration. Whilst there were people in Australia that supported the acceptance of refugees for humanitarian reasons, many also feared that homeland politics would continue to produce discord in Australia (Thomas, 1999). The fear that, like the Croatian migrants that preceded them, the Vietnamese would seek to “liberate their homeland” thus causing problems of legal control, diplomatic headaches with the new government in Vietnam, and in turn, create a backlash among Australians. This was the origin of the epithet for Vietnamese refugees, “Yellow Croats” (Viviani, 1984).

Moreover, the arrival of the Vietnamese refugees had a profound effect on Australian migration policy, first as a test of the disestablishment of the White Australia Policy, and second, in demonstrating an erosion of Australia’s sovereignty over the entry of people to her shores (Viviani, 1984). Arriving at a time of liberalisation of Australia’s “White Australia” immigration policy and fears of an influx of people from Asia, the Vietnam-born have been particularly subject to media and public discourse (Thomas, 1999). When the third boat of “self-selected” refugees arrived on Australia’s shores, the media expressed deep misgivings (Viviani, 1984). The Melbourne Sun-News Pictorial claimed that “today’s trickle of unannounced visitors to our lonely northern coastline could well become a tide of human flootsam” and asked how Australia would react to the “coming invasion of its far north by hundreds, thousands and even tens of thousands of Asian refugees” (as quoted in Viviani).

Even though only some 2000 of a total intake of 37000 refugees arrived by boat on Australia’s northern shores, the arrival of the Vietnamese people by boat had “a far reaching and complex impact on many Australians’ deeply held perceptions of the vulnerability of their country to Asian penetration” (Viviani, 1985, pp. 235). The arrival of the “boat people” in 1976 gave a new twist to already deep-seated fears of an uncontrollable flood of impoverished and desperate Asians. Although Australians had generally been in favour of

accepting small numbers of refugees officially, they reacted very strongly to receiving self-selected migrants that arrived on the coast without official clearance. They were concerned about the worth of the government's coastal surveillance, about diseases that the Vietnamese "boat people" might bring, and about whether they were genuine refugees two years after the fall of Saigon.

Most importantly, Australia was now confronted with a peaceful penetration of Australia's territory. The perception that the number of Vietnamese persons that needed resettlement was large and would upset the racial dominance of Anglo-Australians was a fear that reduced the support for refugees. Reigniting many of the old fears and prejudices Anglo-Australians had exhibited in the late nineteenth century, the arrival of the Vietnamese refugees was referred to by many Australians as an "Asian invasion" (Elder, 2007). The media headlines screamed of a refugee "flood", repeated references to a mythical armada of boats were made, and in one case, a news story headed "It's the Yellow Peril again" (Viviani, 1984).

There was extensive anti-Asian sentiment and the Vietnamese refugees were represented as being too different to fit into the nation, the main concern being that cultural diversity threatens social cohesion, and promoting difference would incite conflict. Prejudices were aired to argue that Vietnamese refugees should not be allowed to enter Australia. These included their very different languages, different food and different world views. In addition, widely publicized complaints that the Vietnamese refugees were receiving undue preferences from the government and that their political activities presented a threat to Australian political values, were at times linked to demands that the entry of Vietnamese should be curtailed (Viviani, 1984).

The Vietnamese refugees were also accused of stealing jobs from Australians; the two main arguments being that most of the refugees were either on the dole and therefore a drag on the country; or that they were such good workers and therefore competing and depriving Australians of jobs in a time of high unemployment (Viviani, 1980). The Vietnamese were also viewed as receiving preferential treatment from the Australian government. Tom Burns,

the then Leader of the Opposition in Queensland, complained that the Vietnamese should not get extra privileges in reference to a \$12 000 interest free loan (Viviani). This loan was in fact, a Commonwealth scheme which allowed Indochinese refugees to borrow a maximum of \$600 to assist them in paying for housing bonds and buy furniture, with the aim of speeding up integration into the community. However, based on his comments, people in Queensland continued to believe that the Vietnamese refugees were obtaining \$12 000 loans interest-free (Viviani).

For most non-Vietnamese in Australia, knowledge and perceptions of the Vietnamese were based on media images and newspaper representations. The media presentation of the issues of jobs, preferential treatment and politics as a “racist backlash” raised the question of racial balance and inter-race conflict in Australia. According to Viviani (1980), investigation of the “racist backlash” by the Australian press uncovered widespread adverse attitudes that had only been hinted at in the public opinion polls. It was suggested that the foundations of attitudes put in place by the White Australia policy remained intact and still had the political potential to constrain the entry of non-White persons into Australia.

Profile of the Vietnamese Community in the Early 1990s

The Vietnamese community in Australia in the 1990s was a newly established community that was expanding rapidly. At the time of the 1981 census, persons born in Vietnam constituted 0.3 per cent of the population of Australia, and by the end of 1982, 57 770 refugees from Vietnam had entered Australia. In the early 1990s, it was observed that the bulk of Vietnamese-born persons were young, with the majority of them without academic qualifications, and on fairly low income (White, Perrone, Guerra & Lampugnani, 1999). They were also reported to have high unemployment rates and be of low English proficiency. In February 1992, the unemployment rate for the Vietnamese-born persons was among the highest in Australia – 34 per cent, compared with 11.5 per cent for the total Australian population (ABS, 1992).

Previous research has suggested that the reported unemployment rate could be due to the age structure of the community (Thomas, 1999). The younger median ages of the Vietnam-born in Australia in the 1990s would have dictated less work experience and hence, more difficulty in obtaining employment. This situation would have been exacerbated by the years lost in refugee camps and the later age at which they would leave school compared to the rest of Australia's population (Coughlan, 1992). Another reason would be the lack of education. Due to their young age upon arrival, many of the Vietnamese-born in Australia would have had little professional achievements. Also, very few enrolled in skilled trade courses. The third, and probably most important factor, is English language proficiency; the 1996 Census indicated that 44.1 per cent of respondents with Vietnamese ancestry reported a lack of English proficiency.

Existing literature has also indicated that the Vietnamese community in Australia in the early 1990s was not a financially prosperous one (Thomas, 1999), and were underrepresented in high income groups and overrepresented in the group reporting no income. Compounding their problems of low English proficiency and a lack of education, the early Vietnamese refugees arrived during a time of economic recession, and high unemployment made finding work even more difficult (Viviani, 1996). Available jobs were in the low-skilled, manufacturing trades, particularly in the "clothing, textile, footwear, catering and retail trades" (Lack & Templeton, 1995, p.159), and most of the newly-arrived Vietnamese found employment in these low-paid, unregulated areas. Informed by existing statistics, namely the 1991 Census, Thomas (1997) wrote that the low levels of English proficiency and high levels of unemployment would result in the development of an underclass of unskilled and unemployed Vietnamese. She also suggested that the high unemployment would lead to risks of child poverty and low levels of education, employment and income.

In contrast to these predictions, the Vietnam-born in Australia appear to be on an upwards trajectory in the 21st Century. The 1996 Census indicated that 73 per cent of first generation Vietnamese young persons (i.e. Vietnam-born)

aged 0-14 years of age spoke English very well, with only 24 per cent not speaking it well. In contrast, 31 per cent of second generation Vietnamese in that age group spoke only English, with 37 per cent speaking it very well (DIMIA, 2000). Perhaps as testament of their upwards trajectory, statistics from the 2006 Census indicate that only 18.8 per cent of second generation Vietnamese are not able to speak English well (DIAC, 2011).

Despite existing literature suggesting high low levels of education, the statistics from the Data Set of the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) (1996) indicated a relatively high participation rate of 24.9 per cent for Vietnamese in higher education. Comprising only 1.2 per cent of the total student population in higher education, Vietnamese persons represented 11 per cent of enrolments in courses where competition for entry is high, such as Dentistry, Optometry and Medicine (Jayasuriya & Kee, 1999). According to Parr and Mok (1995), this degree of participation in higher education is all the more significant because nearly 45 per cent of Vietnamese-speaking students in higher education live in low socio-economic status suburbs. By contrast, only 14 per cent of students from English-speaking households came from such disadvantaged areas. More recently, the 2006 Census reports that 86.3 per cent of the second generation Vietnamese aged 15-19 years of age, and 48.2 per cent of those aged 20-24 were in attendance at some form of educational institution. This is above the Australia-born average (71% and 28.6% respectively) (DIAC, 2011). Data from the 2006 Census also indicates that 72 per cent of second generation Vietnamese hold a Bachelor degree or Higher qualifications in managerial or professional occupations.

Another marker of their upwards trajectory could possibly be the proportion of Vietnamese in Australia who own or are purchasing their own home. Informed by the 2006 Census, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship reported that 78.5 per cent of the first generation Vietnamese and 79 per cent of the second generation Vietnamese are home owners. This is above the Australia-born average of 73.1 per cent and 73.6 per cent respectively (DIAC, 2011).

According to the 2011 Census, there are 221 114 persons of Vietnamese ancestry in Australia; there are 185 000 Vietnam-born persons, comprising 3.5 per cent of the total overseas-born population (ABS, 2012); and 1642 persons with Australia-born parents indicating third-generation status. The 2011 Census also reported that 220 000 persons speak Vietnamese at home, comprising 1.2 per cent of the total population in Australia. Of those that speak Vietnamese at home, 27.9 per cent were born in Australia. There are no official statistics on the number of second generation Vietnamese in Australia from the 2011 Census; this raises the question, has available statistics failed to capture an important cohort of the Vietnamese population? It is noteworthy that the Australian Bureau of Statistics has stopped publishing detailed information of the Vietnamese population in Australia. For example, statistics on their proficiency in spoken English; their highest level of education completed; or total income is no longer available. In light of this, I argue that the Census does not adequately or accurately portray the Vietnamese population; in particular, the second generation Vietnamese youth in Australia today.

Profile of the Vietnamese Community in Perth

A review of existing literature showed that most of the available research has been conducted in Victoria and New South Wales, despite the fact that the Vietnam-born population in Western Australia (WA) accounts for 6 per cent of the state's population. According to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 40 per cent of all Vietnam-born persons reside in New South Wales, and 37 per cent reside in Victoria (2008a). This is in comparison to 7 per cent of all Vietnam-born persons residing in Perth. This raises the question if growing up in Perth, where there is a considerably smaller proportion of Vietnamese people, would encourage particular ethnic identity negotiation processes.

As previously noted, there is a lack of specific statistics on the Vietnamese population from the 2011 Census. As such, the profile of the Vietnamese person in Perth has been largely informed by statistics from the 2006 Census. According to the Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) (2007), there were 11

844 persons of Vietnamese ancestry in Western Australia; with 10 494 persons born in Vietnam. Compared with the total overseas-born Western Australian population, Vietnam-born persons have a more recent arrival pattern. Only 17 per cent had arrived in Australia before 1981, with approximately 50 per cent arriving during the 1980s and 28 per cent arriving during the 1990s. Between the years 1996 and 2006, only 384 persons arrived from Vietnam. However, it is not known what proportion of the new migrants were children, comprising the youth of Perth today.

The majority of Vietnam-born individuals were recorded as living in metropolitan Perth, with the Local Government Areas of Stirling (23.5%), Wanneroo (24.3%), Bayswater (12.5%) and Swan (14.4%) reported to have the highest concentrations of Vietnamese (OMI, 2007). Thomas (1997) proposed that the clustering of Vietnamese people at different location benefits the maintenance of Vietnamese language and cultural values, as well as providing networks for social communication. However, unlike Cabramatta in Sydney, the Vietnamese community in Perth is not as tight-knit or visible. Cabramatta, in Western Sydney, recorded the highest number of Vietnam-born individuals in Australia (ABS, 2007), and has become the site of a visible Vietnamese identity. At the same time, the area has also been viewed as a Vietnamese “ghetto”, with the perception that it has a high level of criminality, drug use and gang formation. Similarly, Springvale and Footscray in Melbourne have a high concentration of Vietnamese people, and are viewed as “ghettos”. However, Perth does not have an ethnic enclave similar to Cabramatta or Springvale. This raises the following questions: (a) how similar are the lived experiences of these youth and how does this then affect the negotiation of an “ethnic” identity? (b) In turn, does existing literature reflect and address the needs of the Perth-born Vietnamese young person?

According to the 2006 Census, most Vietnam-born Australians (96%) spoke a language other than English at home, mainly Vietnamese or Cantonese (OMI, 2006). More than half (56%) reported to speak English very well or well, with a higher proportion of Vietnam-born males (62.5%) reporting so than females (45.1%). Of the Vietnam-born in Perth, 40 per cent reported speaking English

not well or not at all. This differs from previous statistics that indicates low proficiency in English amongst the Vietnamese in Perth (50%). It is suggested that rather than possessing a low proficiency in English, these statistics reflect a tendency to speak Vietnamese at home because it continues to be their parents' first language. However, these statistics are almost a decade old; today's Vietnamese young person who considers English to be their first language may not have been included in the census. Also, if the Vietnamese in Australia are deemed to be of low English proficiency, I question if the questions in the census comprehended and answered accurately. I argue that previous Census data does not provide a precise snapshot of the Vietnamese in contemporary Perth.

At the time of the 2006 Census, 14 per cent of the Vietnam-born community in Western Australia possessed a bachelor degree or higher qualification. This was comparable to the total Western Australian population (14.3%), and is an increase from 10 per cent of the Vietnam-born community as reported in the 2001 Census. They were also more likely to have completed Year 12 or equivalent than the total Western Australian population (49.3% compared to 41.8%). In contrast, they were also more likely to not have attended school (10.1% compared to 0.6%) and the proportion of Vietnam-born adults qualified at advanced diploma, diploma or certificate level was less than half the proportion for the total Western Australian population (10.9% compared to 24.7%).

As noted previously, many of the Vietnamese persons sampled in the 2006 Census and prior, may have arrived in Australia at a later age, experiencing a disruption in their education. Their parents may not also have had the financial capacity to support their education; perhaps not pursuing a non-school degree was borne out of necessity. Given that they grew up within the Western Australian school system, and the upwards trajectory that their parents are on, it may be possible that the second generation youth identified in this study would have a higher propensity to complete Year 12 schooling and even tertiary education.

Between the 1996 Census and 2001 Census, labour force participation had increased by four percentage points (59% to 63%). In 2001, 53 per cent of the Vietnam-born individuals in Perth were employed, 10 per cent were unemployed and 36 per cent were not in the labour force (ABS, 2001). By 2006, more than half (59.8%) of Vietnam-born Western Australians were employed, comparable to the total WA population (59.1%). 33.4 per cent were not in the labour force, and the proportion of unemployed Vietnam-born persons halved to 4.3 per cent. In terms of income, the weekly incomes of the Vietnam-born Western Australians improved between 2001 and 2006, with a decline in the proportion earning less than \$250 per week (42.7% to 26.5%). There was also an increase in the proportion of Vietnam-born persons earning over \$1000 per week (3.7% to 10.8%). However, the proportion of persons not earning a weekly income increased during this period (7% to 9.5%), and was higher than for the total WA population.

While the unemployment rates and the level of income earned by the Vietnam-born in Perth may indicate considerable disadvantage, it should be noted that official statistics may not present a complete picture. The 2001 Census reported that Vietnam-born in Australia had higher rates of home ownership than the total Western Australian population (39% compared to 33%). It is suggested that there may be a significant proportion of Vietnamese persons that work within the family business, and hence declare unemployment. Although officially unemployed, they may provide unpaid labour to family businesses, thus being sustained by family income. Similarly, it is possible that some Vietnamese people find work in businesses run by other Vietnamese migrants, such as restaurants or cafes, and receive earnings that may be untaxed. Also, the lower employment rate for women might reflect an adherence to the traditional role of the Vietnamese woman to stay at home and look after the house and family.

Thomas (1999) suggested that although there is considerable under-reporting of income, more accurate figures would still represent very low levels of income among the Vietnam born. She proposed that the second generation Vietnamese youth in Australia may face considerable nutritional, educational,

economic and social disadvantages due to the low levels of income in Vietnamese families. It is apparent that much has changed since 1999; there was an increase in labour force participation and proportion of persons earning higher weekly incomes. It should also be considered that the sample examined in this study may not have entered the workforce during the 2001 nor 2006 Census, which raises the question – are the second generation Vietnamese youth in Perth today disadvantaged as suggested? Do they still present with low levels of English proficiency, un-educated and unemployed?

Not only is there a dearth in current statistics on the Vietnamese person in Australia, I argue that available statistics may not have accurately captured today's Vietnamese young person in Australia, much less the Vietnamese young person in Perth. In fact, the statistics provided by the 2006 Census only include Vietnam-born persons and do not provide specific statistics on Australia-born persons of Vietnamese descent. With few recent statistics or research available on Vietnam-born youth living in Perth, this study aims to address this gap by exploring the stories of a group of second generation Vietnamese youth living in Perth. Born in Australia or arriving in the early 1980s, this group of Vietnamese youth was educated within the Australian education system. They would have only recently entered the workforce, or are completing tertiary education. By exploring their lived experiences of growing up in Perth, this study aims to uncover their ethnic identification and how they negotiate an ethnic identity as Vietnamese youth growing up in Australia.

The next section explores traditional Vietnamese values; a better understanding of traditional (and historical) Vietnamese values will allow for an exploration of how this group of youth are active agents in choosing what values they embrace, and how it may contribute to their ethnic identity negotiation.

Traditional Vietnamese Values

The Vietnamese community in Australia is not a homogeneous community, with about 25 per cent of the Vietnamese-born claiming to have Chinese

ancestry in the 2006 census. Having been occupied by China for almost 1000 years, Vietnam has so strongly integrated Chinese values and ideas into its cultural and political life that it was not possible to completely separate itself from Chinese cultural practices and values. For example, Buddhism and Confucianism continue to be two of the three major religions of Vietnamese-Australians (Thomas, 1999). However, many scholars agree that Vietnamese culture, while containing many similarities to Chinese culture, has managed to preserve its own unique national characteristics and identity (Do, 1962).

Previous research has suggested that the relationship many have with Vietnam is primarily experienced through family relationships. When asked what is important to them about Vietnamese cultural life, most Vietnamese in Australia mention family life (Thomas, 1999). In traditional Vietnamese society, the family was the centre of an individual's life and activities, and one cared more about his or her family more than oneself. Traditionally communal in texture, the Vietnamese culture is one in which family interests often take precedence over personal interests. Phung Thi Hanh, formerly a journalist in Saigon, states that traditionally Indo-Chinese society "rests entirely on the solid core of structure of the family" (1979, p.177). The family is viewed as a system of welfare and mutual dependence, through which each member of the family must contribute in order to gain assistance when necessary. According to existing literature, one of the pre-eminent ideals of the Vietnamese family is the concept of *hoa thuan*, or 'harmony and unity in relations' (Thomas, 1999). These harmonious social interactions are the basis of the family's moral code, which relates to the way in which each individual suppresses independent desires in order to maintain a cooperative and unified family. Kibria (1993) proposed that the Vietnamese ideology of family collectivism promoted cooperative kin-based economic practices that helped families cope and survive in the immigrant setting.

The Vietnamese kinship system drew strength from Confucian ideology which clearly defined the power, position and relationship of each member of the family. Vietnamese families are characterized by a patriarchal structure, a mutual helpfulness, and an unquestioning obedience to parental authority

(Matsuoka, 1990; Nguyen & Williams, 1989). As described by Tran (1988), there were certain fundamental characteristics of the traditional Vietnamese family, such as the domination by gender hierarchy (the males in the family had more power); by the age hierarchy (elderly have more power); the centre of loyalty; and ancestor worship.

The heads of the traditional Vietnamese nuclear family were the grandparents, if they were alive. At the death of the grandparents, the father became the head of the family, and the eldest son would take over this position at the death of the father (Tran, 1988). The hierarchical nature of familial roles and relationships in a Vietnamese family often spells out the demeanour and behaviour expected in interactions between family members, thus minimising the potential for interpersonal conflict. Parents and elders, particularly males, are deemed authority figures that are responsible for providing proper care and inculcation of moral and social values to the younger generation (Chung, 2006). Dependency on parents and other relatives is strongly encouraged as they are deemed to be wise and experienced. On the other hand, children are often thought to be too irresponsible to make decisions and are told that they do not have the maturity required to solve problems. These conceptions of adult-child relationships are viewed as radically different from the social trend in Australia, where dependence is condemned and children are empowered to become independent and to make informed decisions autonomously at an early age.

Another cornerstone of Vietnamese traditional values is the Confucian ideal of *dao hieu*; translated as filial piety, it is one of the most important ethics in the Vietnamese culture and has shaped parenting within Vietnam over several centuries. Described as “a guiding principle governing general Chinese patterns of socialization, as well as specific rules of intergenerational conduct” (Ho, 1996, p.155), it dictates a system of age respect and patriarchy. Children’s piety was regarded as the most important moral obligation of children while their parents are alive, and also after their death (Phan, 1975). Previous research by Ho and Lee (1974) and Sung (1995), identify a number of prescripts for children’s filial behaviour; these include according respect for

elders, obedience, seeking parental advice and guidance, bringing honour to the family, caring for parents materially and emotionally, performing ancestral worship duties, and making sacrifices for the family. It needs to be noted that filial duties do not only extend to one's parents but to one's family in terms of respecting and honouring the family name. The repute of a family to a large degree rests on the children's behaviour. One of the most extreme insults to family is to accuse their children of lacking parental respect (*do bat hieu*). Children devoted and dedicated to their parents and older kin are called on to protect family honour and to be an exemplar of their family's righteousness (Thomas, 1999).

Within Vietnamese families, filial piety strongly influences how parents discipline children, in particular, how to behave or orient themselves toward their parents, elders and even ancestors. A well-known Vietnamese proverb is "*thuong con cho roi cho vot, ghet con chon got cho bui*": "to love a child one is strict, to hate a child one says sweet words" (Thomas, 1999). The strict discipline of children has the purpose of engendering respect and deference, it is also used to inculcate self-control and restraint, selflessness, responsibility and consideration for others, and academic excellence. Vietnamese children are taught to be absolutely obedient to their elders, with disobedience regarded as a serious violation of the moral code (Thuy, 1976). Previous research has also suggested that girls are subject to stricter rules than boys (Pyke & Markson, 2003). Children who are compliant and submit to their parent's wishes are rewarded and defiance is dealt with harshly. Literature has also suggested that if there is disharmony in the family, children will often not confront their parents. Rather than insulting their parents verbally, they will often just leave the family home or stay out for long periods, away from the house (Thomas, 1999).

Respecting and honouring elders as prescribed by the Confucian value of filial piety, extends beyond those who are living in the form of ancestor worship. Many Vietnamese families identify as being Buddhist and continue to have a relationship with their deceased relatives through ancestor worship and death anniversaries. Families that worshipped their ancestors in Vietnam continue to

do so in Australia and set up an altar in the main room of the house (Thomas, 1999). Carrying photographs of deceased relatives, usually parents and grandparents, offerings of incense and items of food and drink are placed on the altar. As described by Thomas, the ever-present fruit and tea is placed there both to remind the family of their ancestors and to invigorate their relationship to the past.

Ancestor worship also fosters “we-ness” that is limited in blood lineage and immediate family (Park, 2002). As Kibria (1993) writes

Ancestor worship affirmed the sacredness and essential unity of the kin group as well as its permanence in comparison to the transience of the individual... It highlighted obligation as a key feature of a member’s relationship to the kin group... and familial obligation was defined by the idea that the needs and desires of the kin group took precedence over personal ones. (p.100)

In worshipping their ancestors, requests of blessings and approval, as well as of support for future endeavours are made. The cooperation of ancestors in the practices of the living and in the hopes for future generations signifies the union that operates spatially and temporally between Vietnamese people across the world (Thomas, 1999). Thomas suggests that ancestor worship operates not only to modulate the sense of loss of the homeland, it may also intensify the association between those present and absent. The altar is thus viewed as a tangible pathway to a place beyond the home, to a family still held dear and to a lost country.

It needs to be noted that a fair percentage of Vietnamese are Catholics with 29.5 per cent of the Vietnam-born in Perth reporting to be Catholic (OMI, 2006). According to the Catholic Hierarchy Catalog, 6.87 per cent of persons in Vietnam are Catholic. After the reunification of North and South Vietnam by Nguyen Anh in the early 1800s with the help of Pigneau de BeLongne, a French Catholic bishop, French influence was allowed to extend and deepen. A major thrust of this influence had been proselytization and conversion, to the extent that perhaps 5 per cent of Vietnamese had become Catholics by the

nineteenth century. However, while the Vietnamese who are Catholic may not practice ancestor worship, family and filial piety remain core tenets.

While there is little doubt that the family is of utmost importance within the Vietnamese system of values, it is acknowledged that some dynamics within the Vietnamese family may have changed over the years. Yet much of the research continues to reinforce the stereotype of the Vietnamese family and individual. These normative prescriptions for familial relations are often at odds with personal independence, thus creating many tensions and frictions within migrated Vietnamese families (Thomas, 1999). It is thought that urban living favours fragmentation and dispersion, with Western culture promoting individualism, reducing the need for interdependence. The mainstream emphasis on individuality, self-assertion and egalitarian relationships in Australia may then challenge many of the traditional values in the Vietnamese culture (Nguyen, Messe & Stollak, 1999). Available literature has suggested that the duty and responsibility of each member of the family toward his/her family and those of the family towards him/her are tightly interlocked and inseparable. As a Vietnamese adolescent in New Orleans reported to Zhou and Bankston (1998, pp. 166) “To be an American, you may be able to do whatever you want. But to be a Vietnamese, you must think of your family first.” Given the nature of normative adolescence in Australian society, the extent to which Vietnamese adolescents act in accordance with the traditional expectations of family obligation remains unclear.

This study explores whether these youth continue to adopt traditional Vietnamese values, and if they contribute to the negotiation of an ethnic identity. It also examines whether discrepancies in values between parent and child prove to be sites of tension. Would the individualistic values as promoted by Australia be a source of stress between Vietnam-born youth and their parents? Has it eroded the structure and strength of the traditional Vietnamese family in Australia? Does one’s value system contribute to one’s ethnic identity construction?

The next section introduces various theoretical underpinnings of ethnic identity. Whilst the present study has refrained from adopting any particular

framework in exploring the ethnic identity negotiation of this group of second generation Vietnamese youth, I acknowledge that it is impossible to embark on the journey without any prior knowledge of the topic. As such, it would be useful to first have an understanding of the different conceptualizations of ethnic identity.

Theories of Ethnic Identity

The issue of ethnic identity has been brought to the fore by increased globalization, and increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees throughout the world (Phinney, 1990). Many studies have asserted that ethnic identity is crucial to the self-concept and psychological functioning of ethnic group members (Erikson, 1950; Farver, Bakhtawar & Narang, 2002; Maldonado, 1975; Masuda, Matsumoto & Meredith, 1970; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Rumbaut, 1994). Researchers have found that an achieved ethnic identity to be associated with greater self-esteem, psychological well-being, and self-efficacy (Lee, 2003, 2005; Phinney & Chavira, 1992; Phinney, Cantu & Kurtz, 1997; Romero & Roberts, 2003; Yasui et al, 2004). Similarly, an achieved ethnic identity has been found to be associated with an increased sense of community and social connectedness in samples of Asian American college students (Lee, 2003; Lee & Yoo, 2004; Tsai, Ying & Lee, 2001). However, the topic of ethnic identity is a broad topic characterized by a lack of theoretical coherence and many definitional problems (Ward & Kennedy, 1994). Furthermore, the topic has been explored within different frameworks, resulting in theoretical tension.

To illustrate, stemming from an essentialist framework, Erikson (1958) viewed ethnic identity as an essential human need. He defined ethnic identity as a learned aspect of an individual's overall identity development, and a process of coming to terms with one's ethnic membership group as a salient reference group. However, for social constructionists such as Tajfel (1981), ethnic identity is defined as the ethnic component of one's social identity, and is a result of wider group processes. Tajfel (1981) writes, it is "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from [his] knowledge of [his]

membership of a social group or social groups together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.” (p.255)

Some writers have also suggested that ethnic identity can be assessed as the subjective sense of belonging to a group or culture, and involves an exploration and commitment to a cultural group (Le & Stockdale, 2008; Masuda, Matsumoto & Meredith, 1970; Ting-Toomey, 1981). In contrast, the individual as an active agent in developing an ethnic identity has also been suggested in existing scholarship as a result of individual choice and negotiation (Hall, 1998; Nagel, 1994; Waters, 1990). It is important here to note that one’s ethnic identity is not an issue except in terms of a contrast group, and in this case, being “Vietnamese” in the face of the dominant Australian culture.

Both theoretical and empirical evidence suggest that ethnic identity is a multifaceted, overarching construct that includes a number of components (see Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volge, 2004). Following a review of research on ethnic identity in adolescents and adults, Phinney (1990) highlighted various factors that were most widely considered to be central to the construct of ethnic identity. These include self-identification, a sense of belonging to the group, attitudes towards one’s ethnic group, and ethnic involvement. The concept of self-identification refers to the ethnic label that one uses; for example, Vietnamese, Australian, Vietnamese-Australian, or Australian-Vietnamese. Adolescents and adults are assumed to know their ethnicity, the question is how one chooses which label to identify with. Although the choosing of one’s label may appear easy, it can be quite complex. One’s ethnicity, as determined by ancestry or parental background, may differ from how one sees him or herself. For example, the participants may have Vietnamese parents / ancestry, but may identify as Australian rather than Vietnamese.

The second component is the sense of belonging one feels towards one’s ethnic group, and is viewed by Phinney (1990) to perhaps be the most important component of ethnic identity. However, it needs to be noted that the strength of one’s belonging to the ethnic group is not necessarily related to the

content of the identity. In other words, the specific attitudes or worldviews held by the individual may not determine extent of belonging (Cokley, 2005). Phinney (1990) writes that people may use an ethnic label when asked, but may not have a strong sense of belonging to the ethnic group chosen. Another component is the positive and negative attitudes towards one's ethnic group. In her review of existing literature, Phinney found that attitudes towards one's group were examined in more than half of the studies. Positive attitudes examined included pride in, and pleasure, satisfaction, and contentment with one's own group. Negative attitudes were viewed as a denial of one's ethnic identity; measures included displeasure, dissatisfaction, discontentment, feelings of inferiority or a desire to hide one's background. The last component is ethnic involvement; involvement in the social life and cultural practices of one's ethnic group has been widely used in existing studies as measures of ethnic identity. These measures include language spoken, friendship, social organisations, religion, cultural traditions and politics (Phinney).

As I reviewed literature on ethnic identity for the present study, I had to concur with Ward and Kennedy (1994) that there is indeed no widely agreed upon definition of ethnic identity. In light of this, and by nature of the narrative methodology adopted, I chose to embark on my research journey by adopting a postmodern perspective. Here, knowledge is viewed as inter-relational and structural, and is neither inside nor outside in the world, but exists in the relationship between person and world. As Geertz (1973) writes:

Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning. (p.5)

Informed by previous scholarship, I sought to uncover narratives of ethnic identity negotiation of second generation Vietnamese youth. Whilst this research journey was not anchored within any particular framework, it is useful that the different conceptualizations of ethnic identity processes employed within existing literature are introduced to have a better

understanding of ethnic identity as a concept. As previously mentioned, it needs to be acknowledged that the different models of ethnic identity development include different theoretical assumptions and predictions that are perhaps irreconcilable; however, it is not the aim of this review to resolve any theoretical tension.

This section begins with the essentialist framework provided by Erikson's (1958) theory of ego identity formation. The following sections then review the socially constructed nature of identity; in particular Tajfel's (1981) social identity theory, and sociological perspectives of ethnic identity formation. Phinney's model of ethnic identity is then introduced. This section also examines acculturation as a framework for studying ethnic identity formation. The review of existing literature highlights how quantitative studies of ethnic identity may perhaps have limited our understanding of the content and dynamics of ethnic identity negotiation. This section concludes with how the narrative approach adopted aims to add to our understanding of ethnic identity negotiation in this group of second generation Vietnamese youth.

Erikson's Theory of Ego Identity Formation

In developmental psychology, the study of ethnic identity formation has largely been situated within Eriksonian theory. Erikson (1968) focused on the processes of exploration and commitment to important identity domains of a broader self-concept (Phinney, 1989, 1990, 2006; Umana-Taylor, Yazedjia & Bamaca-Gomez, 2004). According to Erikson (1959), identity is a process located both in the core of the individual and in his/her communal culture. Beginning with identifications made in early childhood, then transforming and solidifying during adolescence, ego identity development culminates in coming to terms with their feelings about the role of a particular component identity (e.g. ethnic) within their broader social self (Erikson, 1968). He writes "for only an identity safely anchored in the 'patrimony' of a cultural identity can produce a workable psychosocial equilibrium" (1968, p.412). Erikson theorized that forming a positive and coherent identity is characterized by an ability to integrate seemingly disparate aspects of the self to arrive at a sense of personal sameness and continuity across time and context. In other words,

the search for an identity culminates in establishing a meaningful self-concept. Erikson suggested that the key means through which identity develops is through interaction with others. These include interactions with family members, primarily parents, as well as the community and larger society. As a result of their exploration, the adolescent arrives at a resolution that serves as a guiding framework in adulthood (Spencer, Swanson & Cunningham, 1991).

At the same time, it needs to be acknowledged that the issue of belonging to an ethnic group is not always determined just by an individual's desire or choice alone; existing literature suggests that circumstances are important because they provide possibilities and create limitations. Moving away from positivist frameworks that render the concept of identity as "fixed", the next section explores the social construction of one's ethnic identity. Phinney and colleagues (2001; 2003) suggest that ethnic identity can be distinguished from one's ascribed ethnicity. Specifically, one's ethnic identity is part of social identity, and changes in response to social psychological and contextual factors. Moreover, these responses vary over time and must therefore be considered with reference to its formation and variation.

Social Identity Theory

It needs to be acknowledged that in referring to the participants as 'Vietnamese', I am referring to a social identity. Defined as "socially constructed and socially meaningful categories that are accepted by individuals as descriptive of themselves, or their group" (Thoits & Wirshup, 1997, p.106), each of us possess a range of social identities. These include those derived from highly meaningful and clearly defined groups (e.g. PhD candidate), as well as identities that stem from more abstract and ambiguous social categories (e.g. Asian). The concept of social identity was developed out of a sense of dissatisfaction with attempts to explain intergroup phenomena in terms of personal and interpersonal processes (Hopkins & Reicher, 2011). This tradition highlights that group behaviour cannot be merely reduced to the properties of the individuals in the group. It recognizes that group identities (e.g. Vietnamese) are the product of wider social processes. The theory also emphasizes the variation in the situational salience

of particular identities; that is, the salience of these identities varies according to context and situation. One's social identity thus becomes a self-evident and basic framework for thinking, feeling and doing, and is an important part of the self-concept.

Although social identities deal specifically with group memberships, they can also be conceived as one specific type of self-component composing the global self (Deaux, 1991). According to Phinney and colleagues (2001), adolescents from ethnic minority groups or of immigrants are likely to develop an ethnic identity, as part of their social identity. Indeed, in many societies, ethnic identity has become a medium through which social life is interpreted (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992). Differing from Eriksonian theory and its emphasis on the process of identity development, social identity theory focuses on the affective components of identity and how they are related to outcomes. In social identity theory, a social identity is viewed as a person's knowledge that he or she belongs to a social category or group (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). A social group is defined as a group of individuals who share a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category; for example, an ethnic identity, or members of the same ethnic group. Value is attributed to group membership, and self-esteem is derived from a sense of belonging to the group. Through a process of categorisation, individuals who are perceived to be similar to the self are categorized with the self whilst individuals who differ from oneself are categorized as the out-group.

According to the theory, the self is viewed as reflexive in that it can categorise, classify or name itself in particular ways in relation to other social groups. Inherently social in nature, categorisation with a certain social identity is embedded within a frame of reference that is provided by the immediate social context. In other words, social contexts make certain social identities more or less relevant than others in different comparative contexts. Alluding to the use of categorization, this group of participants represent themselves as a distinct ethnic group - "Viet", "Asian", in contrast to the "Aussie", "White people" or "Western people" mainstream. Yet, in their narratives, they concomitantly

identify as being Australian, illustrating that ethnic (and social) identity is always contested and constantly negotiated.

Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development

As previously explored, one's ethnic identity evolves and changes in response to developmental, contextual and situational factors. Deriving her model by integrating Marcia's (1966) developmental model of identity statuses and Tajfel and Turner's (1986) social identity model, Phinney (1989) identified three statuses of ethnic identity development: unexamined, moratorium, and achieved. In her model, she views the process of ethnic identity negotiation as dynamic - changing over time and dependant on context. Consistent with Erikson (1968) and Marcia's (1980) model of ethnic identity, Phinney's model is developmental in that individuals are expected to progress through the statuses (unexamined → moratorium → achieved) in response to new experiences and opportunities for meaning-making. In this model, one's ethnic identity negotiation may be viewed as a process similar to ego identity formation; it takes place over time as individuals explore and ascertain the importance of ethnicity to their global self-concept. However, these statuses are not stages, and therefore progression does not follow an invariant sequence. As part of the normative identity negotiation process, individuals may regress to lower statuses (e.g. from achieved to moratorium) in response to new experiences (Syed, Azmitia, & Phinney, 2007).

In the first status of her model, ethnic identity is unexamined. This status is characterized by minimal exploration of their ethnicity, along with no clear personal understanding of their ethnicity. According to Cross (1978) and other scholars (e.g. Atkinson et al, 1983; Kim, 1981), this early stage is characterized by a preference for the dominant culture. However, individuals in this stage may not necessarily have negative views of their own group. They might simply not have been faced with the issue of ethnicity and consider ethnicity to be of little importance. In Phinney's (1989) study, only one-fifth of all the subjects had negative own-group attitudes, for example, a desire to change their ethnicity if they could.

Individuals in the moratorium status display an increasing awareness of their ethnicity. They will re-examine their ethnic identity and actively explore its meanings before making a commitment. This status might be the result of significant experiences, which might include discrimination or prejudice that forces awareness of one's ethnicity (Phinney, 1990). It typically involves an active exploration of one's culture, and an immersion in cultural activities such as reading about one's culture, going to ethnic museums and participating actively in cultural events. For some, it may involve active rejection of values of the dominant culture.

The exploration of one's identity culminates in the final status of the process, characterized by an achieved ethnic identity (Phinney, 1989). Individuals in the achieved status show evidence of a clear confident sense of one's ethnicity, together with a sense of acceptance and internalization of their ethnicity as an identity. It may also require resolution or coming to terms with two fundamental problems for ethnic minorities: (a) cultural differences between their ethnic group and the dominant culture, and (b) the lower or marginalized status of their group in society (Phinney, Lochner & Murphy, 1990). Phinney (1989, 1990) stressed that the meaning of ethnic identity achievement differs amongst individuals and groups because of their different historical and personal experiences. It needs to be noted that an achieved ethnic identity does not necessarily imply a high degree of ethnic involvement; one could be confident of their ethnic identity without a desire to maintain one's heritage language or cultural practices.

Sociological Perspectives

Similar to social identity theory, sociologists have proposed that the self is made up of multiple social identities. Identity is thus in part a uniquely personal, internal sense of self, but concomitantly relates to that person's place in society and how they are categorised (Taylor & Spencer, 2004). According to Craib (1998), it is possible to be both a single unified self and plural selves simultaneously. In any social situation, we project an image, an identity of ourselves to those around us, and may face approval or disapproval, acceptance or rejection. The reactions to these identities are then assessed, and

we may choose to modify our presentations in future to that group, to ignore their response, or feel a positive affirmation of our identity. In other words, our social identities are constantly in negotiation, depending on situational and contextual factors.

From a social constructionist perspective, ethnicity is fluid and emergent (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998). Constructed through language, religion, culture, appearance, or ancestry, ethnic identity or ethnicity is viewed by sociologists as a socially produced category arising in relation to specific historical contingencies that are simultaneously cultural and structural. According to Takei (1998), by identifying oneself in terms of one's ethnic or cultural group, an individual retains his or her connection to an existing community as well as to a larger historical context. However, this shared descent is again, always subject to reinterpretations and adjustments depending on context and circumstances. In that sense, one's ethnic identity is dynamic and socially constructed, and involves on-going production by the individual. Consequently, the content and form of ethnicity reflect the choices of individuals and groups as they define themselves and others in ethnic ways (Nagel, 1994).

With considerable variation in the images individuals construct of the behaviours, values and norms that characterize their group(s), one decides how these features are (or are not) reflected in themselves (Jasinskaja-Lahti & Liebkind, 1999; Ferdman & Horenczyk, 2000). As Lyman and Douglas (1973) write,

Just as an ethnic group must affirm and reaffirm its boundaries (or be reminded by others of what they are) in order for such boundaries to retain social relevance, so also individual ethnics must affirm and reaffirm an ethnic identity (or have it reaffirmed by outsiders) in order for it to be a feature of any social situation in which they are participants. From the ethnic actor's perspective, ethnicity is both a mental state and a potential ploy in any encounter, but it will be neither if it cannot be invoked or activated. (p.349)

Waters (1990) stemming from a social constructionist approach, proposed that ethnic identity is the product of personal choice. It is a social category that individuals actively decide to adopt or emphasise. Similarly, Hall (1990) proposes that individuals are able to exercise control and agency in the negotiation and assertion of their ethnic identity, including claims of belonging within the country and on their own terms. According to him, people make their own lives, negotiate meanings and change prevailing views and ideas to their own insights and desires. Individuals do not simply reproduce the circumstances they are in, but appropriate them. Thus, cultural or ethnic identities may be the subjective instruments and the framework by which we may shape or construct our futures.

Existing literature has also suggested that ethnic identities are not simply the product of ethnic assignments posed by others or assertions made by people themselves, but the result of the interactions between the two (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1992; Nagel, 1994). In discussing ethnic identity, Nagel (1994, p.154) argues that ethnicity is “the result of a dialectical process involving internal and external opinions and processes, as well as the individual’s self-identification and outsider’s ethnic designations – i.e. what you think your ethnicity is, versus what they think your ethnicity is”. In other words, one’s ethnic identity is a composite view one has of oneself, as well as the view others hold of one’s ethnic identity. Moreover, Ryan (1997) concurs that identity construction takes place as part of a process of negotiation within the social environment. He elaborates:

The construction of identity, however, is not an individual or exclusively personal thing. Selves are neither made nor changed in isolation. Rather the process of identity formation is dialogical in nature. Who we are and what we become is tied very closely to the social circumstances in which we find ourselves. Our interactions with other who we may or may not know, well as a range of other phenomena in our social milieu, shape in fundamental ways who we think we are and who and what we identify with. (p.42).

Acculturation Theories

Research suggests that ethnic identity formation is further complicated by culture and acculturation for ethnic minority youth – not only do they need to grapple with their loyalty to their own culture of origin, but also with adjustment to their host culture, including youth culture (Le & Stockdale, 2009). In addition, they become aware of the response of the majority culture to them on the basis of their appearance and other cultural characteristics (Phinney, 1987). Acculturation refers to the changes that occur in members of a minority group in contact with another dominant culture, and is often viewed as a process of “overall” adaptation on individual and group levels (Lee, Sobal & Frongillo, 2004). Research has shown that immigrant parents acculturate slower than their children and cling to the values and practices of their ethnic culture while the youth adapt faster to the host culture (Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006; Buchanan, 2001; Matsuoka, 1990; Moua & Lamborn, 2010; Nguyen & Williams, 1989; Santos, 1997). The parents would have reached maturity in their ethnic culture, whereas the children would have been socialized in both cultures. As recent migrants, the parents of these young people would have had little time to acculturate to the Australian culture, resulting in conflict between parent and child (Klimidis, Minas & Ata, 1994).

While the term ethnic identity has sometimes been used as virtually synonymous with acculturation, the two terms need to be distinguished. The concept of acculturation deals primarily with changes in cultural attitudes, values and behaviours that result from contact between two distinct cultures (Berry, Trimble & Olmedo, 1986). Ethnic identity also depends on contact with another culture, since it is defined in partly by an awareness of membership in a distinct group (Phinney, 1989) and may be viewed as an aspect of acculturation. However, acculturation research focuses on adaptation at the group level, while ethnic identity research focuses on the way in which individuals incorporate awareness of group membership into their self-concept (Tajfel, 1981), and the focus is on how they relate to their own group as a subgroup of the larger society.

The two most popular models of cultural orientation and acculturation are the unidimensional and the bidimensional models. The unidimensional model assumes that one's cultural orientation develops inversely related to the other; i.e. the more oriented one is to the Australian culture, the less oriented one is to the Vietnamese culture. These unidimensional models have been critiqued as valuing assimilation into the dominant culture; in turn, alienating "bicultural" individuals who are oriented to both the dominant and their ethnic culture (Gordon, 1964). However, proponents of the unidimensional model assume that they hold for all individuals within cultural groups. As Abe-Kim, Okazaki & Goto (2001) write, "we need to consider the fact that, although biculturalism is conceptualized as an orientation that involves independent involvement in two different cultures, it is possible that the measurement of biculturalism within a unidimensional instrument might be limited to a reflection of a 'in-betweenness' between cultural poles" (p.244).

Conversely, the bidimensional model assumes that cultural orientations are independent of each other; i.e. the degree to which one is oriented to the Australian culture is unrelated to the degree one is oriented to the Vietnamese culture. Theoretical models that treat the two concepts of ethnic identity and acculturation as both present and discriminant has resulted in a more complex bi-level representation of changing culture or ethnicity (see Berry, 1987; Berry & Kim, 1988; Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Phinney, 1990). Accordingly, individuals who are more acculturated may or may not exhibit high levels of ethnic identity, and conversely, individuals who display high levels of ethnic identity may or may not be highly acculturated. In Laroche, Kim, Tomiuk and Belise's (2009) examination of the relationship between ethnic identity and acculturation, their results suggest that while there is some degree of trade-off between the maintenance of heritage traits and the learning of new cultural traits, it does not warrant a unidimensional conception of ethnic identity and acculturation.

Competing models of acculturation suggest that the process is multidimensional. As Phinney (1996, p.922) argues "acculturation is not a linear process, with individuals ranging from unacculturated to assimilated,

but rather a multidimensional process that includes one's orientation to both one's ethnic culture and the larger society". One multidimensional strategy involves the recognition that the acculturation process encompasses multiple acculturation domains, including language/communication, familiarity with customs, self-identification and preferences, attitudes and values (Felix-Ortiz et al, 1994). The second approach emphasizes that the extent to which individuals adopt elements of the dominant culture and retain elements of their ethnic culture are fairly independent of each other (Cuellar, Anrold & Maldonado, 1995). Individuals may maintain significant aspects of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds while acquiring the characteristics necessary to participate in the host culture (Laroche et al, 1998). Consequently, this multidimensional approach involves assessing individuals' cultural orientation to both their ethnic and host cultures.

Limitations of Existing Scholarship

In Abe-Kim and colleagues' (2001) study comparing unidimensional and multidimensional approaches to conceptualizing acculturation among a sample of Asian American college students, results demonstrated that the relationship between acculturation and cultural indicator variables was not only heavily influenced by the manner in which acculturation was construed and measured, but also by the particular variables in question. This then questions whether the findings of quantitative studies are "an accurate representation of an unexpected reality or whether they are a function of limited measurement tools" (p.244).

I argue that the presumption that second generation Vietnamese youth in Australia feel the need to acculturate and adjust to the host society is an inherent flaw in previous research, implying that these youth are different from other Australian youth. It is proposed that as youth born and raised in Australia, Australian culture is not 'new' to second generation youth, nor is it the 'host' culture. For the purpose of this paper, Australian culture shall be referred to as the "dominant" culture. It is acknowledged that identity formation for these second generation youth may be particularly challenging. They face especially complex issues, as they find their place in two potentially

conflicting worlds: that of their parents and ethnic community, and that of their peers and the dominant society. While globalization and Australia's multicultural society support the maintenance of ethnic links, these cultural youth have frequent and regular interactions with the dominant culture, at least through the school system. For the purpose of this research, I will use the term "cultural orientation" to refer to the negotiation of possibly conflicting values.

Many traditional studies exploring the ethnic identity negotiation of bicultural youth have operationalised biculturalism largely as a uniform construct, overlooking individual differences in which a bicultural identity is negotiated. Specifically, the quantitative measures employed to assess biculturalism in terms of a single score (or a set of scores) seems insufficient for capturing individual differences in the experiences and meanings associated with one's ethnic identity. For example, Laroche and colleagues (2009) utilized two-item of measure of acculturation in assessing the ethnic identity of Greeks and Italians in Canada. One item measured attachment to the English culture and the other measured English-Canadian self-identification: 1. I am strongly attached to all aspects of the English-Canadian culture. 2. I consider myself to be English-Canadian. I argue that the two-item measure is not adequate in assessing one's ethnic identity as it does not explore what it means to be "strongly" attached or perhaps "not so strongly" attached.

Similarly, Rotheram-Borus, Dopkins, Sabate and Lightfoot (1996) asked participants to rate their reference group with the following items: strongly ethnically identified, somewhat ethnically identified, more bicultural, somewhat more mainstream and very mainstream. Participants were surveyed on two separate occasions, and the responses were summed to determine the strength of participants' bicultural identity. Measuring what individuals report about their ethnic identity, I argue that this study does not give insight to what it means to be "bicultural", "ethnically identified" or "mainstream".

Such quantitative research does not necessarily enrich understanding of the content of ethnic identity. Phinney (1993) defined content as the "actual ethnic behaviours that individuals practice, along with their attitudes toward their ethnic group" (p.64). Whereas Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley & Chavous,

1998) focused more on general attitudes and beliefs that include dimensions such as salience, centrality, ideology and regard. These two conceptualizations have been generally assessed using rating scale instruments, and as such are context free. Moreover, participants are often categorized as belonging to ethnic groups that may be mutually exclusive, immutable and discrete ethnic categories which may then result in oversimplified and possibly distorted depictions of the participants' subjective realities. The assumption that participants ascribe the same meaning to ethnic labels and stimuli not only suggests that ethnic categories in these studies are viewed as part of an objectively given empirical reality (Zageka, 2008), but in turn, provides little insight into the content of ethnic identity. Previous research on ethnic identity development (e.g. Cross, 1978; Kim, 1981) has also focused on specific ethnic groups, limiting an understanding of how the concept of ethnic identity may be widely applied. As Phinney (1990) writes,

It is interesting that in the theories and definitions presented by researchers, ethnic identity was treated as a general phenomenon that is relevant across groups. Yet researchers have attempted to answer theoretical and definitional questions almost exclusively in terms of one group, or, sometimes, a few specific groups. A starting point in resolving this dilemma is to recognize that there are elements that are both common across groups and unique to ethnic identity for any group. (pp.507)

In addition, existing studies that have examined ethnic identity across different groups have used ethnic groups as an independent variable, and compares levels of ethnic identity across groups (e.g. Fuligni, Tseng & Lam, 1999; Fuligni, Witkow & Garcia, 2005). This leads to the conclusion that some ethnic groups have a "higher" ethnic identity than others. In Phinney and Alipuria's (1990) study of ethnic identity in college students from four ethnic groups, they examined the importance of ethnicity as an identity issue. In their sample of Asian, Black, Mexican-American, and White university students, the participants were required to rate five identity domains (occupation, politics, religion, sex role, and ethnicity) on a 4-point scale from not at all

important to very important. Findings indicated that the White participants rated ethnicity as least important, with less than a quarter of the White subjects rating ethnic identity as quite or very important. This was in contrast to about two-thirds of the three minority group subjects that rated ethnic identity as quite or very important, and identified ethnic identity as third or fourth in importance. While the findings of Phinney and Alipuria's (1990) study reinforce that ethnic identity is an important component of identity development, it fails to shed light on the content of ethnic identity. As the authors acknowledged "it should not be assumed that the term 'minority group' implies homogeneity in achieving an ethnic identity" (pp.180); that is, the content of ethnic identity and ethnic formation may vary for different ethnic groups.

Although the focus on the processes of exploration and commitment in existing literature has expanded our understanding of ethnic identity, it may have led to an overemphasis on the process (i.e. how they negotiated an ethnic identity) of ethnic identity formation and overlooked the content of ethnic identity; for example, their partaking in ethnic behaviours, or adherence to traditional values. In their examination of ethnic identity formation, many scholars recognize that changes in orientation towards one's ethnic group and the dominant culture can occur in multiple domains such as behavioural practices, identity and values (Berry, 2003; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind & Vedder, 2001). However, existing quantitative literature do not always assess the multiple domains of each dimension simultaneously.

Narratives and Identity

Accepting the constructed nature of ethnicity and ethnic identity, it is clear that quantitative methodologies leave a number of important questions unanswered. In light of this, the present study aims to fill this gap by adopting a narrative approach to uncover the content of ethnic identity. A growing number of researchers and theories today conceive of identity in narrative terms (McAdams, 1993, 1996; Singer, 2005). According to Wilks (2005, p.1254),

What a narrative gives us is a framework for understanding identity, which, in the move away from essentialism, offers scope for a less rigid and fixed account of the account of the concept. Identity grounded in narrativity is able to incorporate the multiply constructed and particularist qualities of modern subjectivity. It addresses the complexity of identity formation and its variability over time. It is the story that we make of our life that brings together the diverse sources of our identity and gives them coherence for us.

According to this view, human beings are storytellers by nature, and the stories they tell about themselves and the world around them, form key aspects of their identity (Bruner, 1990). A key feature of the narrative perspective on identity is that the stories people tell are not mere representations of their identities, but rather are their identities (McAdams, 2001). Both the process and the content of identity development lie in the stories told. Identity, then, from a narrative perspective, is inherently dynamic and developmental (Syed & Azmitia, 2008). As Yuval-Davis writes,

Identities are narratives, stories tell themselves and others about who are (and who they are not)... always producing itself through the combined processes of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong. This duality is often reflected in narratives of identity. (as quoted in Reissman, 2007)

It is acknowledged that while these stories are personal narratives, they cannot be removed from the narratives of a social identity presented in a particular historical and cultural context (Hammack, 2008). From a social constructivist position, the importance of the organizing power of narrative is highlighted; stories, themes and identities can be unpacked and located within specific historical, social and cultural systems of power relations and knowledge-making (Bruner, 1990). As Polkinghorne (1998) argues,

We achieve our personal identities and self-concept through the use of the narrative configuration, and make our existence into a whole by understanding it as an expression of a single unfolding and

developing story... Self, then, is not a static thing or a substance, but a configuring of personal events into an historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be. (pp. 115)

As the meaning of a particular event can change over time, the teller's current perspective is central in determining the structure, content and meaning of the story (Thorne, 2000). The narratives of these events then provide insight into the processes of ethnic identity formation. Some stories are highly emotional and frequently thought about (Singer & Moffitt, 1991-1992), and could be considered self-defining, and important. For example, stories of growing up witnessing their parents' financial struggles and sacrifices to provide for the family, or the physical discipline they were subject to. Other stories may be more microgenetic in nature, in that these experiences may not have been perceived as having a significant impact, but have led the individual to consider and reflect upon their ethnicity. For example, stories of parental expectations for academic excellence, or peer relationships.

Previous research on ethnic identity has focused on studying the ethnic behaviours that youth actively seek out and engage in, or beliefs and attitudes that they value as intrinsic to their ethnic identity. Rather than concentrating on behaviours and experiences that one actively seeks out, the narrative approach allows for the exploration of lived experiences that while unintentional, are still significant to the individual. The stories that the individual shares provides an insight to particular ethnic-related situations that they perceive as significant, and highlights the unique contexts in which they are situated. These may include stories of events which the individual had not intentionally sought out, but had been initiated by others or were experienced vicariously (Syed & Azmitia, 2010). For example, being the target of discrimination, or having to attend Vietnamese school on weekends. Thus the focus on lived experiences allows for an exploration of the content of ethnic identity. In other words, it provides insight into what it means to be a second generation Vietnamese youth

As stories express a kind of knowledge that uniquely describes human experience, a narrative approach was adopted to better understand second generation Vietnamese youth as they tell stories of growing up in Perth. Stories surrounding ethnicity can highlight the nature of the individuals' experiences as well as identify any measures taken to resolve or make meaning of what was experienced. For example, stories of discrimination or conflict with parents, and the action taken to cope with these experiences. It is through the resolution of conflict and the meaning ascribed to these experiences that the beliefs and concerns about one's ethnic identity are disclosed, thus providing a personal, native account of ethnic identity development.

Existing literature has focused almost exclusively on ethnic identity at one time period in individuals' lives, most commonly during adolescence (Fuligni, Witkow & Garcia, 2005; Jasinskaja-Lahti & Liebkind, 1999; Kiang & Fuligni, 2009; Lee & Yoo, 2004; Phinney, 1989; 1992; Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Rosenthal & Hyrnevich, 1985; Rotheram et al, 1996; Tse, 1999). As narratives allow for individuals to make sense of the past (Reissman, 2008), this provides a window into the developmental history of the narrator; in particular, the participants' social and familial experiences in primary school, in high school, and as a young adult. The next chapter describes the methodology that guides this present study, and discusses the narrative approach adopted in further detail.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and discuss the methodology used to explore how second generation Vietnamese youth in Australia negotiate an ethnic identity. It also articulates the first step of my journey as researcher – the development of the methodology that underpins the research design. It will:

- Consider the importance of interpretation or meaning making
- Reflect on the importance of narratives as a way of exploring experience
- Acknowledge reflexivity whilst on the research journey.

In Section One and Two of this chapter, I describe the qualitative approach adopted, in particular, the narrative interviewing process that informed this research journey. Section Three introduces my co-travellers, and provides an overview of the data analysis methods employed in this study. As a traveler on this research journey, I recognise that I bring to the research relationship my own life experiences, and values. These are discussed in the section on Reflexivity. This chapter concludes then with the limitations of this study.

The next section introduces the impetus for my research journey. As an articulation of my journey as researcher, sections of this chapter have been written in first-person indicating an active voice in my role as a collaborator in the research process.

Purposefully Qualitative

Our knowledge is limited by the fact that reality cannot be observed directly, but only through the concepts and theories we choose to use; change the concepts and theories and what appears as reality will also change. (Blaikie, 1994, p.6)

Due to the lack of an emic understanding of the Vietnamese youth in Australia today, this study has employed an interpretive, narrative approach in the hope of gaining a deeper understanding of the ethnic identity formation in this

group of second generation Vietnamese youth as they negotiate two cultures. In contrast to quantitative measures, qualitative research provides multiple opportunities to explore participants' views, emotions and experiences. Its interpretive nature also allows for the identification of themes from the participants' discourse.

To better understand different ethnic minorities and sub-cultures, such as second generation Vietnamese youth growing up in Australia, researchers need to pay heed to the individual's own voice that represent unique characteristics related to their ethnic culture. The personal nature of telling stories, and narratives' integral link with the meaning-making process will better allow us to examine the phenomena of maneuvering between two cultures and negotiating their ethnic identity through descriptions of their lived experiences. Lived experiences, for the purpose of this study, are defined as specific behavioural episodes that occur in an individual's everyday life and the meanings made by individuals of these episodes (Syed & Azmitia, 2010). Examining lived episodes allows for the exploration of other dimensions of ethnic identity content; for example, the categorisation of people (e.g. Aussies, Westerners, Asians, Fobs); or one's values and cultural activities (e.g. respect for elders, the need for autonomy, celebrating Vietnamese New Year).

In-depth interviews were chosen as it enables understanding of human experience and the interpretations ascribed to situations, described from the perspective of the individual. Thus, through the interaction between the two parties in the in-depth interview is a construction site of knowledge. Adopting an interpretive approach, I acknowledge that that there is no bottom-line upon which to construct our knowledge, and this absence means that no one interpretation is uniquely right or wrong (Smith, 2002). Thus, the aim of this inquiry is to understand the subjective nature of lived experience from the participant's perspective, by exploring with them the meanings and explanations they attribute to their experience.

Interpretive researchers share a focus on three central concepts – interpretation, meaning and understanding. Interpretation is defined as “the clarification of meaning, and understanding is the result of processes of interpreting, or

comprehending the meaning that is felt, intended, and/or expressed by the individuals”, while meaning is defined as “what an experience means to a person, defined in terms of intentions and consequences” (Denzin, 2001, p.160). With a focus on human and social action, the goal of interpretive inquiry is then the interpretation of meaningful human expressions. People are viewed as self-interpreting beings who have reasons for their actions and who are constantly attempting to make sense of their own expressions and of the expressions of others. However, these meanings can only be understood within a social context by both the actors and interpreters (Smith, 1992). Thus in a narrative interview, both the narrator and the listener make meaning of the story; the narrator making meaning whilst telling the story, and the listener interpreting the story through listening to its presentation.

What are Narratives?

Rather than a factual report of events, narratives are instead an articulation of the participants’ stories told from the narrator’s point of view (Riessman, 2008). With a focus on the organisation of human knowledge, rather than on the collection and analysis of data, narrative inquiry can be described as “a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006, p.7). Through the collaboration between participant and researcher, narratives permit participants’ stories and descriptions of their lived experiences to be honoured and given status (Conle, 2003). According to the narrative approach, story-telling provides the means by which an individual can understand themselves as living through time. In other words, having a past, present and a future, made whole by the coherence of the narrative plot with a beginning, middle and an end. In recording the participants’ stories, we need to remember that each narrative is unique – each story, each telling of the story, and each interpretation of the story is a novel reconstruction of events in time and space. This telling of self-stories produces meaning through inter-subjective sense-making. Bruner (1990) argues that one way humans make sense of experience is by telling their story. He argues that narratives structure perceptual experience, organize memory and “segment

and purpose-build the very events of a life” (1987, pp.15). Similarly, As Sarbin (1986) writes,

The narrative is a way of organizing episodes, actions and accounts of actions; it is an achievement that brings together mundane facts and fantastic creations; time and place are incorporated. The narrative allows for the inclusion of actors’ reasons for their acts, as well as the causes of happening. (p.9)

In other words, we learn about our notion of the self and identity in the context of life experiences through the process of story-telling (Ochs & Capps, 1996). Through the process of meaning-making and interpretation, narratives thus illustrate the significance that events hold for one another and allow one to understand the experience. As Polkinghorne details,

Narrative meaning functions to give form to the understanding of the past events of one’s life and for planning future actions. It is the primary scheme by men of which human existence is rendered meaningful... It is the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite .(1988, p. 11, 13).

Barthes (1977) argues that narratives perform significant functions; at an individual level, people have a narrative of their own lives that allow them to construe who they are and where they are headed. They also allow one to examine implicit and sometimes unexamined beliefs that one may hold about relationships and critical events (Fiese & Spagnola, 2005). For example, where quantitative methods may use tools to measure ethnic identity, narrative methods take as their starting point unique familial and social experiences, and the participant working collaboratively with the researcher, explores themes and makes meaning of these experiences.

Narratives not only allow us to investigate how stories are structured and the ways in which they work, but also who produces them and by what means. As Mattingly (1998) notes,

They do not merely describe what someone does in the world but what the world does to that someone. They allow us to infer something about what it feels like to be in that story world. Narratives also recount those events that happen unwilled, unpredicted, and often unwished for by the actors, even if those very actors set the events in motion in the first place... Narratives do not merely refer to past experience but create experiences for their audiences. (p. 8)

Concerned with how events are framed, narrative research acknowledges the participant's reflexive engagement with his or her own story. By reviewing the thick descriptions shared by the participants, it allows for an exploration of significant connections between the individuals' experience and action, about views on family relationships, social relationships, as well as their inner experiences and emotions. The narrative approach thus captures the emotion of the experience described, rendering the event active rather than passive, and infused with the latent meaning communicated by the teller (LeGoff, 1992). Thus, by examining the narratives of second generation Vietnamese youth, it provides us with a window to better understand what it means to be a Vietnamese young person living in Perth in 2012.

Some discussions on the distinction used in narrative research refer to "story" as content and structure, and "narrative" as the process of making sense of an event or personal experience (Fiese & Spagnola, 2005). Thus, it is said that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of their lives, while narrative researchers describe these lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). For the purpose of this research, Polkinghorne's (1988) approach is adopted, where "narrative" refers to both the process and the results; the context of the story should clarify its meaning. Thus, the term "story" is equivalent to "narrative", and both terms will be used interchangeably.

According to Elliot (2005), the three key factors of narratives are that (i) they are chronological; they are representations of sequences of events and have a beginning, middle and an end. (ii) They are meaningful and (iii) are inherently

social, in that they are produced for an audience. In order to give the details of their experience a beginning, middle and an end, individuals must reflect on their experience. Stories rely on the presumption that time has a unilinear direction, moving from past to present to future. When a person tells a story, a change in situation is implied as expressed by the unfolding of a specific sequence of events (Franzosi, 1998). The story-teller decides upon a starting point, moves in a direction and finishes in a manner that assists the listener to understand the crux of the telling.

The plot within a narrative therefore relates events to each other by linking a prior choice or happening to a subsequent event (Polkinghorne, 1995). Not only are narratives characterized as having a beginning, middle and an end, they also typically have three primary components: a beginning, an occasion of conflict, and some sort of future direction (Bruner, 1990). For example, a participant sharing that the relationship with her parents was conflicted during adolescence as her need for autonomy was in contrast to her parents' expectations; and how the relationship has changed over the years. It is this process of selecting specific details of experience, reflecting upon them, and organising them that makes telling stories a meaning-making experience (Seidman, 1991). Narratives thus provide a window into the individuals' development, and what triggered and guided this development (Syed & Azmitia, 2008).

Method

Participants

The purpose of this inquiry was to gain insight into the lived experiences of second generation Vietnamese youth living in Perth. Rather than concentrate on the size of the sample, participants were chosen based on their relevance to the research topic. The inclusion criteria for participation in the study were: (1) be a second-generation immigrant; that is, born in Australia or born in Vietnam and have lived in Australia from a young age, (2) if not born in Australia, had to have arrived between 1985 and 1990; (3) be aged between 22 and 32 years of age, and (3) be fluent in English. Over 80 per cent of young

people of Vietnamese origin are defined as speaking English ‘very well’, irrespective of their parents’ fluency (ABS, 2003).

An invitation to participate was issued to the Chung Wah Association Incorporated and the Vietnamese Community of WA Inc. However, between submitting the research proposal and gaining ethics approval, the Vietnamese Community of WA Inc appears to have ceased operations. Due to a lack of Vietnamese professional organisations in Perth and referrals from other organisations, my personal network was used to access participants. To ensure sufficient diversity of experiences to be explored in the research, snowball sampling was used to recruit the twenty participants; ten male and ten female.

It is recognised that by relying on snowball sampling, the participants may not be representative of all second generation Vietnamese youth in Perth. As the participants were nominated by a friend, it is highly possible that they share similar lived experiences, and characteristics. Consequently, there may be a segment of the Vietnamese population in Perth that this research has failed to sample; it might not have reached possible disadvantaged, marginalized Vietnamese in Perth. The study might not also have sampled Vietnamese youth that identified only as being Vietnamese or Australian. However, despite its limitations, snowball sampling allows for data collection from different backgrounds, demographics and work settings. It was determined that having participants from different socio-economic status (SES) would provide a myriad of valuable insights to the research topic and add considerable richness to the data.

A total of twenty participants contributed to this study – ten males and ten females. Although twenty participants may seem like a small number, unstructured narrative interviewing allows for thick descriptions to evolve, providing a rich, yet nuanced understanding of the topic. According to Geertz (1973), the use of thick descriptions allow for an exploration of significant connections between the individuals’ experience and action, about views on family relationships, social relationships, as well as their inner experiences and emotions. After interviewing the twenty participants, it transpired that saturation level was reached. In fact, it was initially anticipated that each

participant would be interviewed twice. However, as saturation became evident, only four participants were interviewed again.

Although they were happy to share their experiences for this study, I have used pseudonyms to protect their privacy. In choosing their pseudonyms, I made the decision to use pseudonyms that reflected their names; participants with Anglicised names were given Anglicised pseudonyms, and participants with Vietnamese names were given Vietnamese pseudonyms. This was to respect aspects of their ethnic identity that may or may not be reflected in their names.

A demographic profile of the participants is included:

Characteristics of Participants	N	%
Male	10	50
Female	10	50
Born in Australia	12	60
Born overseas	8	40
Married	2	10
Single (Not married)	17	85
Divorced	1	5
Lives at home with parents	13	65
Lives independently	7	35
Secondary education	4	20
Post-school education (Attained or Enrolled)	16	80
Student	8	40
Employed	5	25
Business owner / Self-employed	6	30
Unemployed	1	5
Dating/ Married Vietnamese person	3	15
Dating / Married Non-Vietnamese but Asian person	4	20
Dating / Married Non-Asian person	5	25

At the start of the research journey, it was determined that only Vietnam-born youth were to be sampled. However, in trying to gain access to participants, it became apparent that there are few Vietnam-born youth between 22 and 32 years of age. In fact, I was informed by the participants that they did not know of many others in their age group that were born in Vietnam. Due to a lack of Vietnam-born participants, it was then decided to sample both Vietnam-born and Australian-born Vietnamese youth. The participants were aged between 22 and 32; seven of the participants were born in Vietnam (m = 5, f = 2), one participant was born in a Hong Kong refugee camp, and the rest of the participants were born in Perth.

The amount of time spent in Perth is considered a definitive factor in the process of ethnic identity formation, with the assumption that the length of time spent in Australia would influence the level of acculturation in both the youth and their parents. Therefore, participants who were not born in Australia had to have arrived in Perth between 1985 and 1990. This ensured that the youth migrated to Perth at a young age, and had attended both primary and high school in Perth along with other Australia-born youth. This allows for similar experiences growing up in Perth, with the relatively same amount of exposure to Australian culture, ensuring similar linguistic, cultural and developmental experiences to those of Australia-born children. Many of the participants know each other and share stories of interconnectedness. Yet, many of these participants have walked different paths and continue to do so. Their stories interconnect to be complementary and contribute to this tapestry of different stories.

1.1.1.1 Introducing My Co-Travellers

Phuong

The eldest of four children, Phuong was born in a Hong Kong refugee camp before arriving in Perth with his parents at the age of four. Describing his arrival in Perth as “*depressing*”, Phuong recalled that his mother started crying as “*Perth was really boring looking and crap*”. Unable to speak English, he only picked up the language upon enrolment into pre-primary the year after

arriving. While he remembers the language barrier proving to be a difficulty in the beginning, he was soon proficient in English despite only speaking Vietnamese at home. Working at his parents' fruit and vegetable business on weekends, Phuong was in his last semester at University at the time of the interview. He is now pursuing a career in the field of logistics.

Mark

Born in Vietnam, Mark arrived in Perth when he was five years old. Together with his mother and older sister, Mark was sponsored by his father who had arrived previously. Growing up, his parents separated, and Mark and his siblings were raised by his mother. Sharing a close relationship with his mother, Mark continues to live at home. Choosing not to pursue a tertiary education contrary to his mother's wishes, Mark now works in the financial sector.

Hong

Born in Vietnam, Hong arrived in Perth with his parents at age seven. Sponsored by an Aunt, the family lived with her family until they were financially stable. Upon arrival, his father found a job as a labourer, and his mother enrolled in University. Although she had worked as a pharmacist in Vietnam, Hong's mother required an Australian university degree in pharmacy to work in Australia. She continues to work as a pharmacist. Unable to speak English upon arrival, Hong was proficient in the language within the first two years. After graduating from University, Hong now works in a laboratory.

Long

Born in Vietnam, Long's family escaped to a Hong Kong detention camp when he was one year old. For five years, the family lived in Hong Kong before they were granted access to Australia. Sponsored by a family friend, Long's family lived with distant relatives before moving into a HomesWest house. To make ends meet, his parents found work at a market garden and continue to work as market gardeners. The second of three siblings, Long has always shared a close-knit relationship with his family. Now married to a

second generation Vietnamese lady, Long continues to maintain close ties with his parents and siblings. Despite not entering University, Long has pursued courses at TAFE and now works in electrical design.

Phil

Born in Vietnam, Phil arrived in Perth in 1988 with his mother and older sister, on sponsorship from his father who had arrived in Perth five years earlier. Rather than attend University, Phil pursued a course at TAFE. Rather than pursue his own career, Phil worked for his family, helping to run the family business. He now runs his own computing business in addition to running the family business.

Vuong

Born in Vietnam, Vuong and his mother were sponsored by his father who fled Vietnam as a refugee. Arriving at age nine, Vuong quickly picked up English in school and was largely independent as his parents worked long hours to make ends meet. Growing up, Vuong was required to help his parents sell flowers on the weekend. After high school, Vuong decided to continue working at the family business before eventually buying his own delicatessen. Living in his wife's family home, Vuong continues to maintain close ties with his parents, visiting regularly and speaking to them on a daily basis.

Nick

Born in Australia, Nick is the eldest of two sons. Growing up in a close-knit family, Nick continues to share a close relationship with his parents despite moving out a few years ago. However, he notes that the house he lives in belongs to his parents, and is “*two minutes away*” from his parents' home. Nick continues to visit his parents often and returns home for dinner regularly. Despite entering University, Nick decided to drop out after a year to work and now owns a newsagency.

Martin

Born to Vietnamese refugees in Australia, Martin's childhood memories consist of growing up at the back of the family's delicatessen, while his parents worked hard to make ends meet. Stealing a boat from the government in his bid to flee the country, Martin's uncle organised for the family to leave Vietnam. Upon arrival, Martin's father worked as an electrician in Geraldton before getting married. Eventually, his parents bought a delicatessen where they started selling flowers. They now run a successful florist business. After graduating from University, Martin continued to work at the family business. Moving out of the family home a few years ago, Martin lives with his partner in a home they co-own.

James

Born in Australia, James grew up speaking only Vietnamese and attended ESL classes up until he was eight years old. Proficient in English after a few years, James now regards English as his first language. Growing up with a stay-at-home mother, James always shared a close relationship with her. While he admits to not being close to his civil engineer father while growing up, James now maintains a close relationship with both his parents since getting married a couple of years ago. After working in a local government job upon graduation from university, James and his wife now own their own business.

Thai

Born in Australia, Thai's childhood memories consist of being home alone while his parents worked long hours at various jobs. Speaking only Vietnamese until he entered pre-primary, Thai was fluent in English after six months, which he attributes to watching "*so much television*". Self-described as an "Aussie" in high school, he mixed with mainly White Australians in high school. However, since helping to run the family restaurant, he now feels more "Asian". Choosing not to go to University, Thai now runs his own restaurant, while continuing to help manage the family's business in the afternoons.

Mai

Born in Vietnam and sponsored by her father, Mai and her mother arrived in Australia when she was three years old. Unable to speak English initially, Mai gained fluency by Year 5. Growing up with strict parents that emphasised the importance of education, Mai is currently pursuing a degree in Forensics. The elder of two daughters, Mai laments that her parents are not as strict with her younger sister. Still living at home, Mai continues to abide by a midnight curfew.

Thi

Arriving in Australia in 1986, Thi was ten months old when her family was granted access after living in a Hong Kong detention camp for four years. A self-confessed rebel, Thi ran away to Sydney at a young age, fell pregnant, got married and eventually divorced; all against her parents' wishes. However, she remains close to her parents and siblings. Since returning to Perth and having her child, Thi has worked at her family's business and continues to do so.

Sue

Born in an Indonesian refugee detention camp where her parents met, Sue was six months old when she arrived in Australia. An only child, Sue spent most of her childhood alone at home while her parents worked long hours. After her parents divorced when she was in Year 12, she initially lived with father. However, her father eventually re-married, and Sue decided to move home with her mother. She continues to see him every weekend and maintains a close relationship with both her parents. At the time of the interviews, Sue was pursuing a course at TAFE.

Debbie

The elder of two children, Debbie was born in Australia. Conceived ten years after her parents first arrived in Perth, Debbie's story differs from the other participants in that her parents were able to achieve financial stability before she was born. Growing up with her stay-at-home mother, Debbie shares a close-knit relationship with her family. Previously studying genetics at

University of Western Australia (UWA), Debbie is now pursuing a degree in commerce at Curtin University despite her parents' wishes. She shared that her parents preferred that she remain enrolled at UWA, because it's "more prestigious".

Ashley

Born in Australia, Ashley is the middle child of three children. Growing up, Ashley was placed in day care as her parents had to work long hours. With an elder brother that had already learnt to speak English, Ashley was able to speak English from a young age. Despite being left home alone with her brother as her father worked at a bakery and mother worked at a fish factory, Ashley never felt neglected. In fact, she has always shared a close relationship with her family; *"We did everything together. Parents and kids."*

Jane

Jane was born in Perth to a Vietnamese father and Filipino mother, and is the elder of two daughters. Her parents divorced when she still young, and when Jane was five, her mother re-married. Her father too, is re-married. Although she admits to being closer to her mother, she maintains a good relationship with her father. In fact, she now lives with her father. Despite her father's insistence that she enters university, Jane completed a business course at TAFE upon finishing Year 12, and has since also completed a course in beauty therapy. At the time of the interview, she was seeking employment and was contemplating a degree in nursing.

Sharon

Born in 1988, Sharon is the only child of Vietnamese refugees. Although she remembers only speaking Vietnamese as a child, Sharon is now more comfortable speaking English. Studying Chemistry at Curtin University at the time of the interviews, Sharon professes to share a good relationship with her parents. Closer to her father, Sharon admits that she finds it harder to talk to her mother due to differing values and perspectives, especially with regards to dating.

Emma

The younger of two siblings, Emma was born in Australia. Growing up with an elder brother, Emma started speaking English at a young age. However, her parents spoke Vietnamese to her and she continues to speak Vietnamese at home. Close to both her parents growing up, Emma's father passed away several years ago, and Emma shared that the relationship with her mother has deteriorated over the years due to differing perspectives. At the time of the interviews, Emma was studying at Curtin University, while working two jobs concurrently.

Simone

The youngest of three siblings, Simone was born in Australia four years after her parents first arrived. With two elder siblings, Simone's first language growing up was English and speaks only English to her parents. Despite understanding Vietnamese, she is unable to speak it. Growing up with very strict parents, Simone was a straight A student in high school and graduated with a degree in Pharmacy. She now works as a pharmacist.

Lisa

Born in Australia, Lisa is the middle child of three, and professes to share a close relationship with her family. Although her parents work long hours at their family restaurant, the family reserves Sundays for family activities, and Lisa regularly visits her parents at work to spend time with them. With her younger sister almost a decade younger than she, Lisa had to look after her sister as she was growing up and is especially close to her. At the time of the interviews, Lisa was pursuing her Bachelor's degree in UWA in Sports Exercise and Health.

Procedure

The approach to interviewing within the context of this study is reflective of the narrative approach; the privileged position of the interviewer to decide on the authenticity of the narratives being told and to arrive at objective conclusions is thus challenged. Within the narrative approach, it is important

that the researcher first listens to the participant's story, and that it is the participant that first tells his or her story. Relinquishing a priori presuppositions by the researcher, the participant functions not merely as a research subject but as a co-researcher. One story may lead to another and shifts may occur, and the associations and meanings that might connect several stories must be explored with the participant. It also requires following the participants along their train of thought, with researchers having to give up control to encourage equality in the conversation (Reissman, 2008). As Michsler (1986) writes "if we wish to hear respondents' stories, then we must invite them into our work as collaborators, sharing control with them, so that together we try to understand what their stories are about." (p.249) However, sharing the research space does not mean that the researcher is silenced. Rather, it means that the participant is given the time and space to tell his or her story so that it is granted the authority and validity that it already bears (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Narrative inquiry is thus, a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and re-storying as the research proceeds. Instead of a hierarchical relationship of interviewer-participant, the narrative interview is viewed as a partnership where both parties co-create knowledge to further the aim of the conversation; the interviewer is a co-producer and co-author of the resulting interview text. In this inter-relational conception, the researcher does not uncover pre-existing meanings, but supports the interviewees in developing their meanings throughout the course of the interview (Kvale, 1996). While the interviewing process allows for co-creation of meaning between researcher and participant, each bring with them a set of relatively static characteristics (i.e. race, age, gender, class), and a set of pre-conceived expectations regarding the interviewing process and conceptions of the other.

Kvale (1996) calls interviewing a "basic mode of constituting knowledge" and acknowledges the participants as the "expert in meaning-making" (p.31). This recognition of the authority of the participant is a central tenet of narrative research. As Elbow (1986) noted, we need to play the "believing game", which is "essentially cooperative or collaborative. The central event is the act

of affirming or entering into someone's thinking or perceiving" (pp.289). This requires a belief that knowledge itself is considered valuable and noteworthy, even when known only by the participant. In narrative interviewing, the researcher's concern is not whether the details of the story are accurate. Rather narratives are proposed to be a reflection of how the individual organizes representations of social and familial exchanges, has learned from the past and anticipates the future.

For the purpose of this study, I conducted a series of unstructured narrative interviews with the participants. Participants were contacted via text message or phone calls to introduce myself and the aims of the interview. An interview was then organised at a venue and time of their choosing. The majority of the interviews were conducted at Utopia, a bubble tea café in Northbridge – the heart of Chinatown, Perth. Utopia was chosen as our meeting place because of its accessibility as well as its familiarity to both me and the participants. I met with two participants at a coffee shop of their choosing; two of the participants requested that I meet with them at their place of business (deli, restaurant), and the interview took place away from where business was conducted to prevent distractions. I also met two of the participants at their respective Universities, and the interviews were conducted in a private room in the library and on the lawn. The participants' comfort was of concern in choosing a venue for the interview; I hoped for a comfortable setting that would put the participants at ease and encourage open story-telling during the interview, yet quiet enough to have a conversation without distractions.

Conducting unstructured interviews with the participants not only limited the potential danger of analysis merely reflecting the key topics identified within the interview schedule (Pollio et al, 1997), it also facilitates an appreciation of the participants' priorities and a sense of the importance of what the participants bring to the interview (Smith et al, 2009). Rather than seeking answers or general statements, the goal of narrative interviews is to generate detailed accounts and "to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of the world" (Malinowski, 1922:25). These details include specific incidents and turning points, rather than simple general

evaluations. The narrative interview was viewed as an opportunity for the participant to think about their experiences and lives, and to share rich, in-depth stories in ways that other methods may not allow for. The questions used were designed to evoke thick descriptions, rather than confirm theoretical hypotheses.

While the interviews were largely unstructured, an interview guide was prepared to stimulate and guide discussion. The questions were not intended to be used as a traditional interview guide, but rather as potential pathways to aid the unfolding of participants' stories. The questions set in the interview guide were developed based on a review of previous literature on ethnic identity, and were open-ended to encourage open discussion. To ensure that the purpose of the interview, as well as the questions would be fully comprehended, a pilot interview was conducted with two individuals from similar backgrounds to the participants. After each session, the individuals were asked to explain what they believed the purpose of the interview to be in their own words. Feedback on the type of questions and the structure of the interview was given. While the interviews were largely unstructured, the questions in the interview guide were fine-tuned in accordance with the feedback to aid the content and flow of subsequent interviews.

The interview guide was divided into four different sections:

- Demographics
- Social experiences (e.g. peer relationships, activities)
- Family (e.g. parenting styles, relationship with parents / siblings)
- Ethnic identity. In particular, "what do you say when people ask where are you from?"

In attempting to explore how Vietnam-born youth negotiate an ethnic identity as Vietnamese growing up in Perth, the questions were either:

- Steered towards a particular life-phase: "Could you tell me more about your childhood?"

- Steered towards a situation mentioned in the main narrative “You mentioned earlier about (e.g. being left alone at home while parents worked)... Could you tell me more?”
- Steering a sample narrative towards an argument: “Can you still remember a time when (e.g. your parents were still hitting you)?”

Through the course of the interviews, it transpired that some of the participants’ stories mirrored mine. When appropriate, I shared personal stories which on hindsight, not only contributed to the reciprocal relationship, it also allowed for both the participant and myself to reflect and make meaning of our stories. Perhaps the reflection on stories that were similar, yet not personal, allowed for different insight and prompted participants to make meaning of their own stories and how it has related to them.

It was also acknowledged that it is likely for participants to present a success story of their lives; it is the role of the researcher is to discover the middle ground in the recalling of both good and bad experiences (Denzin, 1989). In his research of the life stories of reformed ex-convicts, Maruna (2001) found that his participants had re-fashioned their biographies to conform to an overarching and coherent life story. He describes the process of “wilful, cognitive distortion as ‘making good’” (p.9). Perhaps the need for congruence and integrity of personal plot encourages the storyteller to falsify or modify the parts of his or her own history that don’t fit in the newly minted tale.

Whilst it is difficult to know the difference between intentional distortion and authentic perspectives, the narrative interviewer is not interested in the truth per se but rather the truth as the story-teller perceives it to be. By nature of its postmodern approach, narrative inquiry forgoes the search for true fixed meanings, with a move towards a relational unfolding of meanings (Kvale, 1996). McAdams (1999) writes that “stories seek not so much truth in the paradigmatic sense, but rather verisimilitude, or life-likeness” (p.480). From a postmodern viewpoint, the interview does not provide direct access to unadulterated truth, but is a social production of meanings through the interaction between both parties in the interview conversation (Kvale). As discussed by Minichiello and colleagues (2008), it is the way in which a

person presents information about their perceptions and experiences that is tied to the way in which they attach meaning to these events and experiences and that most people act on their own interpretations. To ensure that my interpretation of the participants' stories mirrored theirs, I constantly reframed and re-worded their stories to allow for cross-checking. This was to ensure that the information reflected the informant's perspective and to identify and classify distortions (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1995).

The interviews were digitally recorded, allowing for an uninterrupted flow of discussion. It also enhanced greater rapport as it allowed me to engage in thoughtful, yet informal conversation with the participant, while maintaining eye-contact without any interruption. Reflective notes about the process of each interview were also made. The interview was then transcribed verbatim. To ensure anonymity, the participants are referred to by pseudonyms. Names of their siblings and schools have also been changed to limit identifiable information. Transcriptions were processed as soon as possible after the interview so that analysis and data collection can proceed side by side.

Four participants were chosen to participate in a second interview. The participants were selected based on their first interviews, and on the quality of their thick descriptions. To establish research credibility and trustworthiness, these participants were presented with their transcripts in the second interview. Participants were encouraged to read their stories, reflect on them and make any changes. The second interview explored in more detail themes that arose from the previous interview. In particular, "what makes you Vietnamese / Australian" and "are there times that you feel more Vietnamese / Australian". It also allowed for checks on the trustworthiness of the account according to the informant's perception. In addition, having a transcript of their experiences would allow for better meaning making. Making meaning requires the participants to examine and consider how the factors in their lives have interacted to lead them to their present situation. For example, "How do you think being home alone a lot of the time has affected your relationship with your parents?" or "Do you think your parents' emphasis on education influenced your choice of study / occupation?" It also requires that they look

at their present experience in detail and within the context in which it occurs (Seidman, 1991). Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes.

Data Analysis

The aim of this study is to provide insights into elements of ethnic identity negotiation amongst a group of second generation Vietnamese youth in Perth. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of this group of second generation Vietnamese youth, and their negotiation of an ethnic identity. Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) write that stories or field texts are the raw data that the researchers analyse, and are then retold in rich detail. In the retelling of these stories, prevalent themes are identified and categorized. Restorying is the process of gathering stories, analysing them for key elements of the story, and then rewriting the story to place it within a chronological sequence. In telling one's story, this sequence may often be missing or not logically developed, and by restorying, the researcher provides a causal link among ideas (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2004).

The analysis of the data involved two analytical processes; a theory-driven top-down process that allowed for the development of an interview guide, and a data driven bottom-up process that allowed for the theory-driven categories to be further refined inductively by the data. Rather than use qualitative data analysis software, I used handwritten notes and themes were categorized manually via Microsoft Word. In the interviews, I focused on the participants' memories of growing up in Perth; I began by exploring familial relationships and shared activities in childhood, followed by both familial and social experiences in primary and high school. I sought to explore the multifaceted nature of their lives, and the participants' perspectives about the different aspects of their lives. Endeavoring to listen to their stories of how they relate to their parents, to their peers, to social others, and to the larger culture, I explored the stories of their families, experiences and values and reconstructed them into narrative accounts.

Themes were detected as these youth talked about a range of their experiences and the information gathered was interpreted and analysed utilizing

paradigmatic analysis - in particular, inductive thematic analysis. Paradigmatic analysis was chosen not only because it allowed for the discovery or description of the categories that identify particular occurrences within the data, but also to identify relationships amongst these categories (Polkinghorne, 1995). Providing a method to uncover the commonalities that exist across the stories, it functions to generate knowledge from a set of instances. Inductive thematic analysis was employed to locate common themes across the stories collected as data. Unlike other forms of narrative analysis, there is minimal focus on how a narrative is spoken, on structures of speech, the local context that generated the narrative, or complexities of transcription (Reissman, 2008). An inductive approach means the themes identified are strongly linked to the data, and not driven by the researcher's theoretical interest in the area (Braun & Clark, 2006).

Irrespective of its grammatical location within the narrative, data was coded and organized into categories on the basis of themes, concepts or similar features. Careful coding not only allows the researcher to move beyond pre-existing theory, it also enables recognition and re-contextualising of data, allowing a fresh view of what is present (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). This requires studying the whole text, not only in the context of what was said, but also in terms of what was not said (Minichiello et al, 1995). The coding was done in two stages – open coding and axial coding. Significant themes in each individual interview was identified and re-evaluated for open coding after transcription. I read and re-read each line of the transcript in search for meaning. Common themes across all interviews were identified and noted. Global themes were revisited across individual interviews, to ensure a clear description of the phenomenon. The rationale for looking across interviews is not to produce generalizability but to improve general vision (Pollio, Graves & Arfken, 2006). This generated an emergent set of categories and properties. For example, notes made in the margins of the interview transcripts highlighted that many of the parents worked long hours while the youth were growing up and were not often at home, and labelled the theme “Main caregiver growing up”. It included stories of day care, being left at a friend's house, but more often than not, being left at home alone. In exploring the

effects of care arrangements, another category “Time spent with parents” was coded.

The next step in coding is described as axial coding by Strauss and Corbin (1990), and involves “specifying a category in terms of the conditions that give rise to it; the context (its specific set of properties) in which it is embedded; the action/interactional strategies by which it is handled, managed, carried out; and the consequences of those strategies” (p.90). The aim of axial coding is to integrate codes around the axes of central categories. Codes were sorted, compared and contrasted until no new codes emerged, and when all the data was accounted for. For example, after multiple readings of the transcripts and across transcripts, the initial codes of “Main caregiver growing up” and “Time spent with parents” eventually became “Growing up in Perth”.

One important characteristic of thematic analysis is its repetitive aspect; data is collected, transcribed, reviewed, reflected upon and interpreted before new data is collected. This aspect of thematic analysis also allows for the researcher to alter the questions for following interviews in response to data already collected. For example, early transcripts alluded to the use of the term “fob” by individuals to negatively describe “very Vietnamese Vietnamese.” In light of this, later interviews explored the definition of a “fob” and why being a “fob” was negative.

Writing it Up

Similar to other qualitative methods, narrative accounts rely on additional measures to ensure trustworthiness. Guba and Lincoln (1989) propose the term transferability to replace the emphasis on generalisability. They argue that generalisability infers the ability to generalise findings across different settings, and suppose that different situations are context free. As an alternative, Guba and Lincoln put forth the term transferability, referring to the degree of likeness between that which is studied, and the situation being compared. In other words, the transferability of the knowledge depends on the degree to which salient conditions overlap or match. It needs to be noted that transferability is determined by readers rather than the researcher. Other

measures include apparency (visible and obvious), and verisimilitude (likeness) (Van Maanen, 1988) which shifts the emphasis to recognisability in the field of the research text.

According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), well crafted narratives have an explanatory, invitational quality, with evidence of authenticity. Plausible accounts tend to ring true and may result in the reader saying “I can see that happening” or “That was how it was for me too” (Rosen, 1988). As Ochs and Capps (1996) write, “while narrative does not yield absolute truth, it can transport narrators and audiences to more authentic feelings, beliefs, and action and ultimately to a more authentic sense of life” (p.23).

In this study, I sought to provide an account of the participants’ stories that not only contextualizes their story as second generation Vietnamese youth in Perth, but one that also contextualizes their voices and mine within the culture we both share as Asians growing up in Australia. Similarly, their stories are situated within the interaction between them as participants and me, as a researcher. None of the stories were presented as discrete units, with a clear beginning, middle and end. Rather, they were offered in bits and pieces and the fragments of narratives had to be weaved together to derive meaning. Verbatim accounts are presented to prevent misinterpretation or misunderstanding; extensive quotations are used so that the participants’ voices can be heard through my interpretation. As narrative research may be considered dialogical, with the author in dialogue with the audience, I want the reader to hear the details of the participants’ lives and to be guided by their stories, as the reader participates in making meaning of the text.

Similarly, as stories may be understood from multiple perspectives and positions that are social, theoretical and logical in nature, researchers are expected to account for their own perspectivity in re-storying and interpreting the meanings of the participants’ stories (Hoshmand, 2005). In my analysis of their stories, I focused on the participants’ perceptions. However, I acknowledge that my heritage, my life story, and my worldviews would colour my interpretations of their stories. Throughout this paper, I interweave my narrative with the participants; yet I refrain from claiming this to be

autoethnographic. Autoethnographers provide first-person accounts of events, and use documentation of their own experiences and responses to sociocultural phenomenon as data (Hays & Singh, 2012). Rather, I have added my narrative of growing up as an Asian female to account for my own perspectivity in understanding the participants' stories. In turn, it is because the understanding of stories is subject to different perspectives that another researcher was not involved in the analysis of the participants' stories. Likewise, researchers bring to the analysis certain assumptions and beliefs, different experiences and personal stories that may inadvertently influence the interpretation of the narratives.

While I have attempted to generate theory through these participants' stories, I have attempted to remain theory neutral whilst acknowledging that I have never been theory absent. The emergent themes reflect efforts to make meaning of the stories that were told along the research journey, and a subsequent weaving of convergent threads with existing literature into a tapestry that tells the story of this group of second generation Vietnamese youth as they negotiate between two cultures. Their stories have been organised into three main chapters: their lived experiences growing up in Perth, their ethnic identification, and their ethnic identity negotiation. These chapters were decided upon after much deliberation; using narrative methods meant that the participants determined the journey as they privileged me with their stories, and in trying to make meaning of their lived experiences, it appeared that these three chapters would best illuminate how their ethnic identity negotiation impacted on their lived experiences and vice versa.

For the purpose of this study, "White people", "Whites", "Western people", "Aussies" "Australians" refers to the Anglo-Celtic population, or as described by John Howard, "mainstream Australia" (Brett, 1997). I have chosen to use these descriptors because they are the expressions most used by the participants. Similarly, I interchangeably use the term "Viet" and "Vietnamese" because the participants use these descriptors to refer to themselves and each other.

Reflexivity

Through this research, I brought into focus my everyday life activities as a student, a friend, a daughter, and a member of a non-dominant group. Upon setting out on my journey, I have found that being an Asian person in Australia has helped in different ways. While I identify firstly as a Chinese person, I have learnt that I am concomitantly part of a larger group, and also identify as Asian. In Espiritu's (1992) research, she found that individuals choose from an array of pan-ethnic and nationality-based identities; their decision contingent on the perceived strategic utility and symbolic appropriateness of the identities depending on the situation and audience. In this case, I chose to identify as Asian rather than Chinese, with the premise that this group of second generation Vietnamese young persons would concomitantly identify as Asians in Australia.

First, it has enabled access to participants. Due to a lack of Vietnamese organisations in Perth, I relied on personal contacts to gather participants that were willing to share their stories. Not only did the use of personal contacts aid in the meaning-making process as rapport had already been established, I believe that the participants were more willing to share my journey as they believed that I understood their story because I too, am Asian. Previous research has found that environmental factors such as experimenter ethnicity, influence adolescents' responses to questions regarding ethnicity and ethnic identity (Bond, 1983; Bond & Yang, 1982).

While I acknowledge that I am neither Vietnamese nor did I grow up in Perth from a young age, I believe that I hold some insider knowledge that aided in the telling (and retelling) of these stories. It is this insider knowledge that I believe has helped in being told more authentic stories because I am able to empathize, create rapport and to establish trust with the respondents. Being Asian has perhaps allowed the participants to feel more comfortable in sharing their stories believing that I too, shared similar experiences. Many of the participants alluded to "you would know..." or "I'm sure it happened to you too..." or "you know..." It may be that they assumed their stories were recognisable, or a common sense that I would share as another Asian young

person. Or at least was something I, as an Asian (female) in Australia would understand.

My Asianness has also perhaps allowed the participants to feel more inclined, and safe when discussing various subjects, such as perceived ignorance or racism in Perth. According to Potter (1996), participants have to establish their rights to speak on the topics discussed, and they do so through claiming 'category entitlement' and thus, an authority to speak. For example, being Vietnamese and being the target of discrimination by White Australians. Perhaps sharing category membership has allowed participants to share freely about their social and familial experiences growing up as second generation immigrant Vietnamese youth in Perth. Rather than having to defend or explain their experiences, the participants might have assumed that as an Asian growing up in Perth, I would have the same knowledge and perhaps, shared similar experiences.

As a number of the participants were personal contacts, a rapport and relationship had already been established. While this may have encouraged the sharing of their life story, it is also acknowledged that it may also shape the stories told. Being visibly Asian and an 'insider' may have introduced an element of "social desirability bias" (Nederof, 1985, p.1); that is, a subtle pressure of political correctness that could lead the interviewees to exaggerate or accentuate their Vietnamese-ness. Moreover, the participants might have felt inclined to identify as being more Vietnamese than they really think they are. They may have shared stories that they believed I wanted (or needed) to hear, or of experiences that would not portray them negatively. There may also have been the chance that the previously established friendship would have resulted in the participants being less comfortable discussing personal experiences and feelings. Moreover, the Vietnamese community in Perth is small; knowing that I would be interviewing personal friends of theirs, some of the participants may have felt the need to be more careful about what stories they share, and how they frame their experiences. However, it is acknowledged that there remains a truth within the stories the participants

have chosen to share; nonetheless, these stories reflect an aspect of the participant's identity.

As the story selected to be told can present a particular image of the teller and because the kind of interview undertaken can affect the type of story told (Polkinghorne, 1988), the interviews were conducted as casual and informal conversations. Rather than a "question and answer" type interview, the participants' stories were elicited through conversation about growing up in Perth and their memories of childhood and high school. Meeting at a cafe and "chatting" appeared to put the participants at ease, with many laughing and joking throughout the interview. A number of participants commented at the end of the first interview that they had expected a "formal interview with a list of questions." Allowing them to digress also elicited stories that they may not have shared if direct questions had been asked. The way in which questions were posed, contingent on what had already been shared, perhaps also encouraged reflective and extended responses. To guard against assuming a taken-for-granted stance toward the participants' meanings, languages and concepts, I repeated and re-told their stories within the conversation to ensure that my interpretation was congruent with theirs.

I recognize that as a traveler on this research journey, I bring to the research relationship my own life narrative, my own ethnic narrative and attitudes, beliefs and values. As I travelled along this research journey, I have been privileged to walk alongside these participants as they shared their stories of growing up in Australia. Personal narratives of events and experiences were shared by both myself and the participants, and the exchange of stories created a relationship and elicited stories that would not have existed in other methods. Moreover, reflecting on the possible similarities between our experiences may not only have allowed for the participants to reflect on their experiences thus creating deeper understanding, it also allowed for me to better understand and make meaning of the story being told. However, it is acknowledged that if individuals are agents who actively negotiate their situational ethnic identity to others, it is possible that their narration of identification was affected by me. In turn, in trying to make sense of their narratives, I examined my own story

of growing up in Australia; I interweave my narrative within this paper as recognition of what I bring to the research relationship

Limitations

This exploratory study on the ethnic identity negotiation of second-generation Vietnamese adolescents in Perth is the first of its kind, and focuses on the content of ethnic identity and ethnic identity negotiation of this group of young persons. Adopting a narrative approach, the findings of the present study expands our knowledge of both the process and content of ethnic identity negotiation of immigrant youth in ways that quantitative measures are seldom able to do. It is however, not without its limitations. One limitation of the study is the inclusion criteria; because participants were required to give thick descriptions, participants were required to speak fluent English. This would have excluded Vietnamese persons in Perth who are less fluent in English, suggesting that they may be more marginalized or separated from mainstream Australian culture. It is acknowledged that these stories of ethnic identity negotiation as a Vietnamese person in Perth might be very different, and would have contributed to our knowledge of the non-homogenous Vietnamese community.

Another limitation of this study is its design; not only is it cross-sectional, the stories are retrospective. While the participants' narratives do not indicate conflict in their ethnic identity negotiation, it does not mean that none existed. It is plausible that participants may have forgotten instances that incited ethnic identity exploration, and the meanings they prescribed to these experiences. While it may not have been significant enough for the participants to remember and share, it does not mean it was not significant at the time of their exploration. Similarly, they may have not been willing to share instances of conflict.

Narrative references the past but is always tailored to the present, and specifically to the moment of narration. As Mills (1940) writes, the fact of selectivity is pragmatic — logistically we cannot recapitulate all that has happened to us, and even if we could, the narrative point would suffer. It is

also cultural, as socially situated notions of what is noteworthy about one's life constrain what we even think to make of it. Thus, it would be of value for longitudinal qualitative studies to be conducted; documenting participants' stories as they explore their ethnic identity may allow for a more accurate and nuanced understanding of different phases in their ethnic identity development.

Despite its limitations, the research design has merit. In contrast with traditional studies exploring the ethnic identity formation of ethnic minority youth, the emic nature of this study has allowed for this group of young persons to choose their ethnic identification. Rather than selecting from a list of preconceived categories, the participants identified as Australian and Vietnamese in their stories of ethnic identification; alluding to the multiple identities they possess. Moreover, the narrative approach has not only allowed for the documentation of familial and social experiences, it has also encouraged an exploration of significant connections between these experiences and family relationships, as well as their inner emotions (LeGoff, 1992). This allowed for the participants to make meaning of these experiences and how they may have contributed to their ethnic identity formation.

Furthermore, by allowing the participants to lead the interview, they decided what parts of their identity they were willing to reveal. Accordingly, the participants revealed dimensions that were salient to their ethnic identity negotiation. The nature of the interviews also afforded some of the participants insight to previously unexplored beliefs and emotions; for example, Phuong commented "*actually, I never thought about it until now and there you have it, I think that's why*" as he ruminated his disappointment with his brother. Similarly, in discussing his social network, Thai wondered "*Hmm, why do I hang out with Asians more now? It's pretty weird.*"

In sum, the narrative approach adopted in this study has allowed for a deeper understanding of what it means to be Vietnamese in Australia, and a more nuanced exploration of the process and content of ethnic identity formation. Adopting a general perspective on ethnic identity, free from preconceived and predetermined concepts and categories, I argue that the research design has allowed for potential transferability of its results to other ethnic groups.

The next chapter, *Growing up in Perth*, explores the participants' familial experiences in childhood, primary school and high school. Narratives of growing up with parents that worked long hours are presented, and we explore if the lack of face-to-face interaction affected the parent-child relationship. The chapter also explores changes in the parent-child relationship as the participants enter high school, and the reasons behind the parent-child conflict.

Chapter Four: Growing up in Perth: Familial and Social Experiences

It's like, you first come here, you've never seen a White person in your life and I've never seen blonde hair on a person before, and I saw this blonde haired girl and you know when they're really young, they're really white-blondish and I was thinking in my head "Oh my God, she's my age and she already has white hair". (Phil)

A review of literature reveals a lack of qualitative scholarships examining the parent-child relationship within Vietnamese families in Australia. Existing studies that have directly explored the link between acculturation disparity and problematic relations experienced by immigrant parents and their teenage children have typically measured only one component of parent-adolescent conflict (e.g. frequency or relationship quality more generally, cohesiveness or bonding). Most studies have also been empirical in nature (Tardif & Geva, 2006), and have failed to capture the nuances of the parent-child relationship and its development. Adopting a narrative approach in the present study allows an insight into who the participants are now, and why. As previously discussed, narratives suggest a plot; stories of their past frame where the participants are now and where they are going. Exploring their lived experiences allows us to uncover how their familial experiences have contributed to their ethnic identity formation. This chapter begins by exploring the participants' childhood memories of growing up in Perth, specifically, their memories of growing up as their parents worked long hours away from home. It explores whether the long hours away from home impacted upon the parent-child relationship and if so, how. In this section, the role birth order might have played in mediating the effects of reduced parental interaction on the parent-child relationship is also discussed.

The second section, Adolescent Years, explores the familial experiences of this group of Vietnamese youth during their high school years, and identifies various sites of tension. Specifically, the emphasis placed on academic excellence; the intergenerational cultural dissonance between the participants

and their parents; the parenting style adopted; and the perceived preferential treatment accorded to the males in the family. It is proposed that the participants' stories of tension with their parents would give insight to the values that the participants embrace. If conflict between the participants and their parents was due to intergenerational differences, it suggests that the participants embraced different values to their parents. Accordingly, it uncovers what these values are and why they are different. This section also explores how parent-child conflict affected the transmission of traditional values, and thus, their ethnic identity formation.

The third section, Discrimination, explores instances of discrimination experienced by the participants. Existing literature suggest that adolescents from ethnic minority backgrounds experience discrimination (Alvarez & Juang, 2010; Goto, Gee & Takeuchi, 2002; Ying, Lee & Tsai, 2000). This section explores if this group of second generation Vietnamese youth were targets of discrimination, and their reactions to the discrimination. It concludes with a discussion of the buffering effect of ethnic identity against the negative outcomes associated with discrimination (Cross, 1991; Greene, Way, & Pahl, 1995; Phinney, 1990; 1996; 2003).

Childhood Memories

There are two types of Vietnamese, I think there's the Vietnamese that are really wealthy, and they're actually business owners. They're really business minded and started owning delis and bakeries, and things like that. And then there's the poorer Vietnamese who did the simple jobs like being a labourer or working on the farms... Life was hard, I know our parents sacrificed a lot for our education, they took loans to send us to private school. My mom worked really long hours just to make ends meet. So yeah... my childhood consisted of not many toys, it was a really simple childhood. We didn't have too much so at least we had our siblings. I've got my brother and sister, we've got a pretty close-knit family so... (Simone)

Arriving as refugees in 1982, Simone's parents settled in Perth after being detained in the refugee camps of Indonesia. In re-telling her parents' story, Simone admitted that her parents do not like talking about their escape from Vietnam. However, from what little they shared, Simone ascertained that her parents were desperate to leave Vietnam for a better life. At the time of the war, her father was studying Law and came from a middle class family background in the city. Simone's mother was finishing high school, and her family "*originally came from the villages*" and "*sold vegetables and things*" for a living. Desperate to leave Vietnam after a number of futile attempts, Simone's father risked jail and execution to organise a boat of 30 people, consisting mainly friends. As Simone's father was the youngest in his family, the plan was for him escape Vietnam with his young family and gain entry to another country. He would then sponsor the rest of his extended family.

Together with Simone's mother and eldest sister, the boat eventually left Vietnam with no particular direction in mind. On the seas with little food and water for over a week, some of their friends did not survive the trip due to pirates, illness and starvation. Fortunately, Simone's parents and eldest sister landed safely in Indonesia where they were detained for six months before arriving in Perth. Despite pursuing a degree in Law in Vietnam before the war broke out, Simone's father could only find work as a farmer upon arrival in Perth. Falling pregnant with Simone's elder brother, followed by Simone two years after, Simone's mother stayed at home to look after the children. According to plan, her father eventually sponsored the remaining members of his family, including his elderly mother and disabled brother, to Perth. To care for their needs, Simone's father quit his job to be their full-time care-giver, while her mother joined the workforce. As sole breadwinner of the family, Simone's mother worked at a blinds factory from 5.00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon every day for 20 years. Recently retired, the family's financial obligations are now willingly borne by Simone and her siblings.

Describing a simple childhood, with little extravagances, Simone's story is not uncommon amongst the Vietnamese youth interviewed. Unable to speak the

language, many of the Vietnamese people that arrived in Australia worked low-paying jobs. Simone shared,

It was really hard, they didn't speak English when they first got here. I know nowadays, Australia has a system where you get to learn English, but they weren't offered it. I don't know if it was actually available or not, but they kinda just learnt as they went. I think a few years later, I'm pretty sure my mom enrolled in ESL classes so she started learning some English, but they did struggle for years, just with the whole language barrier.

Most of the participants shared that they all had tough childhoods, with little disposable income available to the family while their parents worked long hours to make ends meet. As Simone loosely described, it appears that the Vietnamese in Australia fell into two categories; the business owners and the labourers. Amongst the twenty participants, some of their parents now run their own successful businesses, while other parents continue to work in labour intensive jobs. Nevertheless, their stories of growing up are similar. A common theme running through all their stories is of financial difficulty; arriving in Perth with little money and few prospects, their parents had to work long hours to make ends meet. Spending most of their time alone at home or with siblings, the participants spent little time with their parents. Which raises the question, did the lack of time spent with their parents affect the parent-child relationship, and if so, how?

Born in a refugee detention camp in Hong Kong, Phuong's family migrated to Perth before his fourth birthday via sponsorship from his grandmother's childhood friend. Hailing from a middle class family in Vietnam, Phuong's father fled "as there was no future in Vietnam at the time", and spent three months on a boat before reaching Hong Kong. In contrast, Phuong's mother came from a poor family, and left home when she was 14 years old; she escaped to Hong Kong with other people in a gang she belonged to. Phuong was conceived at the refugee camp where his parents met. Describing the camp as "concrete", with communal housing, baths and showers, Phuong shared that life in the refugee camp "wasn't bad". Growing up with four other

cousins, Phuong was the youngest in the family and was shielded from the hardships of life in a refugee camp. He described his only hardship as having to walk down from the third storey with a bucket to collect water every day. He was three years old.

Recalling his first memories of Perth, Phuong shared,

I got off the plane and was like “wow, this is pretty small” and on the drive back home, all we saw was basically just bush. It got a bit depressing, cause I was thinking to myself, ‘if it’s all bush where are all the stores?’ Cause obviously in Hong Kong, you’re a little more used to the stores, cause even in the camps, all along the sides of the living quarters would be little stalls and people selling lollies and what-have-you. On the drive home, here in Australia, it was just all bush. I remember mom crying. She got a little bit depressed. She said it was really boring looking and crap.

We first stayed with the family that sponsored us. I remember it was extremely unfair what they did, even though they were family friends. Mum and dad, we came over with \$150 and one suitcase between the three of us, so it wasn’t actually much. First things first, we had to pay straight up a week worth of rent. So that was \$80 out of \$150, and then obviously with the remaining money we had to buy our own toiletries, what have you. It was pretty bad. Whatever we basically spent and couldn’t pay back, we basically owed them till dad could pay them back, and dad found a job the week after.

Left at a childcare centre in the city while his parents worked and studied English, Phuong admitted that he did not know where his parents worked at when they first arrived in Perth. He did, however, know that his parents had difficulty adjusting to life in Australia. He shared,

Communicating with Australians was obviously a very big thing that never happened; especially not knowing the language and when you’re that age as well, it’s really hard to learn. People over here

were quite racist as well back then, so finding jobs anywhere that wasn't Asian owned was practically impossible.

For about ten years, Dad was just going nowhere because obviously not educated, unskilled, labourer really, worked in the warehouse, drove the trucks, courier, really for a long time. Dad wasn't making much, mom had to work two jobs, she'd work during the day, come home make dinner for us, sleep for a couple of hours, and go to work at night as well. It was like that for God knows how long, two to three years?

To be honest, back then, the only thing I felt was like "I never see mom." Saw her for maybe a few minutes a day, I'd eat, do my homework, basically by the time I eat and do my homework, she's already asleep. I looked after myself during the week. On the weekends, it'd just be me and my younger brother. Basically I was independent by the time I was seven. No housework or anything, just eat, hang out, look after the younger ones. At that time, Rob was only one, so I knew how to change him, I knew how to bathe him, that sort of thing. I never got to go out.

I was shielded from the outside world pretty much for a long time, spent it all at home doing nothing. It would have been fun to have family activities every couple of weekends or whatever. That stuff and kind of thing is non-existent really in my family. Pretty bored most of the time which is why basically video games became my best friend up until the age like, the time I was in Year 10. I was pretty much brought up by the video games and the TV. And because they were never around, a lot of the time I felt alienated cause I didn't really know them. I'd see this person maybe for a couple of hours a day, I mean I know and acknowledge them as my parents, but do I really know them? I can't really tell them things. They're never around anyway. Like I said, video games and TV became my parents.

Similarly, Vuong and his mother arrived in Perth when he was nine. Sponsored by his father who had arrived earlier as a refugee, Vuong shared that the family had nothing in the first few years. Arriving with little clothes and belonging, the family lived in an unfurnished rental unit in Highgate, while surviving day to day on as little as \$1 a day. He shared,

We basically had nothing. We rented a flat, a unit in Highgate and back then, Highgate was, you had to be really poor to live in Highgate. When everyone came over, they lived in Highgate, and we had no furniture whatsoever. It was just the house and a blanket, and that was it. Because my mom and I, we didn't take any clothes with us, like we had one or two and that's it, that's all we got, and we lived day by day. My dad had to get an advance payment to buy our tickets, and once we're here, we lived day by day. Like a \$1 a day and that's it. Yeah it was tough. It went for about two years?

For the first few years after their arrival, Vuong's father worked two jobs. Seven days a week, his father would leave home four in the morning to work at a farm until four in the afternoon, before leaving again to work at a bakery from six in the afternoon to midnight. Things changed for the family when Vuong's father's employer gave him a plot of land on the farm. Growing flowers on his newly acquired farming land, his father started his own business selling flowers from a van by the street. Proficient in English by that time, Vuong would help his father sell flowers every weekend. Acknowledging that life was tough, Vuong shared that he was not close to his parents while growing up;

When I was a teenager, I used to go out and hardly stayed at home to talk to my parents. When I stayed home I'd be in my room. I just hated it cause I didn't have a childhood. Basically we were just working very hard, like when I was little, I was thinking, I don't have a childhood, they don't take me to the park, or whatever, like, when I changed school and with all the rich kids, their parents drop them off at parties, I have to catch my own bus, and this and that. Yeah, that's why; I wouldn't say I hated my parents, but they could have managed

it better. I thought, money is always there, it's a matter of ... you're going to have it anyway, but it's good that they did it at first, it gave us that push... I wouldn't say my lesson in life was wrong or anything, it's good that I'm not like other junkies, or go to jail or this and that, I avoided everything.

Eleven years older than his younger brother, Vuong was not responsible for caring for his younger brother as Phuong did, neither was he subject to stricter rules that impacted on the parent-child relationship. However, Vuong believed that he had to set an example for his younger brother, and based on his experiences, wanted his parents to spend more time with his brother;

After I was 18 or 19, I started speaking out more – my brother was growing up, so I just wanted to set an example and talk to my parents more. I also did not want the same thing to happen to my brother, so I spent a lot of time talking to my parents, make them hang out, take my brother to places, fishing and stuff, so he doesn't club early and do the same things I did.

As children of migrants, Phuong and Vuong were not spared the hardships of migration. In this case, their parents were refugees who fled a country in turmoil. Upon their arrival in Perth, the families had little to their name and had to work long hours to survive in a foreign country. Unable to speak the language, and armed with few qualifications, their parents had to work long hours in labour intensive jobs that did not pay well. Unfortunately, the lack of face to face interaction impacted upon the relationship between parent and child as Phuong and Vuong were growing up. This was compounded by financial hardship that meant that their families did not have the means to spend on leisure activities. Moreover, it is conceivable that because their families were poorer than their peers', comparisons made may have affected their relationships with their parents. The strained relationship between Phuong, Vuong and their respective parents is reflective of Qin's (2009) research on parent-child relations in Chinese immigrant families. Findings from her study demonstrated that the long hours spent away from the family,

compounded with the lack of parental warmth and support as needed by the children resulted in estranged parent-child relations at home.

Interestingly, both Phuong and Vuong are the eldest child in their respective families. Perhaps by nature of being the eldest child, their parents had higher expectations and placed more responsibilities on them – i.e. looking after their younger siblings, academic excellence. The participants' stories reflect research that suggests firstborn children are more likely to receive stricter training and are expected to be more responsible than their siblings (Kammeyer, 1967). The higher expectations placed on the eldest child is illustrated in Martin's narrative of his parents' reaction when he entered university. As he described,

Obviously they wanted medicine, all parents want medicine but they were happy that I got into uni, especially since I was the first kid, cause I was the oldest, so yeah, definitely. And because I was the oldest, at least now with my brother and sister, there was less force on which direction. The oldest person always paves the way, especially for an Asian family. So now they're easy on my brother, he can do whatever.

Reminiscent of findings from Liu's (1998) exploratory study that demonstrated that firstborns were held to higher standards of achievement and behaviour, even in cases where the firstborn was a woman and laterborns were men, Debbie shared that her younger brother had less restrictions placed upon him,

I don't know if it's also cause I'm the first child as well and I had to go through everything. Like I know it's harder for me. My brother had it easy, it was harder for me to go out when I was younger than my brother. If he wanted to go out, he went out. It was easy. And I feel like I've got to be more responsible cause I have to be the role model for my brother.

It is conceivable that these expectations exacerbated the difficulties of growing up with immigrant parents, and proved to be an additional site of tension

between parent and child. As the eldest child, Phuong's parents were stricter with him than they are with his younger brother, Rob. As Phuong shared,

Even just recently, up until I was 19 and stuff, if I was out after 12 I still had to call home to let them know I'd be out after 12. And I'd actually try to limit going out, I mean, on weekends I can do whatever till whatever time, but on weekdays, I'd set myself a curfew of 12 o'clock or something. Rob on the other hand, he doesn't give a shit. He'd rock up at home at 5.00 am and wake up at three in the afternoon, and then go out again. Same shit every day, so he'd never see anyone in the family. And my parents wouldn't say anything. Back then they'd have given me hell for it, and a lot of times, I did get hell for it. Yeah, even throughout high school, they were always on my back about homework, about grades, and with Rob, they just don't give a shit.

It's not fair, it's bullshit, but obviously you're the oldest you have the obligation to do it, and cause you know, you're brought up in an Asian household and the whole cultural thing where everything's more collectivistic and you have to make decisions based on the good of the family, so I don't always have to but I feel the need and obligation to help around. I don't think Rob feels the same that's why he just goes off and does his own thing. So I mean I don't think it's fair that I have to do all of it, but I still do it.

It is noteworthy that Phuong understood that higher expectations are placed on the first-born, and that it is because he stems from an "Asian family" that his parents expect him to be role models for his younger siblings. Despite being subject to more rules and higher expectations, Phuong acknowledges the obligation he has towards his family as the eldest child, and strives to meet his parents' expectations. It needs to be noted that he was not always so accepting; describing his relationship with his parents as "strained", the conflict between Phuong and his parents was rife in his teenage years. This conflict will be explored further in the next section.

Research has shown that a difference in values between parent and child may result in conflict (Le & Stockdale, 2008; Lee, 1997; Portes, 1997; Szapocznik & Kurtine, 1993); as new migrants, parents are still acculturating to a new host society and its values and cultures. Perhaps unaware and unprepared for the differences in their values, the conflict between parent and child for first-born children is amplified because it would have been an initial confrontation of these differences. Moreover, as recent migrants, their foremost priority was to achieve financial security. This may have made them less available to spend quality time with the participants, and cater to their emotional needs. This raises the question: did the long hours spent away from home have a similar impact on the parent-child relationship for later-born children?

Echoing the Phuong and Vuong's stories of parents that worked long hours, Ashley, a middle child, described her childhood;

It was tough, it was, cause you know, I didn't have the typical childhood where you know every kid, every Christmas, you see your grandparents, your aunts and uncles, your cousins, have a massive party or whatever. I hardly ever spent any time with my parents, which was pretty anal. Cause when I grew up I didn't really have my parents there to wake me up or whatever cause they were working, and then they'd come home and take me to school, so like every morning, I'd get a phone call from my mom to wake up. That was how my childhood was, it was a bit different, it was a bit tough, but everything worked out ok.

It was a bit hard like during the day we wouldn't see them much because they were working when they just got their business, but during the night I saw them quite a bit. So it's not like I was neglected or anything. Dad would sometimes, well most days, he'd work, come home and just go see my brother and I, and give us a kiss on the cheek or the forehead and then tuck us in, and make us breakfast as well. So they'll make sure that the connection is still there.

Similarly, as the third of four siblings, Long shared,

When they came over here, they were just working. They just wanted to work, support, supply, that's it. So if it's strawberry season, I don't see them at all for months on end. They work early and finish late, by the time they come home, we're asleep, and by the time I get up, they've already gone to work. They had to cause they just came over, we can't work so they had to work, they were the ones providing the food, the roof over our heads, so I understand that they had to work. They weren't neglecting me, they worked hard. But when they don't work, they'd take us fishing. Every Christmas, they'd take off and bring us to the beach. They weren't neglecting us at all, every chance they'd get, if they had time to themselves, they'd spend it with themselves, do their thing, or they'd take us out. It's not like I'd tell my dad "Dad, let's go fishing", he's the one who'd ask me "do you want to go fishing?" and we'd go.

While similar to previously shared stories, Ashley and Long's narratives were not telling of a strained parent-child relationship. In fact, they professed to share a close relationship with their parents. While they do not deny that their childhood was difficult financially, the narratives of their childhood memories were not peppered with episodes of conflict or alienation from their parents. It is conceivable that having siblings buffered the possible effects of absent parents. One explanation could be that siblings are more likely to distract and provide excuses to their siblings for their parents' absence and the lack of interaction occurring within the home. Harris (1989) found that when children were asked how they deal with stressful situations, they most often reported trying to distract themselves by engaging in a distracting behaviour, such as playing with friends. It is plausible then that distraction may be one way in which siblings buffer the effect of reduced parental interaction. As Thi laughingly recounted, *"It was fun, cause we're all around the same age, my brother's only two years older than me and my sister after me is only one year younger. So there's three of us, and we had like cousins and family friends and stuff around, so we were never really alone at home."*

Moreover, the presence of other siblings may have reinforced family bonds and provided an additional attachment figure that protected against the effects of their absent parents. Raised by his eldest brother, Long shared,

When my parents came over, all they did was work, so they didn't really raise me. They showed the love, and therefore I respect them, and yes, they provided food and a roof over my head, but they didn't really raise me. My brother had to discipline me most of the time.

Similarly, Ashley shared that she would depend on her elder brother “quite a bit”; “obviously, when we went somewhere I'd be like ‘George! George! George!’ and he'd have to look after me.” In turn, Ashley took on the role of carer, and looked after her younger sister;

I'm pretty sure it's like a lot of Vietnamese families here, so I don't know, cause she's now the youngest daughter, mom's so protective over her, mom's like “I just want family to look after her, no day care, none of that.” My parents worked quite a bit and when she was born, I was in Year 4, so I had to mature quite quickly to look after her. I'm more like a parent to her than anything. I had to discipline her.

Professing to be very close to her sister, it is plausible that Ashley is an extra attachment figure to her sister, as her brother was for her.

Another explanation could be that later born children may not place as great an importance on time spent with parents as firstborn children. Crouter and colleagues (2004) found no significant correlation between family time and psychosocial adjustment for second-born offspring, suggesting that family time may simply more important to firstborns than to secondborns. Similarly, Sulloway (1996) argued that firstborns and laterborns occupy different niches in their families. He proposed that firstborn children are likely to identify with their parents, and that laterborns recognise that their older siblings have already staked their identities on identification with parents. As a consequence, laterborns move in other directions and do not compete for the same family niche. The authors suggest that this may explain why time spent with the

family is less important to laterborn offspring and thus less connected to their psychological adjustment.

It is noteworthy that regardless of the relationship they share with their parents, the participants' stories all echo an appreciation for their parents' hard work, in spite of the lack of time spent with them. In fact, the participants present with an acceptance and understanding of their less than ideal childhood memories. As Phuong shared, "*I don't want to have it as hard as my parents, they gave me the opportunity to reach for the stars, so why throw it away?*" Similarly, Ashley shared,

Like they work so hard and the last thing you want is to come home to kids where they just don't want to see you or don't want to be near you. It's not like they want to do it, it's not like they don't want to spend time with us, cause they have to do this to make money. They would never be like, they're doing this to hate us. Mom's like "I've got to go to work" and I'm like "yeah". I was just, I've never asked why, I'm not one of those kid and none of us kids were like that. The thing about us kids is that we're really understanding and we know that our parents are doing this for us so we'd never ever resent them. It's more like we were really happy to see them and they were so happy to see us. I think it's just the way our parents brought us up, we always look at the positive out of everything and even now, we do this. So we never really looked at the negative side of things, which really helped, cause if we did, oh man, we would have turned out so bad right now.

Long echoed this sentiment,

If you understand what they have to do, you should love them more, respect them more. Coming from what they had to do to get us over here, two months at sea, five years in a detention camp, you got to show some gratitude towards them. A few might think your parents work so hard and not see you, it's for a reason, it's not for no reason. If your parents are working their butts off to support you, why would

you resent them? It's not like they're going to keep the money to themselves, they're the ones paying for your books, your clothes, everything. You got to understand that, and I understood that when I was really young.

Rather than resent their parents for not spending quality time with them, many of the participants demonstrated an awareness of the strife their parents had to endure to support the family. I argue that it is this understanding that has mediated the parent-child relationship; even though the participants spent little time with their parents, the appreciation and gratitude for their parents' sacrifices shaped the close relationship with their parents. However, while the lack of face-to-face interaction in their childhood years may not have been detrimental to the parent-child relationship for some of the participants, stories of strained parent-child relationships in their high school years were shared. The next section explores the participants' familial experiences as they entered their adolescent years. It identifies sites of tension, and the underlying reasons behind the conflict with their parents.

Adolescent Years

In exploring the familial experiences of this group of second generation Vietnamese youth, it transpired that their adolescent years were peppered with episodes of parent-child conflict as previously introduced in Phuong and Vuong's narratives in the earlier section. This section identifies various sites of tension between the participant and their parents, beginning with the academic excellence demanded of the participants by their parents. As second generation youth negotiating two cultures, many of the participants shared that their parents did not understand them; the sub-section "My parents don't get me" explores the differences in values between the participants and their parents.

The sub-section "My parents hit me" explores the physical discipline employed by the participants' parents and the effect it had on the parent-child relationship; some participants shared that their parents never employed punitive measures, and this is also explored. This is followed by the sub-

section “He’s a boy” that explores the preferential treatment accorded to the boys in the family, as perceived by the participants. This section concludes with the proposition that the conflict documented in the parent-child relationship could be a function of growing up, and is normative of all adolescents.

All I Did was Study

A lot of the Vietnamese people sacrifice a lot for their kids and they’re really big on their education. I don’t know what Vietnamese people are like now because they’ve been in Australia, but all the boat people, you’ll find that they came over it and it’s all about education. They try and get their kids to study really hard and make something for themselves. (Simone)

In exploring their familial experiences as they entered adolescence, the emphasis placed on academic excellence was common in all the participants’ narratives; they were all expected to enter University after they completed high school. As described by Phil, “*Vietnamese parents always expect so much from you, it’s crazy.*” For some participants, the emphasis on education started in primary school. As Nick recalled,

Yeah, they expected good grades. We had to study a lot. Even in Year 4, I remember, Year 4 and 5, even in maybe Year 1 and 2, we had to study a lot. Education is always number one to them. Like maths, we had to remember our maths times tables and repeat them every night. They just said “study”.

Existing literature indicates that this emphasis on education is a long-standing Vietnamese cultural value; bearing a strong sense of loyalty towards the family, children are brought up with a sense of duty and responsibility (Thuy, 1976). Children are expected to do well in school and at other endeavours to provide honour to the family. This is highlighted in Phuong’s narrative;

I think with Asian people, they’re much more pressured to perform, whereas with Aussies they’re ok with passing and stuff. A lot of the

Vietnamese girls were getting stressed out when they were getting 70 etc for tests, they'd cry. Why would you cry when you were getting a distinction? But that's how it was. The Asians were definitely more driven to do better. Back then anyway, you're hard-pressed to find a stupid Asian. But I think it's across the board, across the planet, Asians are more pressured to do well. Italians were the worst. They had the group 'The C4s' and basically they were all Course 4 students and they were proud of it. They were proud of being lacking in education and I thought it was a bit strange.

It is interesting that in his narrative, Phuong compared and made distinctions between the academic expectations of the “Asians” and the “Italians”; he identifies a difference between Asian values and “others”. His narrative suggests that one’s “Asian” ethnic identity is linked with one’s academic identity; as a Vietnamese / Asian student, one is expected and driven to excel academically. Consequently, I argue that Phuong’s narrative reveals the adoption of traditional Vietnamese values; namely, the expectation for academic excellence. This is reminiscent of Zhou and Bankston’s (1994) finding that second generation Vietnamese youth in America had high levels of ethnic involvement that was shown to correlate with their academic orientation. It is also noteworthy that Phuong commented that “back then anyway...”; this raises the question, does he think that the younger second generation Vietnamese in Perth today have changed and have different values? The non-homogeneity of the Vietnamese in Australia is further explored in Chapter Seven.

In exploring the academic excellence expected of them by their parents, many of the participants referred to their parents as “strict”. Many of the participants’ social experiences and freedom were curbed in lieu of studying and pursuing academic excellence. As Simone reflected,

My father had strange logic. There was a period of time when we were children, he wouldn't let us have TV, he took TVs out of the house cause he thought it'd be a bad influence. Yeah, he was strict; he didn't let us go out at all, so in terms of social life, that was non-

existent. So yeah, he was really, really strict... He wanted you to go to school, go home. He wanted you to focus on studies, so he'd constantly remind us that they're sacrificing so much for our education, just got to concentrate on doing well at school, and then once you finish school you can do whatever you like. He wouldn't be there to supervise if we were studying or not, but just wanted us to stay at home and not hang out with other people.

Similarly, Lisa shared,

Like when I was in high school, my curfew was like... actually I didn't have a curfew because I wasn't really allowed to go out. So my Saturdays would be like going to Vietnamese school and then that started in the afternoon and finish at five, and then I'd either have to work here or go home with my sister. And yeah, I wasn't allowed out and stuff like that.

It appears that the participants' parents were strict because of their expectations for academic excellence; the participants were not allowed to go out after school because they had to study, or attend after school educational activities, in particular, tuition classes. As Sharon shared, *"I was a pretty good student. Like they wouldn't let me take sick days at all, even for carnivals, so yeah that type of strict."* Similarly, Phil shared that before his Year 11 and Year 12 examination period, his parents were *"dead strict. No going out. Nothing."*

Reflective of other participants' memories of tuition classes, Peter recounted,

As long as I studied, I guess I could have a bit of freedom. They'd make me study every day for many hours, take me, make me go to a lot of tutoring classes and stuff, primary school all the way to high school. Yeah, learn piano, extra Maths class, English class, things like that. Well, I was pretty slack in studying so they pressured me a lot to study.

Similarly, Debbie attended tuition classes daily, “*Well in primary school, she made me go to this lady’s house every day after school for like an hour to do my homework and stuff. Yeah, and in high school she got tutoring for me in maths, in chemistry, anything I needed I guess.*”

As mentioned earlier in Chapter Two, many of the participants’ parents were without university qualifications, and their proficiency in the English language was low. This restricted their ability to help the participants with their school work. However, this did not indicate a lack of involvement in the participants’ educational pursuits. The participants’ stories are consistent with previous research that has shown that rather than assisting their children with school work, Asian parents show their support in other ways such as enrolling them in extracurricular activities and remedial class. This was illustrated in Asakawa and Csikszentmihalyi’s (2000) study where one participant shared,

Yeah, they well, they don’t help me out on my homework, but I know they work really, really hard, and they work really late hours just so they can save up enough money for me going, for me going to college, I guess that’s a lot, I consider that a lot of help.

In addition, Asian parents have been found to set standards and goals, and assume responsibility for chores and other practical considerations (Caplan, Choy and Whitmore, 1992). As Mai shared, “*Like, they want to push everything to studies, so I didn’t do much at home.*” The restrictions placed upon the participants in lieu of their studying is reflective of research that suggests that Chinese parents place greater emphasis on parental control and academic achievement, and are more protective than their European American counterparts (Lee & Zhan, 1998).

It is interesting that despite having to attend tuition for three years, Lisa did not view her parents as being strict with regards to her studies. As she shared,

If I got good marks, then they’d be like “yeah that’s good” but I never really discussed my marks with my parents and I still really don’t. They just like to see the finished product. Like if you graduate Year 12 and you got your TER, that would be it. They don’t really

care. They were pretty lenient, we were self-taught pretty much. We do our homework when we want. I guess we just did the best we could do. My brother had a tutor, and then that tutor came to me, and the tutor went to [my little sister]. So like, during Year 11 you'd be doing Year 12 stuff... me and my brother had to stick with him for three years, it was brutal.

Despite referring to tuition as “brutal”, Lisa described her parents as “pretty lenient”. It is conceivable that Lisa had internalized the cultural value of academic excellence, and I argue her pursuance of excellence may be a reflection of her ethnic identity as a Vietnamese young person. Lisa’s autonomy in pursuing academic excellence is reminiscent of findings by Koh, Shao and Wang (2009) that indicate Asian American children feel the need to excel in academia. In their study on parental value orientations and child self-identity in Asian American immigrants, results indicated that Asian American parents promote the development of an autonomous self in their children, at least in the achievement domain. The authors suggested that autonomy in the Asian context is often manifested in the pursuit of academic excellence and through the acquisition of learning values. This autonomy in achieving academic excellence is also evident in Thi’s narrative; she shared “*we loved school, going to school... we were really good at school, it was awesome.*”

The emphasis placed on education mirrors previous literature that suggests that Asian American parents, compared to other groups including European Americans, have been found to have higher parental expectations for educational attainment, including the school grades deemed acceptable, and the amount of effort or work they believe their children can accomplish (Caplan, Choy & Whitmore, 1992; Chao, 1994; Fuligni, 1997; Yao, 1985). Additionally, Confucianism has played an important role for elitism; valuing academic achievement, it emphasizes scholarly attainment as a means of achieving higher social status (Lee, 1999). Vietnamese families believe that having a tertiary education in particular honours the family and accords its members a high level of prestige. This is evident in Ashley’s story; her narrative intimates that it is her parents’ desire for her to attend University and

graduate that drove their high expectations for academic excellence in high school.

They looked at reports and nagged a lot, and 'you've got to study a bit more', stuff like that. I mean, they worked hard for money and they don't want to put their kids in and then just wasting their money and doing shit. Every time we drive past UWA, they'd be like "you see that University over there?" I'm like "yeah what about it?" They'd be like "that's a really good university." And then we drive past Curtin and they'd be like "you see that university over there?" I'm like "yeah?" "That's a really good university" and I'm like "ok."

Obviously being parents, be a lawyer, be a doctor, you know, every typical Asian does that cause that's the best job you can get. I know a lot of parents want their kids to be this and that, for image, you know "oh my kid does law... oh my kid does medicine" and all that, but they weren't like that. I think they knew eventually when I was growing up that I didn't want to go near there, it just wasn't me, so.

They were still strict with studies, they were strict because they don't want me to have a crap future. It wasn't like "do it because of these people" they were just strict for us, not for them, if that makes sense. I mean, I hated them, but they kept pushing me and especially my dad, he kept forcing me to study, and I'm like "stop it! You're putting more pressure on me now!" but he was just scared that I was going to stuff up.

In addition, Vietnamese immigrants in Australia often believed that university education is the only way of obtaining power for people in a minority group (Thomas, 1999). That is the future of their children and families is inextricably linked to their children's academic performance. As Martin narrated of his parents' reaction to his decision to enter University,

They sent me to Maths tutoring and that every Saturday, and they knew that would be the only way, cause they were poor so we're in this country, you have to do well in your grades, so they always, they

really stressed it... They would have been pretty unhappy if I hadn't entered uni, that's all they cared about. Cause you know, Asian tradition, as long as you're in uni, you'll come out with a decent job? It's just an Asian thing, it also looks bad. "Yeah, my son didn't get into uni." It looks pretty bad...

Similarly, when Sharon qualified for University, she described her parents as being ecstatic. She shares,

We had a family thing to celebrate that I got into uni, because I'm the oldest grandchild? And my mom was telling me how what my uncle would say if I didn't get to uni, he'd be like, I'm not a good child and stuff? ... Yes, I think cause in their time, they didn't have money to educate, so they just want their kids to be good, and now they're working really hard for little money and they want their kids to work in an office, and you know how you just don't do anything and you get paid for it? That's what they think.

The stories shared mirror previous literature on two dimensions – they are testament not only to the importance placed on education in traditional Vietnamese culture, but illustrate how failing to enter university would have been deemed a dishonor to the family. Zhou and Bankston's (1994) study of Vietnamese youth in New Orleans suggested that immigrant parents do not just bring with them a desire to maintain traditional cultural values and practices. They also developed a strong orientation towards upward mobility as a result of the migration and their own struggles for survival. The participants' parents' desire for them to "be a lawyer", "come out with a decent job" and "work in an office" suggests the emphasis on academic excellence also perhaps stems from economic pressures faced by immigrant families; Vietnamese parents believe that children must do well academically to be upwardly mobile (Thomas, 1999). As Ashley shared, "*They were more like 'do what makes you happy, but make sure it's a stable job and it's good money, you don't want to struggle like us.'*"

I posit that the emphasis placed on academic excellence has enabled the Vietnamese youth in Australia to be on an upward trajectory; the emphasis on academic rigour and excellence has perhaps put them in good stead. I also argue that the participants are aware of the struggles that their parents have had to face in migrating to Australia, and their academic excellence is a means of repayment. As Chao (1996) writes, immigration is often undertaken with the explicit intention of creating better lives for the children, and youth within these families often feel that they owe it to their parents to put great effort into their studies. Similarly, in their study of Asian and Latin American youth, Fuligni and colleagues (1999) reported that adolescents' assumption of their family responsibilities was closely related with a desire to achieve at school. The adolescents in their study were conscious of the great sacrifices their parents made to migrate to America, and believed that achieving in school was an important part of their family obligations. Importantly, they believed that their academic success would in some way, assist the family's fortunes.

The desire to repay their parents is inferred in Phuong's narrative; the eldest child of four siblings, Phuong excelled academically. This is in contrast to his young brother whom he believes has wasted the opportunities afforded to him by nature of their parents' struggles. He shared,

To be honest, I was a lot harder on Rob than on the others. But that's because I expect more from him because when Ben and June were born when the family was doing better, but Rob wasn't. He was born into the family when we were still really, really struggling. So I expected him to be better with money and his decision-making, his education etc, to be thankful for what he has and make the most of it. But in a way, the others are doing it, they're making the best of it in receiving good education and all that. But Rob on the other hand is throwing it all away, which makes me more angry with him and hard on him than the others. Actually, I never thought about it until now and there you have it, I think that's why. Rob knew how hard it was for us, but now he's throwing it all away. I would have thought he'd do what I did, and embrace what you have and make the best of it.

With traditional Vietnamese values espousing the importance of education and academic excellence, we have to wonder what of those that chose other pathways after high school? After completing Year 12, Mark decided that he was “*sick of studying*” and chose not to enter University. Instead, much to his mother’s disappointment, he worked full-time while pursuing a Certificate IV in Industrial Design. He shared,

At first my mom was a little bit disappointed, she really wanted me to go to uni, and she thought that because you’ve got a uni degree it will get you the best job. What she doesn’t understand that it’s not necessarily the piece of paper that will get you the best job, it’s just the experience that will get you the job, the right people, the right knowledge, the right connections. I think it took her two years to get over it? It’s not that she’d complain or anything. Now and then she’d just say “why don’t you go back to study, you know, cause I see you work really hard, if you study, you work in the office, you look nice you smell nice” that sort of encouragement.

Similarly, despite entering UWA and doing well in his course, Nick chose to discontinue his studies;

I had a good job, I learnt that in Australia it’s not about education as much, it’s more about work experience, but in Asian culture, it’s more about your education. And I don’t know, I just didn’t find it challenging in uni. My parents didn’t like that I dropped out. My dad’s more Westernized so he accepts that, what my decision is, because he doesn’t want me to blame him in the future, to regret. And my mom just kept yelling.

Nick and Mark’s narratives demonstrate that their choice not to pursue tertiary education was a site of tension in the parent-child relationship. Their narratives also suggest that the conflict between the participants and their parents was due to a disparity in values; the participants valuing the Australian practice of work experience versus their parents’ traditional Vietnamese emphasis on education and formal qualifications. I posit that these differences

are indicative of an intergenerational cultural dissonance between the participants and their parents. Both Mark and Nick are more “Westernized” in that they value work experience, as compared to their “traditional” parents that emphasize academic excellence and tertiary qualifications. It is noteworthy that Nick recognized that his father accepted his decision more readily than his mother because he is more “Westernized” and understands the importance placed on work experience in Australia.

While the decision not to enter University proved to be a site of tension for Mark and Nick, it needs to be acknowledged that some of the participants’ parents were not upset by their choice. Deciding that he was unable to “*sit in a room for four hours, listen to someone on the board, writing, doing all this homework and stuff*”, Thai decided that he would not apply for University after Year 12. Initially strict, Thai’s parents relaxed their control when he was in Year 11 after they accepted that he had no interest in studying and accepted his decision. Acknowledging that it was important to his parents that he entered University, Thai shared that they eventually accepted his decision;

They were alright. I think they sort of trusted me, that I had the capacity to look after myself. They did want me to enter uni up till Year 11. I think because they think university is everything, you get paid more if you go to University, blah blah blah, all that stuff. And they think it’s like a privilege to go to uni, and it’s the norm in the Asian community that your child goes to uni, and they don’t want to lose face. After Year 11, they sort of saw that I wasn’t very motivated and I just didn’t have the drive like everyone else that wanted to study in uni. It’s not for me. I tried, I did try to get into uni, but it just didn’t work. I just couldn’t sit there.

Similarly, Vuong did not want to enter University, despite his parents’ insistence;

They always say it. A huge thing for a Vietnamese to have a degree, so. But then for me, I tried, and I said “look in Year 12 I barely get in, the only one uni that take me in was like really far”, so I said, “look I

don't think I want to do it..." [How did your parents react?] Well basically, they feel shit. [laughs] Yeah but, they told me to go Tuart college or Canning college and do it again, but I go "nah". Once you try it, even though I pass and get into uni, I get the grades, it's still, I'm just going to hang it there, I'm not going to use it. My era is all IT and commerce, and uh, yeah, I said "look if I didn't graduate high at first, I don't think I'm going to graduate high later on, and there's no point getting the grade if you're not the top 3 per cent. People won't take you and you don't get paid as much, so you rather I just work hard?"

Actually, in my high school year, a lot of people dropped out in Year 10 and they worked, and they make shitloads of money. By the time, cause I didn't realise till Year 12, by the time Year 12 finished, all my friends that goes to uni, they're just stuck in uni for three years, when they finished the three years, the guys that quit in Year 10 already own and paid off their first house. Yeah, and I thought "shit" but those first three years, I owned my first house as well. So I said, "look, see, I just work hard, I don't have to get the degree". So they keep quiet for about six months and then they go "if you're willing to work, work" so Year 12, that's when we bought the shop in Suburb A, that's our first shop, so I worked there for almost three years.

It needs to be acknowledged that the participants' decision to not pursue a University degree does not necessarily imply that they do not embrace traditional values. Rather than not valuing the importance of education, Long, Thai and Vuong believed that they were not academically inclined, and would not have done well in University. In fact, they enrolled in TAFE after high school and possess a post-school qualification. Their stories are also suggestive of the different cultural frames (i.e. Australian and Vietnamese) that these second generation Vietnamese youth have acquired, and how different social identities are salient dependant on the situation. As Long shared,

I still think education is very important. Honestly, I wish I stayed in school went to uni. If I have kids, if I see that they can study in that area, I'll push them to study. But if I know that they can't study, I'll push them to get a job, get out and get working early.

Fortunately for the participants who chose not to pursue a University degree, their parents eventually accepted and supported their choice in not entering university. While their parents were initially displeased, their choice to join the working world did not prove to be a long-lasting site of tension. Perhaps their parents' acceptance of their decision to leave school is a sign of acculturation, an understanding that one did not need a university degree to succeed in Australia. As Thai noted, *"Yeah, they got over it. Things change over time, it's not expected anymore. It's not expected anymore that you have to go to uni."*

I posit that the participants' stories suggest that the Vietnamese population in Perth may not be a homogenous group, with differing levels of acculturation, values, and parenting practices. That is, some parents hold on to traditional values that dictate academic excellence and a university degree, while other parents understand that things may be different in Australia. The non-homogeneity of the Vietnamese population is further explored in Chapter Seven. This section has also explored that the conflict between the participants and their parents regarding their decision not to enter university may be indicative of a disparity in values, or an intergenerational cultural gap. In other words, the participants have adopted values that differ from their Vietnamese parents. The next section further explores the effects of intergenerational dissonance between the participants and their parents in further detail; in particular, the conflict that results from the difference in values and attitudes between parent and child.

My Parents Don't Get Me

They're totally Vietnamese. They, they tried fitting in, but you know, they can only be influenced so much. Just their way of thinking about

everything. I know they're trying to modernise it as well. But yeah, just certain things, oh my God, get with the 20th Century, hello! (Mai)

While it has been documented that important transformations occur in parent-child relationships during adolescence, there is a dearth in qualitative scholarship that explores the specific transformations that occur in parent-child dyads within immigrant families. As first generation migrants to Australia, some of the participants' parents would have adhered closely to Vietnamese cultural values and traditions as these young people were growing up. Conversely, growing up in Australia, these adolescents would have adopted Australian culture at a more rapid rate than their parents, adopting values and behaviours that may be at odds to those prescribed by Vietnamese culture.

A self-confessed rebel, Thi's adolescent years were marked by constant conflict with her very strict parents. With her parents placing great emphasis on her education, Thi maintained straight As in school until her first serious relationship at 15. Forbidden to have a boyfriend and with her parents "*getting aggressive about it*", Thi rebelled, and from then on, her grades deteriorated. She shared,

If they weren't so hard on me, maybe things would have been different, but it just got to a point where you know, they were telling me to break up with my boyfriend "you can't have a boyfriend, you have to study, you can't go out" and stuff like that. I didn't want that, so that's when I rebelled. I started to miss school, and then they found out I missed school. They tried to stop me from seeing him and stuff like that, but I'd see him at school – we went to the same school, and yeah, I just rebelled and they couldn't do anything about it."

Things came to a head when Thi moved to Sydney at age 17. Despite knowing that her parents did not approve, she ran away to Sydney to live with her boyfriend and his father. Describing her parents as being depressed at her departure, she shared,

I heard a lot about it. They just couldn't go on living every day like it was normal. They were just crying a lot, and sad a lot. Not eating, not sleeping. And I felt bad, you know, I felt bad in a way, but in a way I was living my life. Doing what I wanted to do? So yeah.

When she discovered that she was pregnant, Thi moved back to Perth and got married at her parents' behest,

I was quite young, but I was old enough to get married. Like I finished high school and I was old enough to do it, so they weren't that devastated by it. I wanted to wait till I had my kid and then see what happens after. Like, I didn't understand the concept that you had to get married, but they just, my dad just was very old-fashioned and I basically just listened to my dad. I do listen to my parents still, but then sometimes, I just don't listen to them. But yes, they just forced me to get married.

Having troubles with her marriage from the start, Thi tried explaining to her parents that the marriage was not working. Holding on to traditional Vietnamese values of marriage and family, Thi's parents were neither happy nor supportive of a potential divorce. As she shared, "*parents being parents, they said 'oh you know, you have work it out, you have to make it work, you know, you've got a kid together, you've got to stay together, you have to, have to stay together.'*" Despite trying hard to save the marriage, Thi eventually got divorced. Although her parents did not approve, they finally understood the troubles Thi faced and accepted her divorced; "*They didn't like it all because they were so old-fashioned. But yeah, we've reconciled and it's just gotten better. They've been like supporting me with everything now, and after everything that we've been through, the whole divorce and everything. Getting my life back on track now, so that's good.*"

Through her narratives, it is evident that whilst in high school, Thi's need for autonomy clashed with her parents' expectations of obedience and relatedness. Despite knowing that her parents were depressed, she exercised her individuality and self-assertion, and "*lived her life*" by staying in Sydney.

After falling pregnant, Thi moved home and although unwilling, married her son's father at her parents' request. With her marriage on the rocks, Thi eventually divorced her husband despite her parents' disapproval. Reflecting previous literature that suggests that traditional Vietnamese values that emphasize family harmony, and a respect for family hierarchy marked by conformity and obedience, are often at odds with personal independence as espoused by Western societies, Thi's story is evidence of an intergenerational gap between parent and child, and the tension that ensues

Nevertheless, despite Thi running away from home at a young age, falling pregnant out of wedlock, and getting divorced contrary to their wishes, Thi's parents continue to support her and her son. In describing the relationship with her parents, Thi highlights that it is because her parents have "*started to become more Westernized*" that the family shares a close relationship. She shared,

We're a lot closer than a lot of families. We basically made our parents understand our generation. Whereas in other families, the parents will be old and the kids will be young, and they'd just stay in their generation. Whereas you know, with our parents, we muck around with them. We talk to our parents like we're talking to each other. Because my parents are younger as well, I mean, in any other family if you speak like that to your parents, you'd get into trouble. But in our family, we talk to our parents like we're talking to my brother and sisters. We do open up to them and tell them everything and yeah, they've been through a lot with us kids, and just learnt to accept it now. They still follow some traditions from Vietnam and stuff like that, but they've also started to become more Westernized because of us kids. They'll always carry on that traditions, but they change it a bit, so it fits into our Westernized generation. Like celebrating Christmas, and Easter, and Australia day. Australian, Westernized stuff.

While they continue to uphold some Vietnamese values, Thi's parents have learnt to accept that their children may have adopted values different to theirs,

and have adapted to the “Western” culture. This has inherently narrowed the inter-generational gap between Thi and her parents, resulting in less conflict and a better relationship. Nevertheless, the close relationship she continues to share with her parents may be testament to the importance placed on family and family harmony in a Vietnamese family. Thi continues to return home for family dinners despite living separately from her parents. It is worth mentioning that Thi lives next door to her parents, which not only highlights how important her family is to her but also serves to encourage the maintenance of close family ties.

Moreover, her acquiescence to getting married despite her apprehension may be another indication of the respect Thi bears for her parents and her loyalty to her family. As she reflected, *“I got married because I was pregnant, for all that traditional stuff. I did it the first time just to please my parents, because that’s just how it is.”* Although Thi chose to walk her own path in her adolescent years, flouting her parents’ rules and going against their wishes, she professes to uphold some traditional Vietnamese values. Alluding to a re-negotiation of traditional values, she shared,

I’ve grown out of being really religious. Before I used to go to temple every week and I used to eat vegetarian twice a month, and now I don’t do any of it. I only visit temple when it’s Chinese New Year or a special occasion, but I still celebrate Chinese New Year and celebrate all the Vietnamese stuff that my parents do, like a lot to do with religion, Buddha’s birthday, Vietnamese mother’s day. Like marriage and stuff, we still do the traditional tea offering bit and then turn it around to the Westernized wedding afterwards. That’s important to me.

As discussed in Chapter Two, previous research has suggested that immigration to a new society typically involves the individual to acculturate to the dominant culture, and includes some degree of negotiation of cultural values as the new migrant adapts to the physical and psychological norms of the host society. Often used to define the changes that occur in members of a minority group in contact with another dominant culture, acculturation may

significantly affect a person's ethnic identity, behavior patterns, values and attitudes (Kwon, 1995). It includes not only behavioral adjustments (e.g. choice of language for communication, music, cultural foods) but also psychological adjustments. This includes the degree to which traditional cultural values (e.g., filial piety, humility, obedience) are retained (Graves, 1967). Studies have demonstrated that behavioral acculturation occurs more rapidly than values acculturation (LaFramboise et al, 1993; Sodowsky, Kwan & Pannu, 1995), as reflected in Thi's narrative of her parents celebrating Christmas and other Australian holidays yet continuing to be "Vietnamese" in regards to their views on marriage and respect for elders.

The complexity of the acculturation process is magnified when considered in a family context as different family members may balance issues of ethnic cultural retention and dominant cultural adoption differently (Costigan & Dokis, 2006). Existing literature has indicated that the family is responsible for a young person's social development and provides most of their significant social relationships (Buriel, 1987; Fuligni et al, 1993; Knight, Bernal, Garza, Cota & Ocampo, 1993). By adolescence, they are the primary source of socialization into cultural norms and values. However, as their parents strive to socialize them to traditional Vietnamese values, this group of second generation Vietnamese youth are exposed to Australian culture on a daily basis in school, in daily social interactions, and through the media. As a result, the adoption of Australian values via schools, peers and the media would greatly affect their perception of their family culture, thus (re)shaping their ethnic identity and dictating the values they adopt. The participants may then experience a re-negotiation of their cultural schema in a process akin to acculturation. Correspondingly, as their immigrant parents continue to maintain the values of their Vietnamese heritage, discrepancies occur that result in intergenerational cultural conflict (Chung, 1997; Nguyen & Williams, 1989; Portes, 1997; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993; Tardif & Geva, 2006).

In discussing her adolescent years, Mai described a strained relationship with her parents. Echoing Thi's story, albeit with less active rebellion, Mai's story highlights common sites of tension between parent and child; the emphasis

placed on academic excellence, the parenting style adopted, and the prohibition of romantic relationships by Mai's parents placed a strain upon the parent-child relationship during her adolescent years. As she shared,

My relationship with my parents was non-existent. They were just people who feed me and gave me a house. You could never talk to them? Everything you try talking to them about turns into a life lecture. Studying is top priority. You know, you can't show them your achievements, because if you show them your achievement, they'd expect it like they'd go "90? Why isn't it 100? What happened to the other 10 per cent?" or they'd go "90? Are you going to get that again?" Or "You going to get 50 next time" And if you get 50, they'd go "What the hell happened to you? Is it your boyfriend? Your friends?" So you can never share your achievements whether it's good or bad.

You never talk about your friends because they'd think your friends are bad influences, you can't talk about relationships because you're not meant to be in one. They monitored all my phone calls, if it was a home line, they'd be on the other line listening. Even now I have a mobile, they still listen in. So, no boyfriends, if it was a guy on the phone, they'd be like "what's going on?" If it was a girl, they'd check in every now and then to find out if I'm talking about guys. You can't talk about, you know, anything. I think it's like that with all Asian parents anyway. Not many people bond with their parents.

It is noteworthy that Mai described the strained relationship with her parents as typical of all Asian families, and I asked if all her friends shared similar relationships with their parents. She admitted that she had never really asked her friends about their relationships with their parents, but knew that her Eurasian – half-Vietnamese, half-White, friend had a much better relationship with her parents, “*because of the White influence on my Eurasian friend, she had it much better.*” Mai's view that it was the “White influence” that resulted in a better parent-child relationship is perhaps an acknowledgement of the cultural differences between her parents and self. That is, if her parents were

“White”, they would have understood her resulting in a better relationship; in turn, alluding to Mai’s adoption of “White” values. The notion that being “White” would improve the parent-child relationship is similar to Thi’s belief that the close family relationship is due to her parents being “Westernized”.

Growing up in Australia, both Mai and Thi appear to have adopted some “Australian” cultural values and practices; values and practices that are different to those their parents embrace. Their narratives not only intimate an understanding of the disparity between their values and those of their parents’, but also a belief that if their parents shared the same “Australian” values, there would be less conflict. Compounding the problem of the conflict-ridden parent-child relationship due to the discrepancy in cultural values is the parenting style adopted by the participants’ Vietnamese parents.

Contextually, this group of Vietnamese youth would have been exposed to the Western lifestyle outside of their home, and to the different parenting style of their peers’ parents. This would have been a huge contrast to the traditional Vietnamese culture norms and parenting style experienced at home. Research has suggested that as children reach adolescence, they become more aware of differences in their parents’ parenting versus that espoused by the larger society and are more likely to attribute the differences to cultural differences (Hyman, Vu & Beiser, 2001). This incongruence was identified as a source of continuous conflict in many of the participants’ homes. This is evident in the tension resulting from the responses Mai received from her parents regarding her academic achievements in high school. In contrast to the lack of positive reinforcement she received from her parents, Mai’s narratives suggest that she would prefer if her parents supported her decisions.

As the discussion progressed towards the now, Mai shared that her relationship with her parents has since improved after having a talk with them when she turned 20;

Other than I told them to get screwed, get stuffed, I’m old enough now. You know, it’s like I’m in my 20’s now. It’s my life and I’m the one benefitting from it or suffering from it anyway, so I kinda told

them, “that’s it. You can have some control over my life, but you know, obviously at the endpoint it’s still going to be me” and now they kinda give me more freedom, and they kinda see that I do abuse it sometimes but most of the times I don’t, I’m just sitting at home. And I said, “I’m going to have to deal with it, you can either, can you actually be a parent for once, and just encourage me and support me instead of just smacking me on the head all the time.” So yeah.

Mai’s narrative of her relationship with her parents alludes to two sites of tension; the perceived disparity in values, and her parents’ parenting style. Her comment that she would like her parents to “actually be a parent for once” not only highlights the disparity in values between Mai and her parents, but also the incongruence between her expectations and her parents’ parenting practices.

Likewise, the parenting style adopted by Emma’s mother has had a negative impact on the relationship with her mother. Growing up in a single parent household, Emma and her brother were raised by their mother after their father passed away. Describing her mom as very traditional, Emma appeared frustrated as she vented about her mother’s parenting style.

Growing up, I was closer to my dad than my mom, but when dad passed away, I was closer to my mom. But once I turned 18, she started thinking that if she retrain me and tells me off doing it, I won’t do it anymore. And to be honest, it only makes me want to do it more because I want to do it to a point where she sees it, this is my life. She’s in her traditional world. I can’t really do anything, it’s really up to her to change and it’s taking her a really long time...

[What do you mean traditional world?] *Like when I go out, say if I go to a ball, not once has she told me that I look pretty, or that’s a nice dress or anything. She’d be like “get home early!” I don’t know what to say to that, that’s not the way a parent should react to something like that. I mean, she could say “yeah, you look good” or something. It’s so frustrating though. I tell her my grades so she can at least say,*

“oh, that’s good, you didn’t fail any units.” Instead of saying that, she sees it as half cup empty and goes “oh you should have done better.” So I don’t tell her what I get anymore, and that’s what makes us grow apart. She doesn’t compliment me or she doesn’t say good things about me, the only thing that comes out of her mouth is bad stuff. I’m over it.

Emma’s reference to a different, “traditional world” again reveals an understanding that the conflict between them is due to different values; that her mother’s values are “traditional” as compared to her own values that are contemporary, and perhaps, more “Australian”. In addition, Emma’s narrative demonstrates that the perceived lack of parental warmth has contributed to the conflict within the family.

Growing up in Australia, it is possible that Mai and Emma’s idea of a “good parent” reflects parenting practices as espoused by the dominant culture - parenting that advocates for expressive communication, characterized by physical and emotional expressiveness, and a degree of autonomy and communication rather than of obedience and family obligation. Oriented to the Australian culture, it is evident that they value their autonomy and would appreciate affective communication with her parents. Conversely, their parents have continued to adhere to traditional Vietnamese parenting practices that have resulted in increased family conflict and a deleterious effect on the parent-child relationship.

The findings from the current study is consistent with existing American research that suggest that Asian American youth who do not adhere strongly to traditional Asian values may prefer their parents to respond to their achievements with positive affect rather than “negative reinforcement” (W. Chung, 1997; Lowinger & Kwok, 2001). It is also reflective of research that has found verbal affection to mediate the effects of disparity in values on the parent-child relationship. Specifically, low verbal affection negatively affects the mother-daughter relationship (Park, Vo and Tsong, 2009).

Existing studies based in America have discussed that unlike their Western counterparts, Asian parents do not rely on an open style of communication with their children but on a mutual understanding developed through both verbal and nonverbal communication (Wu & Chao, 2011). According to Confucian doctrine, strong emotions are regarded as somewhat harmful to one's relationships and therefore should be avoided (Confucius, 500BC). This self-restraint of emotion is particularly reflected in the parental role; Asian American parents have been found to refrain from expressing affection and warmth openly or directly (Wu & Chao, 2005). Moreover, Asian parents may be more critical because they fear that too much praise would result in their children becoming "lazy" (W. Chung, 1997). Conversely, research has suggested that Asian American youth may be influenced by familial norms of their European American counterparts who tend to be more openly affectionate (Lin & Fu, 1990). In turn, many Asian immigrant adolescents desire more open and emotionally expressive communication with their parents (Hyman et al, 2001; Ngyuen & Cheung, 2009; Wu & Chao, 2005).

Literature on Vietnamese parenting styles is limited, and a review of existing scholarship only uncovered information generalizing Asian parents' use of parenting methods as authoritarian in nature, and punishment-oriented (Lee & Zhan 1997; Nguyen and Williams 1988; Phan, 2005). According to Baumrind's (1971) conceptualization of authoritarian, permissive and authoritative parenting styles, authoritarian parents are characterized to be strict, highly directive and emotionally detached from their children. Park and colleagues (2010) found that acculturated Asian Americans reported increased family conflict when authoritarian parenting style increased. On the contrary, when authoritative parenting style increased, lower family conflict was reported. Based on Baumrind's (1971) assertion that authoritative parenting style reinforces autonomy and self-reliance, findings from Park and colleagues suggested that highly acculturated youth may prefer authoritative parenting style because these qualities are highly valued in European American culture.

Studies have also indicated that Asian American parents tend to utilize the authoritarian style to a greater extent than European American parents (Chao,

1994; Chao & Acque, 2009; Park, Kim, Chiang & Ju, 2010). They may consider the high level of control and extensive involvement with their adolescents' daily lives as a demonstration of their love and interest (Kim, 2005). Conversely, youth from Asian immigrant families may often misinterpret their parents' love or warmth for them as somehow lacking due to their adoption of mainstream American norms of parent-child relationships (Hyman et al, 2000; Phinney, 2000; Wu & Chao, 2005; 2011). Similarly, family roles in the Anglo-Celtic Australian family system are more egalitarian than those of Vietnamese families. It may be that because the Australian norm is to encourage autonomy, the strict parental control and lack of open communication experienced by Mai was viewed as an inhibition of her freedom.

The participants' desire for more personal autonomy and parental warmth is consistent with findings from Nguyen and Cheung's (2009) study of the effects of parenting styles as perceived by Vietnamese American adolescents on their mental health. The authors found that the adolescents desired more freedom and autonomy, and were frustrated that open communication was difficult to achieve. Common themes identified in the qualitative component of the study included communication between parents and adolescents, criticism from parents, affection and encouragement from parents, and parents' granting of freedom/autonomy to the adolescents. The qualitative responses were divided into two groups based on the participants' responses on parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative), and found the comments to be reflective of how the adolescents perceived their relationship with their parents. In the authoritarian parenting style group, comments included "Why can't my parent be more affectionate to me like some of my friends" and "My parent needs to understand that we live in American and no longer in Vietnam" (pp.514).

Similarly, findings from Wu and Chao's (2005) study on intergenerational conflict in norms of parental warmth revealed that although Chinese American adolescents expressed similar ideals of parental warmth to those of European American youth, they reported receiving lower levels of warmth from their

parents. The ideals expressed by the adolescents indicated that these Chinese American youth have adopted mainstream American norms for expressing warmth. However, their parents may continue to adhere to the norms of their cultural heritage, as demonstrated by the lower levels of warmth perceived by the adolescents. The large discrepancy scores among the Chinese youth reflect the cultural conflict these adolescents experience with regards to how warm they perceived their parents to be and how warm they would like their parents to be. These findings mirrored that from the present study in that the participants' ideals exceeded their perceptions of parental warmth, resulting in cultural conflict.

Correspondingly, within-group effects in Wu and Chao's (2005) study revealed that internalizing symptoms increased when these discrepancies increased. The results suggest that these discrepancies are not simply indicators of a parent-child generational gap for Chinese American adolescents, but are essentially indicators of youth's perception of cultural conflict in relation with their immigrant parents. It is noteworthy that the authors sampled both foreign-born and American-born Chinese adolescents (i.e. first and second generation Chinese youth), and found no generational differences in their levels of discrepancies. The similar findings between the two generations may be indicative of the cultural conflict both groups experience with their immigrant parents.

While the findings from existing scholarship are reflective of the participants' narratives, it is recognized that there are no established measures identifying standards for parental warmth, and by using quantitative measures, Wu and Chao's (2005) study may have failed to capture the nuances of conflict due to parental warmth. Comparatively, by using narrative interviews, the present study has captured the participants' ideals of parental warmth as compared to their perceived warmth. For example, Emma would prefer if her mother reaffirmed that she looked nice before going out, rather than tell her to "come home early".

Echoing the desire for more personal autonomy during her adolescent years, Sharon reflected,

They were afraid I'd get into drugs and stuff. They let me go out but they had to drive me there and pick me up. If I stayed over at a friend's house, then they'd have to talk to the parents. So I could still go out and stuff but I had a time limit, I couldn't go out at night time, I couldn't take the bus at all... [How did that make you feel?] I was ok until halfway through Year 12. And then I became really, really angry, but it was only for that period of time. I think after my TEE exams it got gradually better and now, it's still getting better. When I think about it now, I don't think they were strict but they kept telling me that they want me to do good and stuff. At that time I thought it was strict but I don't know...

Similarly, Mark described his mother as being “over-protective”. Arriving with his mother and sister from Vietnam, Mark was five years old when they arrived in Perth via sponsorship by his father. After his parents separated, Mark and his siblings were raised by his mother. Mark shared,

She wouldn't let me go out when I was younger, but when I grew older, in my teens, I started hanging out a lot more. She got a lot more worried, the whole gangs and Northbridge violence crap. Didn't let me go out. Not at all. Made me study really hard, just really really, not lock me down, but didn't want me to get corrupted, kept me in a bubble. Like, if I ask to go out with the boys, she'd ask who I'm going with, what time you're going, where you're going, how you're getting there, and I remember the very first time I went out, I think I was 15. I met up with my friends; she actually followed us for awhile. She dropped me off and followed us for awhile to make sure we weren't up to anything too stupid. At the time, I didn't know, but my friend said “hey dude, why's your mom following us?” I turned around and she was walking. I felt like I missed out. Everyone back then went to Orbit, went to CS, I got to do the same things they did but only at a later stage.

Despite being raised within a culture that traditionally emphasizes parental authority over individual autonomy, the participants' narratives indicate that

second generation Vietnamese youth in Australia become more desirous of personal autonomy as they enter adolescence. Autonomy expectations is defined here as the youth's expectations about the appropriate age at which they should be allowed to engage in certain behaviours, how late they may stay out at night, who they are allowed to associate with and whether they inform their parents of activities and whereabouts (Feldman & Rosenthal, 1990). The participants' narratives are consistent with Feldman and colleagues' (Feldman & Quatman, 1988; Feldman & Rosenthal, 1990, 1991) suggestion that behavioural autonomy is not granted until quite late in cultures that stress family obligation over individual freedom. The authors found that Chinese adolescents in both America and Hong Kong expected to be able to engage in a variety of behaviours such as attending parties at night and choosing their own friends at a later age compared with European American adolescents.

It needs, however, to be acknowledged that the parenting practices adopted by the participants' parents may not have been solely informed by their Vietnamese heritage. Rather than focusing purely on heritage culture, some scholars have examined the current contextual conditions in which ethnic minority families reside. From a cultural-ecological perspective, minority parenting practices emerge from adaptations made by parents to cultivate the competencies needed for success in the immediate environment (Ogbu, 1981). Parents who foresee from their own experience that life in the dominant culture is difficult may elevate control of their children so that the children will have a better chance of succeeding (Barber, 1994). I posit that the participants' parents may have been more controlling and grant less autonomy in a bid to ensure their children's success; if they restricted the participants from going out and made certain that they studied, it would guarantee academic excellence. It would also protect the participants from unseen harm; for example, protecting the participants from violence, and drugs.

The participants' narratives demonstrated an increase in conflict with their parents as they entered adolescence due to a lack of autonomy, and is consistent with existing scholarship on changes in children's conceptions of parent-child relationships during adolescence (e.g. Fuligni, 1998; Smetana,

1988; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). However, I put forward that the emic nature of this study has allowed for a deeper exploration of the range of factors that may create conflict in families. In addition, using the amount of displayed anger to measure conflict as used by existing quantitative scholarship may not be appropriate in all families. This is especially pertinent in cultures, such as the Vietnamese, that discourage open disagreement or direct confrontation in favour of family harmony. A lack of anger may not equate to a lack of conflict nor does it imply cohesion. In his study of parent-adolescent conflict in White, Black and Hispanic families, Barber (1994) found that minority families reported lower levels of conflict than White families. Results also indicated that the minority groups had substantially higher expectations of conformity for their children, which suggests that the roles of culturally based expectations may mediate the type and quality of behavioural interaction among family members. That is, the cultural expectations of conformity, obedience and family harmony may dictate less conflict, or at least outward expression of disagreement. Similarly, limited to emotional closeness, other beliefs and dimensions of parent-child relationships were not sampled by the quantitative measures employed in Fuligni's (1998) study to measure cohesion; obligations to assist and support the family could indicate family cohesion.

Using a qualitative approach in this study has allowed for the nuances of the conflict with the parent-child relationship to be captured. The participants' narratives not only reflect the results from Fuligni's (1998) study, but also enhance our understanding of the dynamics within the parent-child relationship. For example, as Simone reflected on the relationship with her father,

I resented him quite a bit, just because when you're a child and you get invited to birthday parties, you think how come everyone gets to go but you don't get to go... not so much fight a lot because we weren't allowed to speak back, so if we didn't agree with something, we just chucked a tantrum in our heads, but weren't allowed to say anything to him.

Simone's lack of displayed anger against her father does not negate conflict within the parent-child relationship. This was echoed in Sharon's narrative as she shared her reaction to the lack of autonomy granted,

I couldn't really do anything, I would just stay in my room. I didn't talk to them, like I didn't think about running away or anything, cause I think since small, I just had in my head that I wasn't going to do that.

Moreover, despite the sites of tension in Phuong and Vuong's stories of childhood familial experiences, they continued to help raise their younger siblings and work at the family business whilst still in school.

This section has explored how intergenerational cultural dissonance had impacted on the parent-child relationship during the participants' adolescent years. It also revealed how parenting style, namely the lack of perceived warmth and autonomy were sites of tension. The next section explores another facet of the parenting style adopted by the participants' parents - physical discipline. In particular, it explores the impact physical discipline had on the parent-child relationship.

My Parents Hit Me

I can probably assure you that Asian kids got hit all the time.
(Phuong)

As discussed previously, existing literature has generalized Asian parenting methods to be authoritarian in nature, and punishment oriented. Similar to parenting in Chinese households, Vietnamese families adopt the Confucian ethic of filial piety which emphasizes the duty of children to be obedient and affording respect and authority to the parents (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Ho, 1986). These socialization goals may then promote strict control, intolerance of misbehaviour, and reliance on physical discipline (Ima & Hohm, 1991; Tang, 1998, 2006). This reliance on physical discipline was evident in most of the participants' stories.

In addition to the lack of autonomy and the high expectations they had for him as the first born son, the physical discipline meted out by Phuong's parents was another constant source of conflict.

I used to get hit till I was 19 so, not just hit with just the back of the hand or whatever, they used to bring out extensions cord and stuff. The extension cord was just as bad, cause there's the initial contact and then it wraps around and hits you again. I got hit with a shovel once. I was like, nine. It was the house in Morley. We were out in the yard and I was mucking around. I can't remember what I did but I remember him being really fucking angry, and I got smacked with the shovel. Not in the head or anything but still, it hurt. Oh there was this one time, it was so bad.... You know dowels? Those circular wooden sticks that they stick in between grooves so they can glue bits of board together? Anyways, you can get small dowels, big dowels, 1 cm thick to 3 cm diameter what have you, I got belted by one of those. 2 cm in diameter roughly, it left bruises all of me and then I couldn't sit down at school. It was pretty bad. They kept thinking that was the way to discipline children, disciplining me anyway... I think there was one time when I actually put my hand up to block it, and I broke the stick and he got even more pissed off and took off his belt. So it was pretty bad... I thought it was normal up until I was about 17 and I thought "this is bullshit why am I still getting hit". I thought it was a bit much.

Phuong's story, while graphic and perhaps more severe than other participants', was not the only one where physical discipline played a big role. This was echoed by Mark,

Yeah, you ask any Viet family and they'd always have the fly swatter. Guaranteed. Every Viet child would have a fond memory of the fly swatter. A fly swatter on the ass.... just enough for me to learn my lesson, but I guess not enough because I'd do the same thing again. Would get hit for just being silly, or arguing, or not doing what I was meant to do. I mean if you answer back, it warrants discipline, but if

it was something minor like just hitting my brother than it was ok, but if it was really, really major then...

Physical discipline was not limited to boys. Debbie, too, laughingly shared of her experience with the flyswatter,

Of course they hit me... for lying? Not doing my homework? I don't know. Having fights with my brother? Stuff like that... My mom would use the flyswatter, and she'd make me kneel until she said I could stand up. I don't remember how long for, it seems long but I don't think it'd be for that long. Maybe five minutes? Ten minutes? I don't know...

Similarly, Thi appeared amused as she recounted being hit when she was younger,

When we were younger we used to be very naughty. But being young and being naughty was very different. Discipline then was very different to discipline when you rebelled? Discipline when we were younger was just, we had to kneel on the floor or something like that, and there was one time when me and my sister lit up my parents' blanket on fire. We lit it on fire while they were sleeping, and in turn, my dad tied us up to the roof and like, tried to pretend to light us on fire. So that was pretty bad. Or we'd just get a flyswatter to the bum or something like that, a ruler, you know, typical Asians. But when I got older, I used to get hit. I remember when I got hit across the face with a telephone. Cause I raked up the telephone bill. I got chucked around... I was old. I was like 16, at least. But yeah I got chucked around.

Although she seemed unperturbed in recounting her story of being “hit a lot”, I had to ask whether being “chucked around” affected her relationship with parents. She shared that at the time, she was “*very upset. And like, the only person I could turn to was my boyfriend then, and it didn't help things between me and my family. That's why I ran away from home, and I left home and things like that. So it wasn't that great. But now, it's good. It's very good.*”

Contrary to existing literature which reports adverse effects from physical discipline and authoritarian parenting, most of the participants reflected that it was probably beneficial that they were disciplined as such. As James contemplated,

But now when I think about it, I think it was the right thing for them to do because I was pretty naughty. Just running amuck, um, going out, doing stupid shit, wasn't studying, but yeah, when they hit me, now that I think about it, when they hit me, it did knock some sense into me. It stopped me doing things, and at that time I really wanted to do it, but now, yeah, it's a good thing they hit me or I'd have done it. Going out every night during exams, things like that.

Similarly, Long laughingly shared,

It builds character, teaches you discipline, respect. I used to get punished. I used to kneel on a brick. You know the incense candle? My brother would burn that, and I'd have to kneel until it burned down. And that could take hours. My brother would hit me and then he'd tell my mom, my mom would hit me, mom would tell dad then my dad would hit me, but that built character I reckon. Discipline. No one hits their kids nowadays, too scared of getting put into jail and all that. But I reckon, it's discipline.

This is consistent with findings from Chao & Aque's (2009) study of interpretations of parental control by Asian immigrant youth. The authors found that behavioural control by parents was most beneficial for Chinese youth when they felt more anger over the control. The researchers posit that whilst the adolescent is angry, they may acknowledge that the control is legitimate. Sharing Confucian ideologies for filial piety and respect for parents, the participants' narratives reflect Chao and Aque's findings; despite the anger felt towards getting hit, they understood that it was discipline and was for their own good. As Thai shared,

It hurt, it hurt a lot [laughs] You'd get really angry cause you know, why did you get yourself in this situation for, you know it's wrong but

you get caned anyway. Yeah, I think you do [hate your parents] when you're a kid, but you know, you grow a little after. At 12 I understood where they were coming from and tried to be a good boy.

While the physical discipline may have been a site of tension while growing up, it does not appear to have been detrimental to the participants' psychological well-being or self-esteem as suggested by previous research. It is conceivable that the perception of physical discipline as a parenting norm buffered the potential negative effects. Interestingly, Phuong shared that whilst he would never resort to the same extent of physical discipline he experienced, he would still practice physical discipline with his own children *"Na, I'd never hit my kid like that. I mean I'd smack them every now and then but not to that extent. It was just a bit much."*

It may also be that their parents ceased using physical discipline to control the participants before it damaged the parent-child relationship irreparably. Unlike Phuong who was physically punished up until he was 19 years old, most of the participants' parents stopped earlier. As Thai recounted, *"I remember after I was ten, I never got hit again. Get shout at, get grounded, but no more caning that's for sure."* Likewise, James's parents stopped when he was 16 years old, and Debbie's parents stopped when she was 12 years old, *"I didn't get hit after Year 6, Year 5? They just yelled, and I don't think I was the perfect child but they stopped hitting me. I don't know why."* As acknowledged by the participants, their parents recognised that they were getting too old for physical discipline, and were at an age where verbal discipline would suffice; *"I think it reaches a point where they know you're old enough to make your own decisions, you don't have to be hit to be forced to do anything."* (James)

While most of the participants were subject to harsh parenting practices, including physical discipline, it needs to be acknowledged that not all the participants were subject to strict rules and regulations. Despite being the elder of two siblings, Jane shared that her parents were not overly strict;

The only thing my mom said was with tattoos and piercings, when you're 18 you can do whatever you want. I didn't have a curfew at all.

It's like with my dad, he's ok with it but because my mom was brought up really strict, she didn't want me to have that lifestyle cause she experienced it, so that's why my mom wasn't strict. She's like strict on some levels but like, it's reasonable. Like, for example, I know my mom didn't want me to go into Northbridge because like she was scared of the news and stuff, that's it, just for my safety.

Similarly, Sue shared that her parents were not strict with her when she was growing up;

So how I was raised was not so Asian, let's just say it wasn't so traditional. So it's just like, I think they've picked on, so I do have a choice in what I want to do and where I want to be as long as I keep the trust. With Asian families there's a difference between parents and children. Whereas my parents are like my friends, but not to a best friend sort of point, there is a line there. They do stay as parents and I do stay as a kid, which is something I really respect and I really appreciate it, and I took upon that and I was like "you know, considering they've given me all this trust, I'll give it back" so we've got this mutual understanding going and I think that way it worked out a lot better than having to be strict on me. Because I think I'm more likely to want to rebel if they were strict on me. Like say, I know any parent wouldn't like their kids to date at a young age, any parent wouldn't like their kids to be out late doing bad things and stuff like that, so I do tend to stay away from all that. But I do ask them if that's ok, for consent before I do anything. I did have curfews in early high school, and I never lied about where I went because I don't see the point of that. So yeah, most of the time they'd have to come pick me up anyway so it'd be on time.

It is interesting that in describing her parents' adopted parenting style, Sue highlighted that her upbringing was different, because her parents were not like "most Asian parents". It is conceivable that her expectations of parenting style stems from comparisons with her friends, both Asian and otherwise, and because she had little conflict with her parents believed that her parents must

not be “Asian”. In Sue’s earlier narrative, she shared that her parents were different because *“I do have a bit of that freedom where I find most Asian parents are very strict and very traditional. Like you can’t date at a certain age”*, but she later shared that her mother would advise her not to date early, or stay out late. In fact, she also had a curfew in high school, much like the other participants.

It is possible that rather than not being “Asian parents”, Sue’s parents did not need to enforce physical discipline because she never crossed any boundaries. In turn, she perceived them to be less strict than other “Asian parents”. Perhaps Jane and Sue did not perceive their parents to be strict because their parents had no need to be. As Jane shared, *“I didn’t really ask her anything, I was a good girl. I don’t think she was really worried of anything happening to me.”* Similarly, Sue never stayed out late despite not having a curfew. She shared, *“Like say if it gets just a bit late I’m just like ‘oh I’m going to go home’, besides there’s not much to do out after 11? So might as well just go home.”*

Furthermore, Sue confessed,

I was like the most chicken ever. I hated being in trouble, I hate getting myself into trouble or risking myself getting into trouble. If my mom tells me something, or she tells me off once, I’m like “ooh I better not do it again” that’s pretty much it, so most of the time it’d be like a warning, like “shouldn’t be doing that” or “that was wrong” and that was it. I remember when I was little and some little kid came over and started drawing on the wall, and he’s like “you should do it too, it’s fun” and I’m like “oh yeah” and I tried but my mom was like “no, you’re not allowed to do this” and she got really angry and I was like “ok I won’t do it again” I think that was the biggest, biggest trouble I ever got myself into, I was like pretty much afraid for the rest of my life. But yeah, I think that was the only big blow up.

It may also be worthy to note that both Jane and Sue stemmed from divorced households. Sue's curfew was relaxed in Year 11, and by Year 12 when her parents were divorced, she had no curfew. She shared that her parents were not strict in terms of forcing her to study and enter university because *"I think they started to realise that because of the separation, because of the divorce, I think they already failed at one part and unable to keep a stable family for me, that sort of environment that should enable me to have a good education and focus on what I want to do."* While this is beyond the scope of the present study, it would be valuable for future studies to explore how family structure affects parenting style in immigrant families. It would also be of value for future studies to examine its relation with ethnic identity formation.

I suggest that the lack of physical discipline employed by Jane and Sue's parents alludes again to the non-homogeneity of the Vietnamese population in Perth. The findings of this study have shown that the majority of Vietnamese parents have employed punitive means of discipline; it has also demonstrated that not every Vietnamese parent does so. The participants' narratives have also demonstrated that whilst physical discipline was a source of conflict while growing up, it has had no long-lasting adverse effect on the parent-child relationship. As we continued to explore their familial experiences, many of the female participants shared that their brothers received preferential treatment. For some, this was a site of tension within the parent-child relationship; this is explored in the next chapter.

"He's a Boy."

Being Asian, guys and girls are different. They're like "he's a guy" and I'm like "eugh, oh my gosh" he got to do all the things that I can't. He's a boy, he can do this, he can do that. (Ashley)

In sharing stories of growing up in Perth, it transpired that many of the female participants perceived their brothers as receiving preferential treatment from their parents. This was often a site of tension; it was also something that I understood well. As a Chinese female, I too grew up believing that my brother was accorded more freedom and autonomy, and more importantly, did less

housework. Consequently, the differential treatment proved to be a cause of conflict between my parents and I during my adolescent years. Emma's frustration was obvious as she lamented,

Oh, she loves my brother. He can do whatever he wants, he can wear dirty clothes and leave them on the floor. He can not learn how to do the washing machine, he doesn't know how to do the washing and that's ok. But with me, I have to learn how to do the washing. He doesn't do the dishes and that's fine, but I have to do it. And then, because I work two jobs, I work in a pharmacy and a law firm, and my brother only works at Coles, and he recently got two jobs as well and he works the same hours as me, and he goes to mom "yeah I have to work 8.30 to 5 o'clock now" and mom goes "oh that's such long hours" and I look over at her and I'm like "I told you I do those hours and you didn't say anything" and when my brother does it, she just goes "oh that's such long hours, you must be so tired" Whatever.

Echoing the preferential treatment her older brother received when they were younger, Thi shared,

He does whatever he wants and doesn't get in trouble for it. Like, cause he's a boy, it's different [pauses] Like he was mommy's boy. He would do whatever he wanted to do and he would never get in trouble, but as soon as my sister or me did anything, we'd be in trouble. [Such as?] Going out, without questions asked and things like that. I don't know, maybe as we got older, like you know, going out and drinking. "Girls shouldn't be drinking" and stuff like that. But mainly going out and boyfriend/girlfriend stuff... Yep, that's always the reason. He's a boy. But so? That's the thing. With Vietnam, boys have all the authority, whereas here, it's different. It's equal.

Acknowledging how boys are favoured in traditional Vietnamese culture, Thi draws a distinction between the two cultures; "With Vietnam... whereas here..." It is conceivable that she is unhappy about the preferential treatment as

she feels that she is “here” and should therefore be treated as they do “here”. Similarly, Simone identifies the preferential treatment as an “Asian / Vietnamese” thing,

They do treat him differently. They still do, I think it's an Asian thing, or Asian / Vietnamese thing, the boys are always the treasure of the family, because my dad is the youngest of all his siblings and that's his only son, so he carries the name of the family and they treat him like he's king. No matter what he does wrong, he's still king. Yeah, so they treat him really well. I mean if he ever does anything wrong, they'll sacrifice so much for him, so I have to say he's pretty irresponsible, he's very spoiled, so if he wants something like, I want a car, if I said I wanted a car, they'll say “well save up for a car and get your own car.” If he says I want a car, my dad will take out a loan and buy him a car even though my dad can't afford it. So it's just things like that... I did hate that for awhile, like why? Double standards, mom's like you won't understand until you become a parent. That's all they say, “he's older, he's a boy.”

It is interesting that the male participants agreed that their parents expected more from their sisters. As Long shared, *“She's the only girl. She had to cook and clean.”* Similarly, James shared, *“With my sister they were ten times more strict? She's 19 and still has a curfew for 12. Like if I go out, I don't really have to tell them who I'm going out with, but for her, they need to know who she's going out with, what time she's going to come home, this and that.”*

The participants' stories reflect previous literature that suggests daughters from Asian families perceive their parents to be more restrictive or controlling than sons did (Pyke & Markson, 2003; Rohner and Pettengill, 1985). Fuligni (1998) found that girls from Mexican, Chinese and Filipino backgrounds reported later expectations for autonomy than did boys. Similarly, Rumbaut (1996) found that girls reported more conflict with their parents than did boys. This was attributed to the “clash between restrictive parental standards for behavior and dating and the girls' increasing sense of and desire for individuality and independence from parental control in the transition to

adulthood” (p.163). The household chores expected of the female participants was also consistent with Seymour’s (1988) finding that girls in India performed at least twice as many chores as did boys, with the gender difference being greatest in families from low socioeconomic backgrounds. She proposed that mothers, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds that had to seek employment, relied more heavily on their daughters than sons to perform the duties that they were unable to personally attend to.

However, the reasons for the differential treatment may not be culturally motivated; Lisa shared that although her eldest brother received preferential treatment from her parents, it was not only because “he’s a boy”. She shared, *“Yeah, he’s always going to be a little more spoiled. But we all know that, because my mom said that, she felt sorry for him because he had such a hard life growing up. Because before I was born, it was probably the toughest for them. And growing up he didn’t have a lot of things...”*

It also needs to be acknowledged that the preferential treatment accorded to the males is not restricted to Vietnamese families. In Allison and Schultz’ (2004) study of parent-adolescent conflict in early adolescence, their sample consisted 357 youth of primarily Caucasian backgrounds from one American Midwestern state. The findings indicated that parents had greater expectations for their daughters to perform household duties. They were also more restrictive of their daughters’ freedom to go places alone, choice of friends, and decide how to spend free time. The authors concluded that the increased intensity of parent-daughter conflict compared to parent-son conflict over the issues of household chores, care of room, meal choices/table manners, personal appearance and personal autonomy is evidence of gender-typing in the socialization of young females along traditional lines in society. This challenges the assumption that the parent-child conflict experienced by this group of second generation Vietnamese youth is solely due to a disparity of cultural values as a function of acculturation. The next section explores how parent-child conflict may not be culture-specific, and is in fact normative of all adolescents.

Normative Conflict?

In line with the previous argument that the preferential treatment accorded to males may not be culturally motivated, I question if the parent-child conflict experienced by the participants is due to intergenerational cultural dissonance or of normative disagreements. Perhaps rather than due to a disparity in values, the conflict experienced by the participants may be normative of all adolescents. As Socrates wrote,

The children now love luxury; they have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of exercise. Children are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up dainties at the table, cross their legs, and tyrannize their teachers. (Attributed to Socrates by Plato, Patty & Johnson, 1953, p.277)

Existing research conducted with European American families suggests that the transition into adolescence introduces a small to moderate amount of conflict into the parent-child relationship (Collins & Russell, 1995; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991). In addition, Fuligni et al (1999) and Phinney et al (2000) found that parent-adolescent differences exist in beliefs about family obligation among European American families and not just among Asian immigrant families. In fact, Phinney and colleagues (2000) found that there was greater disagreement among American-born adolescents than foreign-born.

In their meta-analysis of changes in parent-child conflict across adolescence, Laursen, Coy and Collins (1998) found that the affective intensity of parent-child conflict increases from early adolescence to mid-adolescence. Rates of conflict then decline across the adolescent years. Research suggests that the early to middle adolescent years represent a time of heightened orientation toward peers, and children of this age often desire less parental control over their lives so that they can increase their involvement with their friends (Laursen & Williams, 1997; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). In addition, with

increasing age, adolescents are less willing to accept parental authority (Fuligni, 1998), and conflicts increase in affective intensity (Laursen, Coy & Collins, 1998). In their review of several studies, Youniss and Smollar (1985) concluded that adolescents view parents as retaining positions of authority, but that while parents still exert authority unilaterally, adolescents view parental authority as becoming more restricted. As adolescents mature, the adolescent-parent relationship becomes less contentious and more egalitarian with age, toward relationships with peer-like elements (Steinberg, 1999). By the time they are in their twenties, most young people have a better relationship with their parents than they did when they were younger (Arnett, 2004). This pattern fits with what has been described as a movement from unilaterality to mutuality in young persons' relationships with parents (Youniss & Smollar, 1985).

Alternatively, Selman (1980) proposed that the changes in parent-child relations may stem from the youth's increasing ability to coordinate a variety of social perspectives. With age, young adolescents become capable of holding perspectives of two individuals in mind simultaneously, and of viewing the two perspectives as exerting influence on one another in a reciprocal social relationship. Adolescents would therefore exhibit more concerns of mutuality and dialogue in the parent-child relationship than do younger children. This was demonstrated in a study by Phinney, Kim, Acer and Vilhjalmsson (2002). The authors found that European American adolescents moved from assertions of autonomy in mid-adolescence (ages 14 to 17) to increased consideration of the views and feelings of their parents in late adolescence (ages 19 to 22).

This development is mirrored in Phuong's narrative,

I was more motivated about going out before, but now it's "I want to be somebody". So now the person they want me to be and the person I want to be is very, very similar. My way of thinking has changed and I've matured a lot and I see things from their point of view as well. Before with problems, I used not tell anyone and get into trouble, now I'm more mature, I'd actually talk things through with

them if I have any issues. My parents say that to me as well, we're not going to be around forever, so it's better that you have a good relationship with us and talk things over than be spastic.

Nonetheless, I do not deny that the differences in values may be culturally motivated, and that it has resulted in conflict within the family. I posit that the intergenerational cultural dissonance between parent and adolescent exacerbates developmentally normative sites of tension (such as, curfew negotiation and dating), producing conflicts that are both intergenerational and intercultural in nature. Tardif and Geva (2006) in their study examining acculturation disparity and conflict among Chinese Canadian immigrant mother-adolescent dyads found that substantial gaps in mother-adolescent acculturation may compound the typical generation gap experienced within most families. Mothers and adolescents in the high acculturation-disparity group reported more conflicts about interpersonal issues. In comparison, conflict reported by the low acculturation-disparity groups was focused more on daily activities and chores. It was proposed that mothers and adolescents characterized by high disparity engage in more interpersonal kinds of conflict as they attempt to negotiate their cultural values and attitudes, which may no longer be optimally synchronized.

In addition, I propose that it may be the participants' perception of the acculturation gap that fuels the parent-child conflict; Dinh and Nguyen (2006) found that the perceived parent-child acculturative gap among Asian American college students was actually a stronger predictor of the relationships between Asian American college students and parents than their level of acculturation. Similarly, Tsai-Chae and Nagata (2008) examined the role of an acculturation gap on reported levels of family conflict in college students from East Asian immigrant families in America. Their results demonstrated that an acculturation gap between students' self-rated Asian values and their ratings of parents' Asian values is more strongly related to the students' family conflict ratings than their level of behavioral acculturation.

While it may be that as the participants mature and negotiate a secure identity, they also eventually embrace values similar to their parents and are hence, less

prone to disagreement and conflict. For example, while Thi and Phuong's stories of growing up indicate a weakening of the parent-child relationships in their younger years due to a disparity of values, their narratives suggest that they now share a close relationship with their parents. It is conceivable that despite adopting Australian values, they also embrace traditional Vietnamese values where obedience to parents and the importance of family harmony are paramount. On the other hand, it is conceivable that in their younger years, the participants perceived the intergenerational cultural gap to be wider than it actually is. And as they matured, are able to empathize and understand the motivations behind their parents' rules and regulations, narrowing the perceived disparity in cultural values. As Mark shared, *“Back then, I just felt like rebelling, felt angry, ‘why’s she doing this?’ Now that I’m a bit more mature, I look back and I kinda understand why, her point of view of why she did what she did.”*

In exploring the adolescents' lived experiences of growing up in Perth, conversations led to experiences of discrimination. Existing scholarship has indicated that there is a long-standing history of discrimination experienced by youth from ethnic minority backgrounds (Benner & Kim, 2009; Young & Takeuchi, 1998). In turn, discrimination is often identified as a significant stressor for ethnic minorities (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996, 2001). The next section thus explores if the participants indeed experienced discrimination and if it proved to be a stressor.

Experiences of Discrimination

Well, cause we did martial arts, and they knew we did martial arts, so they got scared of us. So we didn't really get picked on. (Nick)

Arriving in 1997 in the midst of the Hanson debacle, I was constantly asked by persons outside Australia if Australians were really racist, and if I had encountered any form of discrimination. In response, I always said no. Sixteen years later, I have yet to experience any significant racism or discrimination. I distinctly remember a tutor in University suggesting that my command of English might have been the reason for my (low) grade, which he quickly

retracted after reading through my assignment. Have I encountered racial stereotypes? Sure. I am constantly asked where I learnt to speak English. But have I experienced overt racial discrimination? Not yet. This made me wonder if this group of second generation youth experienced racism and discrimination as they grew up in Perth. Therefore in exploring the lived experiences of this group of second generation youth, I asked the participants if they had ever encountered discrimination.

Many of the participants reported that they had never been the victim of discrimination. However, a further exploration of their narratives indicates otherwise. As Sharon reflected,

I think I didn't want to be Asian in primary school. I didn't feel very comfortable with being Viet because I went to a school that had no Viets, and I remember getting teased. They just said stuff about Chinese people being all the same and stuff, and like looking all the same. I think I got upset but I didn't really show it. I didn't tell anyone, I just laughed it off.

Similarly, Debbie shared that,

In Year 11, people used to call us the Asian group, because they didn't like it cause we used to stick up for ourselves. Cause you know there's like the popular people and they'd pick on people, and we used to stand up for ourselves. They'd say something and we'd be like 'that's not right' and they'd get angry with us and pick on us. But that generally didn't last long. Yeah, it was like that in school.

It is interesting that Sharon and Debbie reacted differently to being teased and picked on in high school. Perhaps it is because Debbie had other Asian schoolmates that buffered against the deleterious effects of discrimination; having a social support group allowed Debbie to stand up to the discrimination experienced. In contrast, Sharon was one of the few Vietnamese in her school and was a distinct ethnic minority. Moreover, Debbie identified strongly as Vietnamese, whereas Sharon shared that she was “*uncomfortable with being Viet*”. Researchers have suggested that a strong identification with one's

ethnic group can serve as a psychological buffer against perceived prejudice and discrimination (e.g. Cross, 1991; Phinney, 1990; 1996; Phinney, Chavira & Williamson, 1992). The underlying presumption being that the strength of connection to one's group compensates for the deleterious effects of discrimination. In the presence of discrimination, one may feel good about themselves by focusing on the positive aspects of their group. In their longitudinal study of Asian American, African American and Latino high school students, Greene and colleagues (2006) found that the affective component of ethnic identity (i.e. strong sense of belonging) buffered the negative effects of discrimination on self-esteem. It is possible that Debbie's strength of ethnic identity allowed her to stand up to discrimination, and buffered any effects of discrimination on her psychological well-being.

Identifying high school as the arena in which discrimination took place, it is conceivable that the participants were most aware of racial taunts and prejudice as they have begun exploring their ethnic identity. In turn, adolescents of other ethnicities are also exploring their identities and the differences between cultures are therefore illuminated. As James shared

The school I went to was very ... people were in their groups. White people in their group, Asians would be in their own group, it wasn't very multicultural as well. So it was quite racist or discriminatory. There's always comments made like, you walk past a group and you hear comments made about racist Asian jokes, there's always that, but to your face they're always really nice, but then when you walk away, you do hear it. Of course I turn around and just ask them "what the F did you say?" And you can imagine what happens from there [laughs]

[Were there a lot of fights?] Yeah, uh not really big fights but just mainly one or two punches cause the other guy's being a smartarse... Not really, reason's cause the Western people tend to be more scared of Asians cause we're a lot more aggressive and we come in numbers. [laughs]

It is conceivable that as part of the 'Asian' group, James had social (and physical) support in the face of discrimination, thus acting as a buffer against the effects of discrimination on his psychological well-being. Interestingly, fighting back was echoed in Martin's narratives. Martin reflected that growing up in the 80s, he would get picked on outside the school compound, *"it'd start with a dude saying something racist, and before you know it, all the Asians... you know how the Asians are, they can just group all the Asian mates in like ten seconds and then just bash the guy up."*

In exploring how discriminated affected him, Martin highlights an awareness of how his ethnicity set him apart from White Australians, and how it is this difference that made him a target of discrimination. However, it is also this knowledge that buffered the effects of discrimination, as he shared

At first pretty bad, but obviously cause you know you're different, and you think "well they're born here as well, but they've got the advantage cause they're White. We're born here but we're always going to look different" so you know why you got picked on so I guess it's normal. As opposed to a kid who's bullied and he doesn't know why he's bullied. Whereas we knew right away...

Martin's narrative also explained how fighting in groups buffered the negative effects. He shared,

Well when I was younger, like before 12 years old, it's more fear than anything cause you feel like you can't do anything, you're just a kid and people can just be racist. But as you enter high school, you go through you know, the teenage years, and that's when you think you're... you use it to rebel. So you'd know that there would have been a lot of Viet gangs in the 90s, especially like at Greenwood and Perth Technical and that, so it actually felt good being Viet at that stage, cause you're going through that stage where it's like "fuck that, I'm not going to let anyone talk down on me just cause we're different"... Yeah like, I don't think anyone calls it a gang, it just felt good, cause everyone's similar and we all had the confidence that

even though we were picked on when we were younger, you can't pick on us now? Cause now we're old enough to fight back, in a way, so there was a lot of racist fights. Yeah, it's pretty weird.

The participants' narratives suggest that fighting those who discriminated against them may be a buffer against the effects of discrimination; it is plausible that being part of an ethnic group that appears physically strong and able to defend its members is empowering. I argue that the positive regard the participants had for their ethnic group resulted in a positive ethnic identity, which in turn, allowed them to better cope with discrimination. Scholars have suggested that having positive affect for one's ethnic group may then buffer against the negative outcomes associated with discrimination. As discussed by Phinney (2003), ethnic identity may function as an important psychological resource that encourages resilience against discrimination. Phinney, Chavira and Williamson (1992) found that adolescents with high ethnic identity used more active strategies in dealing with threats (e.g. discrimination and stereotypes) than those with low ethnic identity.

Moreover, Yoo and Lee's (2005) study on ethnic identity and the moderating effects of approach-type coping strategies on Asian American's well-being found that a strong ethnic identity was associated with more frequent use of social support and problem-solving coping when participants perceived racial discrimination. Research indicates that approach-type coping strategies reflect attempts by the individuals to engage in an active and on-going negotiation with the environment, and include social support seeking, cognitive restructuring and problem solving (Tobin, Holroyd & Reynolds, 1984). While the coping strategies identified in existing studies may not have included physical violence, it appears that fighting in a group was a form of social support and problem-solving that buffered against the effects of racism for this group of youth. Perhaps future research could explore how physical retaliation may be a coping strategy against discrimination.

In exploring incidents of discrimination in high school, Long shared that despite bullying occurring in high school, it did not matter much;

You know, you beat them in something and they start calling you names, and it stems from there. Depends on the situation.... AFL – the sport. Cause you know, AFL is an Aboriginal game and a White game, you don't see any Asians playing it. So when we do play it, and we do excel at it and beat them at it, that's it. That's when the problems start. In a way, it's them discriminating that Asians shouldn't play AFL.

Perhaps it is because the discrimination stemmed from the Asians (“us”) excelling at the game, there was positive regard attached to it, thus the bullying and discrimination had no impact on his psychological well-being. In fact, he continued

After you go into class and you get to study with them, it gets better. Once you get to know them then yeah, and then they spread the word, they'll say 'oh don't mess with him, don't mess with them, they're alright' then after that ... yeah.

Curious as to whether discrimination was limited to his high school years, Long laughingly shared.

I still get racist comments, but it never bothered me. They were just telling me to go back to my own country, chingy eyes, the usual stuff. But I just didn't care. It never bothered me. I just don't care what they say, I'm here, who cares, start my life. Never cared, still don't. I mean, ching chong usually refers to Chinese, but to them all Asians are Chinese so [laughs] I don't know why, but yeah. It never bothered me. Never did. I maybe swore back at them but nothing too violent. So it's alright. Nah, they were kids, they were racist and all that, but they're young as well, so they don't know. Don't take offence at all.

Long identifies strongly as Vietnamese, and is active within the Vietnamese Buddhist community – perhaps the combination of a strong ethnic identity, and the social support he gets from his ethnic community provides a buffer against the ill-effects of discrimination. It is interesting that he did not take

offence to the racist episodes because “they were kids”. This raises the question, at what age does it stop being acceptable to be racist?

The reference to racist comments stemming from kids was mirrored in Mark’s narrative. As he shared,

Oh I get called gook and “go back to your own country” now and then, but that’s when I was younger. But now, I think, as people grow up a bit more, they begin to understand no matter where you’re from, you’re just as Aussie as they are. If they ask me where I’m from, then that’s fine. I don’t take offense to that. But if they say go back to my own country then its “hey hang on a minute, I’ve got every right to be here as you do, you might have been born here, but the way you’re acting it doesn’t show the Aussie way...” But I guess that’s normal, that’s what kids do.

It is interesting that the participants imply that with maturity begets an acceptance and understanding of other cultures. It may be that the participants are forgiving of childhood ignorance; it could also be an assumption that as one grows older, one is more exposed to other cultures, resulting in increased awareness. Without further exploration, I hazard to suggest that the participants themselves may have been discriminatory when they were younger, and their comments were in fact, a reflection of their lived experiences.

Nevertheless, the findings from this chapter are consistent with previous research that indicates strong social support, ethnic identity and approach-type coping strategies buffer against the deleterious effects of ethnic identity. In addition, I propose that the participants may not perceive the discrimination to be significant because ethnicity, or their “Vietnamese-ness” may not be central to their self-concept, and thus may not interpret events through an ethnic lens. In Sellers and Shelton’s (2003) study on the role of racial identity in perceived racial discrimination, findings indicated that the significance of one’s group to the self-concept is positively associated with how much discrimination individuals indicate they have experienced. That is, the more

important being Vietnamese is to the person, the more discrimination one perceives. I extend this argument by proposing that the participants' sense of belonging to Australian and their identity as an Australian also serve to buffer any effects of discrimination. As Mark commented, he has "*every right to be here*"; alluding to the strength of his Australian identity.

It is also possible that growing up within the Perth school system may have encouraged contact and involvement in activities with members of other cultures and ethnicities, equipping the participants with wider knowledge and resources that allow them to cope with prejudice. In turn, this provides them with the ability to acknowledge that discrimination is one-off and contextually-based. Lee's (2008) study found that Asian American college students' interaction with the White majority group and other ethnicities buffered the adverse effects of discrimination on their life satisfaction.

I wonder if the participants' narratives are testament to the success of Australia's multicultural policy. First articulated in a 1977 submission to the Australian Population and Immigration Council, entitled *Australia as a Multicultural Society*, the first official definition of multiculturalism was based on the principles of social cohesion, equality of opportunity and cultural identity. The submission concluded: "What we believe Australia should be working towards is not a oneness, but a unity, not a similarity, but a composite, not a melting pot but a voluntary bond of dissimilar people sharing a common political and institutional structure" (Koleth, 2010).

In the three decades since its introduction in the 1970s, Australia's multicultural policy has evolved in response to changing government priorities and to address the challenges facing Australian society. Over the years, there has been much debate around the use of the term "multiculturalism" and its removal from the title of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs during the Howard government. In fact, then Prime Minister John Howard, advocated a shift away from multiculturalism and back to a focus on integration or assimilation. In the 1990s, Pauline Hanson and the One Nation Party campaigned against multiculturalism, stating in her first speech to Federal Parliament:

Immigration and multiculturalism are issues that this government is trying to address, but for far too long ordinary Australians have been kept out of any debate by the major parties. I and most Australians want our immigration policy radically reviewed and that of multiculturalism abolished. I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians ... They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate. Of course, I will be called racist but, if I can invite whom I want into my home, then I should have the right to have a say in who comes into my country. A truly multicultural country can never be strong or united. (Hanson, 1996)

Through the participants' narratives, it appears that the changes and debates that surround multiculturalism on a political and policy level are in contrast to the lived experience of the people. The findings of the present study suggest that the people in Perth support, and have embraced multiculturalism and diversity. However, it is acknowledged that the participants' stories do not represent all the Vietnamese in Perth, much less all the people in Perth. A national study about multicultural Australia commissioned by Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), a multicultural and multilingual broadcasting radio and television network, found that the majority of participants support multiculturalism. However, some participants experienced varying levels of comfort with diversity and varying levels of belonging in Australia based on where they were situated in relation to politically and culturally constructed narratives of Australian identity (Ang, Brand, Noble & Wilding, 2002). A review of human rights and social inclusion issues as narrated by African Australians indicated that many African Australians have experienced discrimination as part of their daily lives, in areas such as employment, access to housing, education, health services and with the justice system (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010). As a young first generation African Australian shared "You start to feel like an outsider and then you get desperate and angry and you think 'will I ever be part of this place?'" (p.15)

It may be that the discrimination and barriers faced by African Australians are similar to those faced by the first generation Vietnamese upon their arrival and

that Australia's social policies are yet inadequate in catering to their needs. It is possible that as a new immigrant population, the people of Australia lack exposure and knowledge of their culture. Perhaps the lived experiences as narrated by the African Australians are not a true reflection of Australia's multicultural policy and Australians' acceptance of cultural diversity, but a result of "catching up" occurring on a policy and ground level. It is possible that over time, the African Australian population in Australia would perceive less discrimination and prejudice; in turn, experience the same level of belonging as the participants in this present study.

Summing it Up

The participants' stories of growing up in Perth have revealed various sites of tension between them and their parents; specifically, the lack of face to face interaction in their childhood years, as well as their parents' emphasis on academic excellence, the intergenerational cultural dissonance between parent and child, their parents' adopted parenting style, and the punitive measures meted out when the participants were in high school. Female participants also shared that the preferential treatment accorded to their brothers was often a site of tension.

As recent arrivals to Australia, many of the participants' parents had to spend long hours away from the home to ensure economic survival. While the participants who are firstborn children reported that it impacted on the parent-child relationship, the laterborn participants did not appear as affected. It is proposed that the presence of siblings mediated the deleterious effects of their parents' absence. Also, the laterborn children were not burdened by the added expectations and responsibilities that were demanded of the firstborn children. It is interesting that despite a "tough childhood" (Ashley), none of the participants fault their parents for working long hours. In fact, their stories reveal an understanding and appreciation for their hard work. I argue that it is this gratitude that has mediated the parent-child relationship despite the lack of time spent with their parents.

This chapter has also explored the intergenerational cultural dissonance between parent and child, and the conflict that ensued. Growing up in Perth, the participants have been oriented to Australian cultural values and practices. This is in stark contrast to the traditional Vietnamese values and practices their parents continue to uphold. This disparity in values is manifest in the different sites of tension identified by the participants; specifically, the demand for academic excellence, adopted parenting style, physical discipline and preferential treatment accorded to the males in the family.

Many of the participants shared that their parents were very strict and restricted their social activities in lieu of studying; academic excellence was expected of the participants, with entering University the end goal. However, for the participants that did not pursue tertiary education, their decision proved to be a site of tension in the parent-child relationship. In contrast to their parents' cultural values that hold education in high esteem, the participants believed that work experience would be more valuable in attaining employment.

In sharing stories of their parents' adopted parenting style, the participants desired more parental warmth, expressive communication and personal autonomy as characterized in Australian parenting norms. This is contrary to traditional Vietnamese parenting practices that are authoritarian in nature and punishment-oriented. However, it needs to be acknowledged that not all Vietnamese parents refrain from expressive communication. As Emma shared,

If I go over to my friend's house, she's Viet as well, her mom is Viet as well, and her mom like, whenever I come over and get dressed to go clubbing and stuff, she comes into my friend's room and she's like "oh you're so pretty, when did you guys grow up so fast? I like that top, I like that dress!" Wish my mom said that.

Similarly, even though Ashley's parents were strict and resorted to physical discipline, they were also affectionate. This divergence from traditional authoritarian parenting may be indication of a lack of homogeneity in the Vietnamese community of Perth.

The section, “He’s a boy” explored the perceived preferential treatment as reported by the female participants. Their brothers were subject to less rules and restrictions, especially in the areas of household chores, curfews and dating. Again, this may be a function of the intergenerational cultural gap; the patriarchal Vietnamese culture favours boys over girls, as compared to the Australian culture that espouses gender equality. However, rather than culture specific, the preferential treatment accorded to males may simply be a reflection of gender-typing in the socialization of young females, regardless of ethnic heritage.

While the participants’ narratives may be indicative of intergenerational cultural dissonance, I also argued that the parent-child conflict may be a reflection of normative developmental processes. Existing research with American families of European heritage has shown that parent-child conflict increases as the child enters adolescence (Laursen et al, 1998; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Smetana, 1988; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). However, the present study does not aim to deny the existence of the intergenerational cultural gap between the participants and their immigrant parents. Rather, that the disparity of values intensifies the normative parent-child conflict.

The last section explored whether discrimination was prevalent as this group of second generation Vietnamese youth grew up in Perth. The findings indicated that most incidences of discrimination occurred in high school. However, none of the participants’ experiences were significant enough to adversely affect their psychological well-being or self-esteem. Their narratives suggest that the strength of their ethnic identity and the availability of social support buffered against the deleterious effects of discrimination. Finally, I proposed that the experiences of discrimination did not impact upon the youth’s self-esteem or well-being because ethnicity may not be central to their self-concept.

In sum, this chapter has explored the familial experiences of this group of second generation Vietnamese youth in their childhood and adolescent years. It is conceivable that the increase and gradual decrease in parent-child conflict during the participants’ adolescence is a reflection of their ethnic identity

exploration; as they explored their “Australian” and “Vietnamese” identities, they were negotiating the different values important to them, which may or may not have differed from their parents. As the participants commit to the meanings ascribed to their ethnic identity, a deeper understanding for their parents’ perspectives is cultivated, thus perhaps reducing the intergenerational cultural gap. In essence, their ethnic identity exploration mediated the intergenerational cultural conflict, and thus the level of parent-child conflict. The next chapter explores the ethnic identification of this group of second generation Vietnamese youth. By posing the question “What do you say when people ask where are you from?”, the chapter examines their self-identification. It also explores how language may be a symbol of their ethnic identity.

Chapter Five: I'm Australian, but I'm Vietnamese: Ethnic Identification and Dimensions of Ethnic Identity

*This is where I live. I always felt like this is my home. I'm Australian.
I never felt like I didn't belong here, always felt I belonged here. I
have every right to be here. (Thai)*

This chapter explores the ethnic identification of this group of second generation Vietnamese youth in Australia; namely, the participants' perception of belonging to Australia, and their ethnic identity. As discussed in Chapter Two, one's ethnic identity is but one of many social identities and its salience is dependent on context and situation. I reiterate that in exploring the participants' ethnic identification, I have adopted a general perspective on ethnic identity; rather than testing for specific dimensions of ethnic identity (e.g. ethnic awareness, ethnic involvement), the use of narrative interviews has allowed the participants to identify the content of their ethnic identity; that is, what makes them Vietnamese / Australian, and why.

The first section "Where are you from?" explores their ethnic identification. I posed the question "what do you say when people ask you where are you from?" to each participant during the interviews to explore their sense of belonging and membership to their ethnic group; the premise being that their answer would allude to the group they claim membership to, and in turn, their ethnic identity. In posing the question, I recognised that the participants may identify as belonging to different groups, and in turn possess multiple (ethnic) identities. Rather than assume the participants' ethnic identification, and asking the participants "How strongly do you identify as Vietnamese?" I argue that by posing the question "what do you say when people ask you where are you from?" it allowed the participants to identify which (ethnic) identity was more salient. This section also introduces different dimensions of ethnic identity; namely, how one's looks, cultural practices and accent contribute to

the construction of ethnic identity. It also introduces the importance of family in the transmission of values, and thus, their ethnic identity negotiation.

The second section then examines language use. As mentioned in Chapter Two, existing statistics report that the majority of the Vietnamese community speaks Vietnamese at home. Statistics also indicate that more than half of the Vietnamese population speaks English very well or well. This section explores the choice of language use in this group of second generation Vietnamese use and if it may be a symbol of the participant's ethnic identity.

Where are you from?

Born in Hong Kong, Australian but Vietnamese background. (Phuong)

As a Singapore-born Chinese female living in Perth, I am constantly asked “Where are you from?” Despite having been asked the same question for over a decade, I continue to have difficulty answering the question. While seemingly a straight-forward question, my first reaction is usually “what do you mean where am I from?” and depending on who is doing the asking, I wonder, “does it matter?” What would compel someone to ask me where I'm from? When I first arrived as an international student in 1997, I never thought it strange for people to ask where I was from. With no qualms, I would automatically respond “Singapore”. I was from Singapore, I was an international student, I felt like an international student; I was essentially a transmigrant from Singapore, coming to Perth to study.

Fast-forward 16 years into 2012, I have yet to leave Perth and it has become increasingly harder to answer the question. I have now spent half my life in Australia; completing high school and both my Bachelor and Master degree in Perth. I am proud to be a Permanent Resident of Australia and have been for years. So when well-meaning, (or perhaps not so well-meaning) persons ask me where I am from, I feel the need to seek clarification “Are you referring to my country of birth? Which university I'm studying at? What faculty I am in?” The question “where are you from?” reminds me that I may not be from Australia and perhaps, do not belong in Australia. Implying foreignness, what makes one question where I am from? Is it the way I look? Or is it my accent?

What defines where one is from? With that in mind, I sought to explore the perception of belonging of this group of second generation Vietnamese youth by starting the conversation with “what do you say when people ask you where you are from?”

Unsurprisingly, all the participants had been asked the question “Where are you from?” at some point of their lives. Not only did the participants appear familiar with the question, they seemed to have well-rehearsed and scripted responses to the question. This was evident in Emma’s response to the question;

“I used to say I’m Australian, but I now say that I’m Vietnamese but I was born here”

Born and raised in Perth, Emma appeared resigned as she shared her standard answer. Curious about the reformulated answer to the question, I asked, “why ‘used to’?” After a thoughtful pause, Emma shared, “*Well it’s obvious that I’m not Australian, so yeah, if I say I’m Australian, they’d be like ‘no, you’re not, what are you?’ so yeah, I say ‘I’m Vietnamese but I was born here, so I’m Australian’*”

As I contemplate her narrative, I cannot help but wonder why “it’s obvious” that she is not Australian. Has it been reinforced over the years by people questioning her belonging and implying that she is somehow different? Interested to know if Emma would have identified as being Vietnamese if her Australianness was never called to question, I asked what Emma was “Vietnamese” about her. Emma reflected, “*I don’t know. Nothing, really. I can’t really think of anything at the moment. Maybe when I’m at home, and speak to my mom in Vietnamese, that’s about it*”

I then asked her why she identifies as being Australian. She shared,

I belong here more than in Vietnam. I consider Australia home. Maybe it’s because I grew up here that I’ve learnt to adapt to everything that’s happening around me, and I go back there, and people are living on the streets, people wearing pyjamas out

shopping, and I think about it and I'm like "we'd never do that here, people would be looking at us if we did that here" So yeah, and the whole Asian Vietnamese when they cover their faces and hands when they go out into the sun....

Referring to people in Australia as “we” and “us”, and the Vietnamese in Vietnam as “Asian Vietnamese”, Emma’s narrative suggests that she views Vietnamese people from Australia and Vietnamese people from Vietnam as being different. It also alludes to her identity as an Australian person. In her narrative, Emma not only highlights the cultural practices she has adopted as a marker of her ethnic identity, but also her place of birth. It is apparent that Emma perceives to belong in Australia and is Australian. Yet, she is also concomitantly Vietnamese when she speaks Vietnamese to her mother, highlighting the importance of language in the construction of one’s ethnic identity. Language as a marker of one’s ethnic identity is explored in greater detail in the next section.

Believing that the question “where are you from” questioned his identity, Martin reflected that he used to hate it,

I used to always say “Australian” and get offended, Because it’s like your identity, because you were born here, so you think “no, that’s who I am, because I was born here” whereas now, as you get older and you start maturing, you see it from their point of view, you realise they’re asking because they want to know not for anything else.... They obviously know you could be born here but they’re asking cause they want to know your background, so there’s no point in me saying Australia because the next question is then “oh where are your parents from” when they ask, they’re asking for your ethnicity. So I always say “yeah I’m Vietnamese but I was born here” and they can always tell that I was born here, and they just wanted to know where I originated.

Similar to Emma’s answer to the question “where are you from?”, Martin also “used to” say he was Australian. However, unlike Emma who believed that

she was viewed as “obviously not Australian”, Martin modified his response because he learnt that his ethnicity was called to question. It is interesting that contrary to Emma’s narrative Martin believes it to be obvious that he is Australian; highlighting place of birth as an important marker of his ethnic identity, Martin is Australian because he was born in Australia.

In responding to the question, Martin describes himself as “*Australian Vietnamese. If there was a book on me, it’d describe me as Australian Vietnamese. Well, I originated from Vietnam and grew up in Australia*”. I argue that his identification as Australian Vietnamese alludes to the equal importance he gives to his “Vietnamese” and “Australian” identities, that he is neither more Vietnamese nor more Australian but concomitantly both.

Similarly, in exploring her perception of belonging, Sue understands that the question asks for her ethnic heritage. Mirroring Martin’s narrative, Sue believes that people “can tell” that she was born in Australia. Born in a refugee detention camp in Indonesia to Vietnamese parents, Sue shared,

I’d say Vietnamese, but then they’d be like “were you born here?” and I’d go into that and they’d be like “so tell me something about your background” and I’d be like “well... about that...” I don’t want to confuse people, I’ll clarify that I am Asian, because most of the time people would ask where you’re from because they want to know what Asian country you’re from, so I’d be like straight out “I’m Vietnamese.” Most of the time people would ask where you’re from because they probably don’t want to know if you’re Australian or not cause they can tell.

It is noteworthy that despite identifying as Vietnamese when asked, Sue feels no connection to Vietnamese culture; it is only because she looks Vietnamese that she feels compelled to tell people she is Vietnamese. As the conversation transpired, Sue shared,

I feel like English or Australia is my hometown, and then like Vietnamese stuff is all foreign to me. I just picked it up. I don’t feel

anything. There's nothing there that I can say "hey, this is what Vietnamese people always do."

Despite having been asked the same question, it is interesting to note that Martin, Emma and Sue approach it differently. While Emma believes that it is "obvious" to others that she is not Australian, Sue believes that "they can tell", which raises the question "what motivates the different perspectives?" When I queried if she felt Vietnamese at all, she replied "*Well evidently, no. Not at all.*" I propose that it is because Sue identifies more strongly as being Australian, and has a mainly Australian social network that she perceives her Australian-ness to be evident to others. Conversely, it may be that because Emma has a predominantly Vietnamese social network that she acknowledges a difference between her and White Australians. Thus, perceives it to be "obvious" that she is not Australian.

In responding to the question "what do you say when people ask where are you from?", Debbie shared,

I'm Australian but I'm Vietnamese. I was born here but I'm Vietnamese... Because normally when they ask you, they're like "what's your background?" So I always add that I'm Vietnamese.

Reminiscent of Emma and Martin's narratives, Debbie was born in Australia and is therefore, Australian. However, she is also Vietnamese. Again, I wondered if Debbie would have identified as Vietnamese if her identity as an Australian was never questioned nor challenged; I sought to explore what she believed was "Vietnamese" about her. Debbie reflected,

I guess my background, my culture, the way I see things is different from other families, cultures and kids will see things. Like the whole family thing, the values, and stuff like that. I guess I'm more respectful to elders than other people would be, like other cultures wouldn't see it as much. Like people just call their aunties by name, they don't really go "Aunty" and stuff. I have to do that.

Making reference to “my” background and “my” culture”, and how her values and practices are different from “other” cultures, Debbie’s narrative alludes to a strong sense of belonging and membership to her ethnic group; and in turn, the salience of her Vietnamese ethnic identity. Her narrative also highlights cultural practices and values, such as the importance of family and respect for elders, as dimensions that contribute to the construction of her ethnic identity. In other words, she is Vietnamese because she embraces traditional Vietnamese values.

The pertinence of cultural values and practices to the construction of their ethnic identity was echoed by Lisa and Nick. As Lisa shared,

If I see a Vietnamese older person, I wouldn't just say “Hi”, I would bow, quite properly, cross my arms and bow down... We don't call people by their first name and things like that. I still do all of that and at the dinner table and you're eating with a whole bunch of older people always ask them to eat first and then eat, like it's rude to eat before them. Just things like that.

The respect for elders was echoed by Nick,

You always respect your parents. Like with the White culture, I see, when you grow up till you're 21 or something, White people, their kids, they become on the same level. Where with Asians or Viets, we'd never become that level, even if I'm 40 and they're 60, there'll still be a distinct level that they're elders and I'm young. I respect everyone that's older; every Viet person that is older.

The participants’ narratives support previous literature that suggests that even within an individualistic society such as Australia that emphasizes autonomy and independence, Asian youth continue to uphold collectivistic values, and retain their parents’ familial traditions (Fuligni, Tseng & Lam, 1999). Despite identifying strongly as Australian, the participants’ narratives of their respect for elders are testament to their adoption of traditional values and practices. Children in Vietnamese families are taught never to associate with older persons as social equals, and to nod their heads and say “*thùa*” when meeting

an older person. Persons that sit lower on the family hierarchy (i.e. children) are also not permitted to use their elder's name in addressing them; rather, their title or position (i.e. uncle, aunty) in the family is used in lieu of their name.

Noticing that Nick implied that White culture and White people were different, I asked if he had the same respect for White people. He said, "*A little but not really. Yea, nah, I don't think so. I see them as equal even if they're older – I still have that respect that they're older, but I find them more equal.*" With the value of respect inculcated from young, it is interesting that although Nick continues to respect his elders, regardless of ethnicity, he only accords deference to older Vietnamese persons. I posit that the differing treatment is suggestive of an amalgamation of Vietnamese and Australian identities; Nick and Lisa accord deference to Vietnamese elders as dictated by Vietnamese culture, but not with older White persons, as prescribed by Australian culture. I put forward that in interacting with other Vietnamese persons, their "Vietnamese" identity is called to the fore and in turn, activates values and practices that are considered traditionally Vietnamese.

Showing a distinct awareness of their cultural heritage, it is apparent that cultural values and practices contribute to the participants' construction of their identities; Emma is Australian because she does not walk around in her pyjamas as they do in Vietnam, and Debbie is Vietnamese because she continues to respect her elders. It is noteworthy that Emma was unable to distinguish between Vietnamese and Australian values, as she reflected,

I don't know what Vietnamese values are. That's like common knowledge to respect your elderly, I don't see that as Vietnamese thing, I see it as everyone should do it. And you think about it, not only Vietnamese people do it, everyone does it.

I posit that Emma's inability to distinguish Vietnamese values from Australian values is an indication of her ethnic identity negotiation; it is plausible that Emma has yet to negotiate an achieved ethnic identity, and perhaps considers ethnicity to be of little importance. On the other hand, it is also possible that

Emma's "Vietnamese" and "Australian" identities are so integrated that she is unable to distinguish between the different identities, and hence, different cultural practices and values. Nonetheless, I do also acknowledge that respect for elders and good manners may be universally espoused values and are not exclusive to the Vietnamese culture. This was echoed in Martin's narrative; in discussing what contributed to his "Vietnamese" identity, Martin shared that

I think I have a lot more respect for other people and like my maturity level, that all comes down to how you were raised.. And that's the same for every culture." I think it's all about manners. Like in Vietnamese, when you respond, you respond with like a "yes please" rather than just a "yes". Little things like that. But that's just manners, so that's something else entirely. I think you've got Viet parents that are quite rude. I've met some Viet parents, and they're just really bogan so their kids are really bogan, and that's just the way it is."

It also needs to be noted that in discussing her ethnic identification, Emma remarked that she would feel more Australian "if my mother treated me differently." As discussed in the section "Adolescent Years", Emma's relationship with her mother has deteriorated in the last few years. It is possible that the relationship Emma shares with her mother has affected the negotiation of her ethnic identity. Research has indicated that the family is the major socializing influence on children and adolescents within a cultural context (Super & Harkness, 1997; Phinney et al, 2001), and parental attitudes are likely to be important to ethnic identity. Viewed as a multifaceted process by which parents transmit information associated with their ethnic background, ethnic socialization involves teaching children values, norms and attitudes related to their ethnic heritage (Brown & Krishnakumar, 2007). This includes teaching children about their ethnic heritage, encouraging use of their heritage language and promoting ethnic pride.

I argue that the relationship the participants share with their parents would influence the negotiation of their ethnic identity. In other words, a good parent-child relationship would aid the transmission of traditional Vietnamese

values, in turn, encouraging the negotiation of a positive Vietnamese identity. Conversely, a strained parent-child relationship would inhibit the transmission of traditional Vietnamese values, in turn, resulting in a lowered sense of belonging and membership to one's ethnic group.

Sharing a close relationship with her mom, Debbie acknowledged that it was because her mother was a stay-at-home mother that allowed for them to cultivate a close bond. As business owners, Debbie's father managed the business while her mother had the opportunity to stay at home to look after Debbie and her brother. To illustrate the impact of having her mother stay at home while she was growing up, she compared the relationship with her mother with that of her cousins' relationships with their parents; *"I'm close with my mom cause she made the effort to stay home when we were young. Like with my cousins, they're not close to their parents still now, cause their parents worked all the time."*

She also attributed the close relationship she shares with her mother to her parents being "less traditional". Again differing from the relationships her cousins have with their parents, Debbie shared,

I guess like my mom and I have more of a friendship kinda relationship, whereas my aunties they always have to show that they're superior and things like that. Me and my mom we go out, we muck around and stuff, my cousins can't joke around with their mom like me... They think a certain way, my aunty wants her kids to get married to a Vietnamese that's Catholic, has a good education. My parents don't care about that. My parents are more accepting. My other uncles and aunties, they're really old-fashioned, they think a certain way, but my parents can adjust.

Arriving in Perth ten years before Debbie was born, it is conceivable that her parents had been sufficiently exposed to the Australian lifestyle and culture, and had acculturated to a certain degree. However, it needs to be recognised that their acceptance of a difference in values may not mean that Debbie's parents are any less "Vietnamese" nor socialized her within Vietnamese values

and practices any less. Without interviewing her parents, it is impossible to know the strength of their cultural orientation or level of acculturation. Nonetheless, it is plausible that while continuing to uphold Vietnamese traditions and cultures, Debbie's parents were aware of the differences between Vietnamese and Australian cultures and perhaps understood that Debbie might have adopted some Australian values growing up in Perth, and were accepting of some of these differences.

Furthermore, it is possible that her parents were conscious of potential generational differences; i.e. rather than Australian vs. Vietnamese values, they understood that some of their values may be old-fashioned and may differ from Debbie's. Ironically, it may be that their acceptance of certain cultural and generational differences has allowed for the transmission of Vietnamese values. In other words, Debbie's close relationship with her parents has encouraged ethnic socialization, and assisted in her construction of her ethnic identity as a Vietnamese person. Furthermore, it could be that Debbie's close relationship with her parents differed from the conflicted parent-child relationship identified by other participants because the intergenerational cultural gap between Debbie and her parents was smaller. I also acknowledge that it would be hard to conclude that Debbie's close relationship with her mother is solely due to her parents' acceptance of Australian values, and being "less traditional".

In contrast to Debbie's story, Sue was alone at home the majority of the day. Living in Carnarvon for three years, Sue's parents worked long hours on the plantation. Self-described as not having much of a childhood, she shared,

My parents would just leave me at home and then they'd be like "ok, make sure you shower once you come home" because when I go to school, I catch a bus and then I'd just walk into the house and I'd be like shower, eat, like food would be ready for me and stuff, have to do homework, and then bed, then wake up in the morning and it'd be all the same again.. So yeah, I don't know a lot of places, I don't know a lot of things, I'm quite a deprived child to be honest.

Unlike Debbie who claimed to be Vietnamese because of “*the way my parents brought me up*”, Sue’s parents did not bring her up with a strong Vietnamese influence, and had interacted solely with “Western people” because of their jobs. Her parents also did not make a concerted effort to socialize her to Vietnamese practices or values. As she reflected,

My parents don't say much about Vietnam, so it's hard, really hard. My parents do like to adapt to Western lifestyle. Mom works with Western people as well so we kinda like dropped a lot of, even food-wise, we don't eat a lot of Asian food, Western food most of the time. Etiquette at home, we don't eat with chopsticks and stuff, I can't remember the last time I ate with chopsticks so I can't use it anymore. I know, it's horrible. So you hardly see any chopsticks at home. Clothing-wise, anyone can adapt to that. Religion-wise, my parents are Buddhist, mom's like not really strict, it's kinda like a free flow. Like it'd be like on Chinese New Year when we'd go to the temple and pray, even then I don't cause I don't really have a religion, cause I wasn't really brought up with a certain belief.

Results from studies with Mexican-American populations have shown that parents who strongly identified with the Mexican culture were likely to teach their children about their ethnic background. In turn, their children would value and strongly identified with the Mexican culture (Buriel, 1987; Knight, Bernal, Cota, Garza, and Ocampo., 1993). These findings suggest that parents who have established a sense of their own ethnic identity may provide positive role models for, and be cognizant of their adolescent children’s efforts to form an ethnic identity. It is then conceivable that participants with parents that are strongly Vietnamese and encourage ethnic socialization, such as at Vietnamese Church, Vietnamese Buddhist Temple and Vietnamese School, identify strongly as being Vietnamese. On the flip side, participants, such as Sue, with parents who have embraced Australian values and an Australian way of doing things have learnt less about Vietnamese traditions and practices, and thus identify more as Australian than Vietnamese.

Sue and Debbie's narratives also highlight how parent-child relationships may influence the negotiation of one's ethnic identity; the amount of time spent with one's parents encourages transmission of values, and perhaps, a better understanding of one's cultural heritage. According to Knight and colleagues (1993), parents transmit ethnic identity to their children using a process of enculturation or ethnic socialization. That is, parents indirectly model and reinforce ethnic behaviors in addition to directly teaching their children about the social meaning and consequence of ethnicity and race. A multifaceted process by which parents transmit information associated with their ethnic background, ethnic socialization involves teaching children a set of behavioral goals, traditions, beliefs, and values (Moua & Lamborn, 2010).

In reflecting on what makes her "Vietnamese", Debbie added that her religion contributed to the construction of her ethnic identity, *"I go to Church every week. It's our family thing; I go because I want to go not because I'm forced to. I don't have to go if I don't want to go, but I choose to go. I think cause it's bonding time with my family as well."*

It is conceivable that Debbie's family and their commitment to the Vietnamese Catholic community has served to reinforce her ethnicity; not only is she ethnically socialized at home by her parents, her knowledge of ethnic behaviours and practices are reinforced at Church and within its community. It may be that belonging to the Vietnamese Catholic Church reaffirms Debbie's ethnic identity in different and multiple ways; not only does it reinforce values such as the importance of family; it also encourages socialization with other Vietnamese persons. Growing up, Debbie attended Vietnamese school at the Church where she learnt about Vietnamese cultural values, to read and write Vietnamese, as well as learnt more about her faith. While she has stopped attending Vietnamese school, weekly attendance at Church services encourages interaction with other Vietnamese persons and conceivably, stronger membership to her ethnic group.

This is consistent with research that suggests ethnic churches promote a sense of the community and ethnic awareness, while encouraging acculturation (Min, 1992). Ethnic churches provide an additional means within the community to

socialize the younger generations in ways that are consistent with traditional roles, and as Zhou and Bankston conclude (1998, pp.99), “given it’s centrality, the church serves as a primary mechanism for integrating young people into the community’s system of ethnic relations.”

Similarly, many of the participants reported that their families were active Buddhists and visited the Buddhist Temple regularly. While Sharon confesses that she is no longer a devout Buddhist, her family continues to visit the temple regularly. She shared,

It’s the same temple that sponsored my parents, they’re really close to the man there. He’s not a monk but he stays there. He’s got family and stuff but he’s really religious, and I call him Grandpa. So we always go there and help out because they serve food on the full moon. And my dad’s always there helping with funerals and typing letters, like invitations for events and stuff, so we’re really close to them. But my mom and I don’t pray, we just help people and stuff. I think it’s just helping the people who need help than praying. I think I tried being Buddhist because my grandma was really Buddhist and I always went to temple with her, like the incense? Pray and stuff? But I didn’t really understand the concept, I was so young. And then when I got older, I just thought, you don’t need to pray to be a good person.

I put forward that her family’s commitment to the Vietnamese Buddhist temple has further socialized Sharon to Vietnamese values, and assisted in Sharon’s construction of an ethnic identity. Even though Sharon has not embraced Buddhism nor its practices, the time she spends at the temple with her family may serve to reinforce traditional Vietnamese values, and deepen her understanding of ethnic behaviours and practices; in turn, contributing to the negotiation of her ethnic identity. Sharon continued to share that,

It just feels right to say Vietnamese. I’d say I was born here, I’d still call myself Vietnamese, I don’t know. I don’t like to go to Vietnamese restaurants because home cooking is better? [Do you only eat

Vietnamese food?] *At home, yes, because my mom can only cook Vietnamese food. If I go out to eat then anything else, just anything. And I learnt to cook Vietnamese food first.*

Similarly, in identifying as Vietnamese, Ashley laughingly shared,

Look at me! I guess looks is a big thing, and what I eat at home, and I guess it's what I do. You know, just at home, what I speak, what I eat makes me really Asian, that's why I call myself Vietnamese. The only thing I eat everyday is Asian food, like I cannot eat a day without eating rice. People look at me and are like "how can you eat all that for dinner?" White people look at it and think it's really fatty and I'm like "no, I really love it"

Reflecting results from Moua and Lamborn's (2010) study of Hmong American adolescents' perceptions of ethnic socialization practices, eating Vietnamese food is a marker of Sharon's ethnic identity. In their study, 52.2 per cent of the participants mentioned ethnic socialization related to cooking and food. Similarly, Laroche, Emma, Tomiuk & Belisle, (2009) found that ethnic identity was positively related to the consumption of traditional food in the case of Italian-Canadians and French-Canadians.

In exploring the ethnic identification of this group of second generation Vietnamese youth, the participants' narratives indicated that ethnic socialization within the family contributed to the negotiation of their ethnic identity. This includes the time spent with their parents, their upbringing, the food they eat at home, as well as involvement in the Vietnamese Catholic Church or Buddhist Temple. The importance of ethnic socialization to one's ethnic identity formation is reflective of previous research. In Verkuyten and De Wolf's (2002) study of what it means to be Chinese in Netherlands, narratives from the 22 participants indicated that their upbringing, and in particular, their parents are responsible for their sense of identity. As one participant shared,

Yes, I must say from childhood on, I have always felt Chinese. But that has something to do with erm, that at home everything was very

Chinese. Because, yes, my parents are really old-fashioned and also very, very, very Chinese, you know, and it's Chinese this and Chinese that. They also don't approve that you erm, when you forget your Chinese or erm, have many Dutch friends, that sort of thing. They want you to stick to the Chinese culture, even though you're abroad.

Exploring the participants' narratives, Verkuyten and De Wolf (2002) proposed that parental early socialization moulds how one feels, understands and behaves, and within this explanation, suggests that one is not personally responsible for the fact that early socialization shapes one's ethnic identification. However, this discourse on socialization can be used to claim feeling Chinese, Dutch or both Chinese and Dutch. In other words, how and where one is raised may explain how one feels ethnically. As one participant shared "My parents are both Chinese, so erm, you always stay a Chinese and erm, because I was born in the Netherlands... as a little child, you grow up amongst the Dutch, yes, and that explains why I'm actually more Dutch."

Similarly, the participants of the present study are Australian because they were born in Australia and socialised amongst other Australians in the school system. At the same time, their parents are Vietnamese, and most of the participants were socialised within a Vietnamese family. However, we must not ignore the notion of ethnic identity as a matter of personal choice. Biological references such as how one looks, ethnicity of parents, upbringing, and early socialization can take away one's responsibility of negotiating an ethnic identity. As discussed in Chapter Two, individuals are able to exercise control in the assertion of their ethnic identity. I argue that it is possible for the participants to be both Vietnamese and Australian because they grew up in both cultures and know them well. In exploring what it means to be Vietnamese, Sharon reflected,

I'm not sure actually. I think when I get married I would still live with my parents just cause I don't want to put them in an old folk's home, I think that's sort of Viet. I don't think that's very Australian. I would still want to buy them tickets on holiday or something. I

wouldn't make them pay for anything once I'm older. I'm not sure what else. With money-wise, I think Australian views are like they're equal, so they'd have separate bank accounts or something, or you'd pay for half the bills. But I think if you're married to someone, you'd share the money. It doesn't matter how much each person makes... When I have kids, I still want to work because I don't want to stay at home, which I guess is Australian. I can't think of anything else at the moment.

Sharon's narrative represents an adoption of both Australian and Vietnamese values and cultural practices. Although she comments that she "is not sure" what makes her Vietnamese, her narrative indicates that she is aware of what are "Vietnamese" values, and similarly, what are "Australian" values. I put forward that Sharon's narrative alludes to an amalgamation of identities; that is, she is both Vietnamese and Australian; within her portfolio of identities, Sharon embraces different values that are only salient depending on context and situation. In other words, she is "Viet" because she would like to continue living with her parents, but is "Australian" in that she would like to continue working after having children.

Similarly, Long shared,

I'd probably say I'm more Vietnamese but I know what the Aussies are like, so I can be Aussie if I want to. Because I know the two cultures, I can switch depending on who I'm talking to. At work, I become Australian but at home I become more Asian. Family wise I'm more Asian. Like I prefer to support my wife, I expect her to cook and clean, do most of the housework. And also, I won't expect her to have as many guy friends as well.

Traditionally, identification with one's own ethnic group was considered to be inversely related to identification with other groups, in particular, the dominant group. However, existing research into ethnic identification have employed forced-choice tests to measure ethnic identification, such as in studies using black and white dolls (Verkuyten, 2005). For one to identify with

their own minority group, the more they would appear to dis-identify with the other. As a result, identification was studied as an either/or phenomenon and the possibility of multiple identities was disregarded. Alternatively, cross-cultural studies suggest that ethnic identification is not necessarily a singular given but may be constituted of hyphenated identities, such as Australian-Vietnamese or Vietnamese-Australian, that indicate varying degrees of identification with both the ethnic group and the dominant group simultaneously (Verkuyten, 2005). However, in a situation where people are free to describe themselves, they may not always subscribe to this dichotomous scheme of ethnic identification.

The emic nature of the present study has allowed for the participants to describe themselves without pre-determined categories. The findings from this study demonstrate that in negotiating their ethnic identity, this group of second generation Vietnamese young persons identify as both Vietnamese, and Australian. Rather than possessing hyphenated identities, where the participants relate to but are not quite members of the majority group, many of the participants identify as being Australian, and deem themselves full-fledged members of the majority group; they are also very much Vietnamese. Moreover, they are able to skillfully negotiate between the two different cultures without conflict. As Nick stated, *“I don’t think I feel any more Australian than Vietnamese.”*

Rather, the salience of a particular identity is situational. These findings are consistent with Rosenthal and Hrynevich’s (1985) observation that adolescents of Greek or Italian origin in Australia feel strongly Greek or Italian in such situations, such as at home or with family, whereas they see themselves as Australian in other contexts, such as at school. According to Wentholt (1991), the extent and how a particular identity is considered relevant depends upon the situations under which the distinctions are made. It is also dependent upon the relations between and within the groups that are socially categorized under those circumstances. As Phinney (1990, p.510) writes, *“Adolescents report that their feelings of being ethnic vary according to the situation they are in and the people they are with”*

Ballard (1994) argues that second-generation Asians are skilled cultural navigators with a sophisticated ability to maneuver between different social worlds. According to him, switching cultural codes are not unlike being fluently bi- or multilingual: “Cultures, like languages, are codes, which actors use to express themselves in a given context; and as the context changes, so those with the requisite competence simply switch code” (1994: 31). This is evident in Long’s narrative; self-professed to be very Vietnamese, Long continues to speak Vietnamese to his family and fiancée, and surrounds himself with Vietnamese friends. However, he asserted that “*all my workmates are White and I have no problems blending in with them.*”

The findings from the present study reinforce the notion that a combination of cultures can be positive; rather than problematic as suggested in popular notions about ‘living between two cultures’ and experiencing cultural clashes, the participants argue that they can combine and choose the best of both. Believing that his Australian values and practices to complement his Vietnamese values, Long reflected,

What makes me Vietnamese? Family, religion, I’m a religious guy, I’m a really family-type guy. Family means a lot, and sometimes I put family ahead of work. And so far, I’ve seen at my workplace, everyone puts work in front of family. That’s one thing that’s culturally different as well. I do like the Western culture as well. It’s great, freedom, right of speech, when you grow up, your parents want you to leave home, Asians are different. When you grow up they want you to stay with them. That’s one difference that I like about the Western culture, when you hit a certain age, they’ll support you only until a certain level then you’ll have to do everything on your own. But I notice in Vietnamese culture, your parents would do everything for you. They’d die, they’d work for the rest of their lives for you, even if you hit 30, they’ll still work for you. That’s what I’ve noticed. But in Western culture, get a job, support yourself, that sort of thing which I think is quite good, which I think Asians lack. I know in both cultures there will be people who do that, and people who won’t, and

I know that there are Asian families that say “go get a job, live on your own” and same thing with the Whites. Some parents might live with their children till they’re 40, but that’s what I like about the Western culture.

This combination of values is echoed in Thai’s narrative of who he is, and his ethnic identification,

Appearance wise, you’re not Vietnamese Vietnamese from Vietnam, you’re Australian. I’m also starting to think more like an Asian. I think I’m half and half, I think half like an Aussie and half like an Asian... I understand where the Australian people are coming from? I understand how they live and how they think and how they react and stuff, where the Asian people are very methodological in how they think, they put things on a different scale compared to Australian people.

Alluding to being half Vietnamese and half Australian, Thai’s narrative demonstrates an understanding of cultural differences and the differences between Vietnamese and Australian values. Rather than adopting purely an Asian attitude towards money and valuing money over way of life, or adopting the Australian perspective of valuing way of life over savings, he claims to have integrated the different values. He shared,

I play hard but work harder. But make sure you live your life, so on and so forth. It’s quite hard to explain. Cause Asian people work hard and they save their money basically, whereas I work hard and spend my money, make sure I have a good life basically.

This merger of identities is reflective of previous research where other non-Anglo-Australians experience being Australian as “an amalgam of everything put together” (Butcher & Thomas, 2001, p.23). As a participant in Butcher and Thomas’ study of youth culture shared

... you grow up thinking you’re Australian but you don’t grow up with Home and Away or something and you don’t have roast dinners,

instead you have rice dinners. But then you still speak with an Australian accent... so it's bicultural, tricultural whatever. (p.15)

I argue that this combination of values and cultures reinforces the argument that these second generation young persons are active agents in choosing the best of both worlds, and have skillfully negotiated between the two cultures.

The findings of the present study also propose that the participants' ethnic identity is but one of a multitude of social identities. As discussed in Chapter Two, research has proposed that every individual simultaneously belongs to a number of social categories (Deaux, 1991). These social identities are usually not independent of each other, but are closely connected or articulated in relation to each other. For example, my identity as a Chinese person is interwoven with my identity as a female, and even my identity as a PhD candidate. Thus, depending on the social context, a specific identity becomes relevant and others recede in the background; in this case, identifying as Australian vs. Vietnamese, or straight man vs. Vietnamese. The participants' narratives indicate that their academic grades, family relationships, ethnic identity and gender roles are all intimately intertwined. In exploring if she perceived to be a minority in Australia, Debbie shared *"It was an all girls school so like, we were all girls, I didn't really feel left out."* This is echoed in Phuong's narrative, *"No. I'm straight. I'm male. That's 50-50 in the world. I'm definitely not a minority. I never feel like I'm one."*

It needs to be acknowledged that some of the participants shared that they now identify as Vietnamese because in identifying as an Australian, they are told "no, you're not". This raises the question if their ethnicity as a Vietnamese person is indeed central to their self-concept. As Heller (1987) writes, ethnic identity is:

Not necessarily an important part of all aspects of everyday life: Rather there will be certain activities in which ethnicity is more meaningful or central than others. Finally ethnicity is related to the control of access to participation in the social networks and activities of each group; differences in the actual content of ways of life, of

beliefs and values, and of ways of behaving are seen as a product of the social separation of groups rather than as its cause. (p.184)

Results from Phinney and Alipuria's (1990) study of ethnic identity in college students from four ethnic groups indicated that the three minority groups sample rated ethnic identity third or fourth in importance. However, it is noted that ethnic identity importance was measured amongst five identity areas. While not denying the importance of ethnic identity to identity development, ranking third or fourth out of five identity areas may not indicate high priority.

Without any measures to assess the importance the participants placed on their ethnic identity, it is impossible to conclude if the participants' ethnic identity is pertinent to their self-concept or global self-identity. Nonetheless, I posit that their desire to impart Vietnamese values and practices to the next generation may be an expression of pride in their ethnic heritage. As Thi shared,

I want my son to know what all that is, temple and Buddhism and stuff like that, but not push him into practising it fully. He is half-Vietnamese. He's half-Filipino. But yes, I want to teach him the Vietnamese way... My direct family, he calls them uncle, aunty, grandma and grandpa.

As I explored the question "where are you from?" with my peers outside of this research relationship, I realised that perhaps the question can be interpreted in two different ways – rather than an expression of the assumption that all Asians may be "foreigners" and "not Australian", the question could simply represent an effort on the part of the questioner to establish a specific ethnic identity for the individual involved. From personal experience, a significant number of White Australians have moved from "mere tolerance" towards Asians to a more enthusiastic inquisitiveness of sorts. Perhaps it is due to rapid globalization and the geographical proximity to Asian countries, many Australians have become familiar with Asian countries. They have either been 'there', or they may have business dealings with Singaporeans, Malaysians and so forth. Rather than suspicion and mistrust, I am quite often

asked “Where are you from?” with a curious inflection of liking or fondness for Asia:

Where are you from?

I was born in Singapore.

Oh, I've been there a few times. I really like it there; Singapore's such a beautiful country.

Many times, I've had White Australian persons blurt out Cantonese, Mandarin and oft times, Japanese phrases upon first meeting me. Responding with a blank look, such conversations would be extremely brief not only because I am surprised (and slightly offended), but because I would not be able to conjure up a response that could possibly unlock me from the pigeonhole of Asianness they inevitably placed me in. At times, I want to scream “I speak English too!!” While these exchanges may be well-meaning, I cannot help but be somewhat offended. Do I not look like I speak fluent English? Or was it a well-meaning attempt to make me feel welcome because they speak “my language”? Or was it an attempt to show that they have embraced the multicultural awareness espoused by the government and are able to speak “Asian”?

Born in Australia, Nick identifies as “*Australian, but with a Vietnamese background – An Asian heritage, or that Asian outlook on life.*” However, when asked where he hails from, his answer depends on who is doing the asking. He admits that at times, he deems the question (and the questioner) to be racist, “*Just cause I'm Asian why do you need to ask where I'm from? As long as I can speak English, does it matter where I'm from?*” He continues to speculate the impetus behind the question,

Maybe cause they're naïve? Cause all Asians, we look at each other and we kinda know where everyone's from, and where their backgrounds from. And we look at European countries and we kinda know where they're from as well, the Italians, the Greeks, the Irish. So... you know what I mean? That's what I mean by naïve. White people, they look at Asians and they think we all look the same, and

then oh, I don't know ... Would you ever go up to a European person and ask them what country they're from? Not really. You don't normally see that, so why do you need to ask an Asian person where they're from, does it matter?

While Nick's reaction to the question may seem (over-)sensitive over a possibly innocent question, the underlying sentiments are something I understand. While I may not be Vietnamese, nor was I born in Australia, I profess a belonging to Australia and (at times, hesitantly) identify as "local". Many of us, and I use "us" to refer to other Asians in Australia, view the question as being asked in the context of a denaturalization of one's status as a co-inhabitant of the country. The question is also an automatic assumption that because we may not fit into the stereotypical image of the typical Australian, we somehow don't "belong" here. White Australian friends I have spoken to about this issue defend the question as a genuine expression of interest, and deny any racist motivation implied. However, what triggers the interest in the first place; a certain curiosity about "the other" – a curiosity which stems from our construction and positioning as other? Would we be just as frustrated if the question was never asked, in turn ignoring our "differences"?

Listening to Nick's narrative, I can't help but muse if it is true; do people ask persons of European background where they are from? Does one ask an Anglo-Australian or an Indigenous person about their background? And if not, why would one question Asians? Is it because of Australia's historical fear of the "Asian Invasion" and the radical shift from "White Australia" to Australia as a "multicultural nation in Asia"? Is it merely an expression of the internalization of "Asia-mindedness" so promoted by the government? Or are those that ask the question merely naïve, as suggested by Nick? Perhaps the propensity to question the origin of persons of European descent is not as strong because they look like the "mainstream Australian".

An ignorance and naivety of other cultures by White Australians was also reflected in Vuong's story.

People don't know Asian culture, they come to me when they see lion dance and firecrackers, they say "why are you making a racket?" and I say "oh, it's Chinese New Year" and they go "New Year was two months ago, why are you saying it's New Year now?" There are a lot of naïve people here. People walk in all the time and if they see an Asian they, one, they expect for you to give a discount, or they bargain with you. I get people bargain every day, and you get annoyed. And you think, "this isn't Bali." I just get really annoyed.

Vuong believes that it is because he looks Asian that prompts people to act as they would if they were in certain Asian countries, rather than how they would in any other shop in Australia. Rather than labelling it a racist act, Vuong deems such acts as stemming from naivety and ignorance; which leads me to wonder, does being ignorant exempt a racist act? In expecting certain behaviour based on his Asian looks, his customers have automatically assumed that Vuong is different, that he is not "Australian". However, when his customers notice Vuong's distinct Australian accent, they comment that he sounds "very Aussie". And when he informs them that he has been here for over 20 years, his customers would finally acknowledge his belonging;

Customer: oh so you're Australian then

Vuong: yeah, pretty much.

Why does Vuong's Australian accent and length of stay minimise his otherness? Most of the other participants speak fluent English with distinct Australian accents, what then prompts others to question their belonging? Could it be because they look Asian? Is the way one looks the only marker of difference in a supposedly multicultural nation-state? Perhaps this is what Thomas (1998, p.74) mean by "the body becomes the root of marginality because of the ready stigmatization of corporeal difference".

Although he identifies strongly as being Vietnamese, Vuong shared that when overseas, he would tell people that he was from Australia, "Well, because this is my home." Similarly, Australia-born Lisa identifies as being Vietnamese-

Australian, but shared that her answer differs when she is overseas. As she reflected,

I guess that's the first thing I always reply, Australia. I wouldn't say Vietnamese straight off. If someone asked me here, then yeah, but if I'm overseas then I'd say Australian. People would go "where do you come from?" and we'd go "Australia" and they're like "no no no, where you're originally from" and then we're like "oh I get what they're after... oh Vietnam" "so you're born in Vietnam?" "no, no, we were born in Australia." People can't wrap their heads around that, but yeah.

It is note-worthy that Lisa's response is determined by where she is; she identifies as being Vietnamese when asked in Australia, but identifies solely as Australian when asked overseas. Does being overseas amplify one's sense of belonging? Or does being overseas allow one to (positively) identify as being Australian without needing to acknowledge their (ethnic) origin because their belonging is not in question? Which in turn begs the question, do the participants only identify as Vietnamese in Australia because their identity and belonging is challenged every time they are asked "where are you from?" Perhaps their identification as an Australian is suggestive of national pride; they hail from Australia, a developed country with good standing. I posit that the way one's perception of belonging and identity changes when overseas highlights the importance of context in ethnic identity formation. Different identities are enlisted and imposed depending on situational contexts and audiences encountered. It is conceivable that when asked overseas, the participants feel no need to clarify that they are Vietnamese because they are from Australia and identify as being Australian.

Despite being Vietnamese "only in Australia", it is apparent that being Vietnamese is important to Lisa. Having made numerous trips to Vietnam to visit extended family members, she shared "*we've been back heaps of times and we love it there but yeah, I am Vietnamese, I would like Vietnamese Australian.*" Interestingly, Lisa refers to her trips as going "back"; even though she was born in Australia, she acknowledges that she may be from

Vietnam and visiting Vietnam is akin to returning home. It is conceivable that going “back” to Vietnam has strengthened their ethnic identity as Vietnamese. This is consistent with existing research that suggests that with the advent of globalization, some second-generation individuals may possess an enhanced awareness of ties to their parents’ homelands (Song, 2003).

Migrant communities maintain continuing material, social and sentimental connections to the homeland, and while this is not a recent phenomenon, improved communication technologies and facilities to travel have increased the possibilities (Basch, Schiller & Blanc-Szanton, 1994). Due to globalisation and the advancement of technology, the “homeland” is much more accessible. The relative geographical proximity and affordability of travel to Vietnam has allowed for many Vietnamese immigrants to return to Vietnam to maintain family (and cultural) ties. Flights are affordable, and going “back” to Vietnam can be a regular occurrence. The participants and their parents are now able to fly back to Vietnam to visit with family, and technology allows for them to maintain communication with family regularly without cost. Technological advances have also made it easier for family members to communicate despite being in different countries; some of the participants shared that they talk to family members in other parts of the world regularly over MSN and Skype. Instant messaging programs over the internet have allowed for maintenance of close family relationships, some even allowing for video conversations. As Sharon shared,

We talk really often, through SMS or Yahoo? Like we’re really close cause I’ve been back four, five times now? Five times. It’s good, I feel really happy. Everyone complains about the weather and stuff, but I think it just overcomes everything, it’s just being with them overcomes everything else?

Identity and the establishment of being Vietnamese is often articulated through personal and collective memories in which social and cultural elements of traditions, myths, histories and languages are reproduced within the family, linking subsequent generations to their ancestral homeland (Ngan, 2008). And while parents continue to maintain the relationship with the homeland, second

generation youth at the very least, maintain these ties at emotional levels through ideologies and cultural codes. Although these youth may not actively participate in transnationalism, the formation of their identity is influenced by the transnational ties maintained by the older generations within the family. The diasporic experience is thus “a dynamic process of interactions between places and ideologies as identities are not established in a vacuum but are intergenerationally influenced” (Ngan, 2008, p.85).

Some second-generation individuals may embrace forms of diasporic cultural practices and identities. For example, growing evidence of a global Asian popular culture; listening and watching Vietnamese songs and movies. Mark and Mai shared that they watch Vietnamese movies with their parents, and continue to listen to Vietnamese songs. As Min (1999) discusses, rather than being a generation which will gradually but inevitably become completely acculturated into the dominant Western culture, the second generation of today possesses various advantages for retaining their ethnic heritage and cultures. Not only are they able to access transnational ties with their parents’ homelands, these individuals can benefit from the implementation of multicultural policies, especially in the form of bilingual programs and extracurricular activities which are designed to celebrate cultural diversity (Song, 2003). As Sharon reflected as she considered why she is increasingly more comfortable identifying as Vietnamese, “*I went back to Vietnam in 2000, so that could have been a factor?*”

In the lives of second generation immigrant youth, their negotiation of identity and belongingness is inevitably influenced by their family’s imagination of “homeland” and their experience of displacement. Martin revealed that he had only been back to Vietnam a few times and does not have strong emotional ties to any relatives back in Vietnam. At the same time, has not lost a sense of certainty about identifying as Vietnamese. This can be seen in his fascination with the land his parents left behind, and his gratitude for the life he now has. As he shared,

When I went back to Vietnam for the first time, when I was like, 12, cause then you see how it is over there. They are poor, they just sit on

the streets, they don't have anything. Like they might have one meal a day and that's like some dried fish and some rice that they cooked on the ground. It's strange, but that's just life over there, and you can see why they wanted to escape. Yeah, definitely. I'm thankful. Like it's crazy, it's weird to explain especially since my uncle, every time we have a family gathering, he's always explaining how if you think about it, we just hopped on a boat and this is our life now. But had we not gone on the boat, we would be just like everybody else in Vietnam. We'd be poor and hungry. So it's strange. It's like two lives almost, I don't know what it's like for someone who was born in Vietnam, but for me it's like, this is my life here but it could have been another life.

Yet despite the ties they maintain with Vietnam, their mythical homeland, none of the participants would return to Vietnam to live. In fact, they were all vehement about not living in Vietnam. As Mark shared,

Not to live. No. I don't think I'd be able to adjust because I'm too used to the way of life here, just too used to the way the society is here as opposed to Vietnam. Vietnam is a shithole, pardon my French. The distinction between the upper and lower class is so wide, it's just such a wide gap that I'm sickened by it. You can have a LV on one side of the street and on the other side is a slum. And there's so much corruption there.

Echoing this sentiment is Hong,

I hated it. I mean I enjoyed the food there and everything, but I really disliked the weather. The hygiene, I didn't like it as well. I could never live there? It was very different dirty and hot. Also, the people. Like, it just doesn't feel, I don't fit in, you know what I mean? Not just that I don't fit in, but I don't feel comfortable being around like, Viet Viets. Because I just feel like I'm on a different level? Just the way they act and the way they speak Vietnamese is different because um... I don't know how to explain. Just the way they speak is very

different. Yeah, the way they talk. It's more like typical Viet. Their thinking is different as well. I don't know. I think for them money is a big deal more because they're a lot poorer over them so money would be a lot bigger for them.

Interestingly, despite being born in Vietnam, Hong draws a distinction between the Vietnamese in Vietnam and himself, and refers to the way they talk as being “typical Viet”. I posit that this distinction alludes to his identity as an Australian; the Vietnamese persons in Vietnam are different from him, because he lives in Australia and is Australian. The sentiment of not fitting in with the lifestyle and the people in Vietnam was shared by many of the participants, and is consistent with previous research. In Tse’s (1999) analysis of 39 narratives by Americans of Asian descent, several participants wrote that because of their American upbringing, they would never be completely at ease in their ethnic culture. Despite enjoying being a part of the racial mainstream during his three years of study in Japan, David Okimoto, an American-Japanese participant shared,

Although I may have resembled any other person in Japan, internally I was not, and probably could never be ... Living in Japan made me conscious, as nothing else could have, of being very much an American in my personal attitudes and tastes. (p.134)

Echoing other participants and previous research, Long shared,

I wouldn't go back to Vietnam. The stories my parents told me of how they got here is just, you know, painful. I would never, never go back... Personally, I just wouldn't want to go, cause I'm so used to the lifestyle here, for one thing. But I wouldn't want to go back for holiday there as well, cause you go back to a country where you're from, you've got family over there, you're not going over there for holiday, you're going there to visit. And I hate it. And every time you go over you've got to give them money. It's like, you go visit, you spend two grand giving money away, and then wherever you go, whatever you do, you've got to pay for it. I have no problem paying

for stuff, but when you're there, they just... use you. They say "you're outside" you know... They just don't know how hard it is over here.

The dislike the participants have for Vietnam made me question if it affects their negotiation of an ethnic identity as a Vietnamese, and if it will subsequently affect the ties future generations would have with their (mythical) homeland. Most of the participants have returned to Vietnam with their parents to visit family, yet some of them confess that they would not visit Vietnam if they had a choice, not even for a holiday. However, others do enjoy going to Vietnam and visiting with family. This raises the question of whether this generation of Vietnamese youth in Australia would continue to maintain ties with family in Vietnam after their parents pass on. And if not, would this then affect the ethnic identity negotiation of future generations, and how?

Alluding to the possibility of bringing his future children to Vietnam, Martin shared,

I would want them to speak just enough [Vietnamese]... Maybe read some basic words, like just the basic. I don't know how they would learn, even if I spoke a little bit to them, whatever. But I'd definitely want them to have English as a first language and then Vietnamese so at least they can go to Vietnam and have a chat with relatives and that... Speak it, just cause it helps. Like if I brought my kids to Vietnam, it'd be sad if they couldn't even speak to our relatives... That'd be weird, like are they all of a sudden an alien?

Findings from the present study indicate that the participants' identity as an Australian is equally as important as their ethnic identity as a Vietnamese person. The participants' stories evidently show that regardless of country of birth, all the participants identify as hailing from Australia; they are Australian, albeit also Vietnamese. While many of the participants identified country of birth as a marker of their ethnic identity, others continue to identify strongly as Australian despite not being born in Australia. Perhaps the time spent in Australia, and being socialized in Perth is more important to their identity

negotiation. Also, it is conceivable that those born in detention camps had a lack of attachment and knowledge of the country of their birth. Similarly, the Vietnam-born youth arrived in Perth at a young age. With little knowledge and time spent in Vietnam, it is conceivable that there too is a lack of attachment and belonging to Vietnam. This raises the question: is the strength of one's ethnic (Vietnamese) identity related to one's national (Australian) identity?

Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind and Vedder (2001) examined the strength and interrelationships of national and ethnic identity of adolescents from four immigrant receiving countries: the United States, Israel, Finland and the Netherlands. In each country, adolescents from recent immigrant groups were sampled; these included adolescents from Mexican, Vietnamese, Turkish, Armenian, Russian, and Ethiopian backgrounds. Ethnic identity was measured with four items assessing ethnic affirmation based on the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992). Identification with the receiving society was measured with four comparable items (based on Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1977).

Results from the study indicated that ethnic identity and national identity were unrelated. However, the relationship between ethnic and national scores varied among countries, and among ethnic groups within countries. For example, in the United States, there was a positive relationship between ethnic and national identity for Mexicans, suggesting greater integration. However, correlations were low and non-significant for adolescents from Vietnamese and Armenian backgrounds. It was suggested that the large Mexican population in America aids easy integration, allowing recent immigrants to feel that they are part of both their own culture and the larger society. Contrary to the Mexicans in United States, a significant negative correlation was found between the two identities among Russian immigrants in Israel, suggesting a perception of incompatibility between Israeli and Russian culture.

The implication of these differences between countries and within ethnic groups is that although ethnic and national identities may be theoretically independent, the relationship between them varies empirically (Phinney et al, 2001). I do acknowledge that conceptualizing one's Australian identity as a

national identity may also be contentious; the Australian Bureau of Statistics classifies “Australian” as a cultural group (ABS, 2005). Nonetheless, the results from Phinney and colleagues’ study highlight the social construction of identity formation; some contexts support integration and aid the development of a bicultural nature. Many of the participants “don’t know” why they identify as Australian or Vietnamese – I propose that this is because the development of their ethnic identity was relatively uncomplicated and conflict-free. Perhaps Australia, with her multicultural policy, has enabled and supported the participants in negotiating equally salient Australian and Vietnamese identities within their portfolio of identities. In addition, I posit that the inability to separate their Australian and Vietnamese identities further highlights the contextual and situational nature of identity salience; the participants possess both Australian and Vietnamese identities, and the emergence of a particular identity is dependant on the situation, and audience. I also argue that the participants’ ethnic identity is closely interweaved with other facets of their identity, and cannot be examined as a single dimension.

I acknowledge that in inviting the participants for “a study on Vietnamese youth in Perth”, I may have inadvertently activated their Vietnamese identity to the foreground. It is, also acknowledged that the identity negotiation of this group of young persons is not representative of all second generation Vietnamese youth in Australia. At this point, I suggest that the Vietnamese population in Perth is perhaps a success story of migration. As previously discussed, despite the economic disadvantages faced upon their arrival, the Vietnamese population in Australia appear to be on an upward trajectory. The findings of the present study suggest that the second generation of Vietnamese youth in Australia may be reaping the rewards of this success, in turn supporting the negotiation of both an Australian, and a Vietnamese identity.

It is also plausible that growing up in Perth, a city that is without a strong Vietnamese community nor a Vietnamese town, had abetted in their negotiation of an ethnic identity. Without an ethnic enclave, the participants had no choice but to adopt English as a first language. Also, the participants were socialised within the Australian school system and were introduced to

children from other ethnicities. The lack of a strong Vietnamese community could be a reason for identifying as Australian. On the other hand, the Vietnamese in Perth continue to be a minority, and it is plausible that this has contributed to the salience of their Vietnamese identity. Furthermore, because they are relatively recent migrants, it is possible that the participants' parents would continue to identify strongly as Vietnamese and be more inclined to socialize them to Vietnamese traditions and values. I argue that growing up in Perth has encouraged integration into the larger society through daily interaction with individuals from the dominant culture and other ethnic groups. At the same time, Perth has a sufficiently strong Vietnamese presence that encourages maintenance of one's ethnic culture and thus, ethnic identity.

In reflecting on their ethnic identification, many of the participants referred to language use as a determinant of their ethnic identity; i.e. "I am Australian because I speak English" and "I am Vietnamese because I speak Vietnamese". Research has shown that heritage language development can be an important part of identity formation and can help one retain a strong sense of ethnic identity (Cho, 2007; Cho, Cho & Tse, 1997; Tse, 1996). As Baker writes, "a heritage language may be an important symbol of ethnic identity..." (p.69); the next section explores how language may be a symbol of one's identity. In exploring the relationship between language and ethnic identity, I begin by exploring their fluency in English. I then explore their heritage language proficiency, and if speaking Vietnamese is indeed a marker of their ethnic identity.

Language as a symbol of ethnic identity

As a Singapore-born Chinese, I grew up speaking English as a first language. I conversed with my family and friends in English, classes were taught in English and I grew up practically a monoglot even though learning a second language was mandatory in school. I spent ten years learning to read, write and speak Mandarin as part of the school curriculum, yet I never mastered it. And I was almost proud of it. This was despite being raised by my paternal grandmother who can only speak Mandarin, and continues to speak Mandarin to me. Sixteen years later, I am definitely more fluent in Mandarin than I ever

was, and ironically, I've spent the last 16 years in Australia. Perhaps it is because I have spent the last 16 years in Australia that I feel the need to connect with my Chinese heritage through language fluency. Or perhaps it is because I attempt to connect with my heritage through Chinese television serials and movies, which has in turn, increased my mastery of the language. In fact, I am now proud that I not only am able to speak Mandarin, but am fluent in it. But, why?

Perhaps it is because I now embrace my Chineseness more strongly than I used to, and unconsciously use fluency in Mandarin as a symbol of my Chinese-ness. In other words, I speak Chinese ergo I am Chinese. However, I continue to speak English as a first language. I am more comfortable reading, writing and speaking English, and probably always will. Yet, I do not believe it makes me any less Chinese, nor more Australian or Singaporean - which leads me to challenge the assumption that language is truly a determinant of one's ethnic identity.

In exploring the relationship between language and ethnic identity, I started by asking the participants which language they were more comfortable with and why. I then asked what language they spoke at home, and why. Despite stemming from homes in which Vietnamese is spoken, all the participants are fluent in English and claim English to be their first language. While some of the participants have not maintained proficiency in Vietnamese, many of the participants continue to speak Vietnamese fluently. Within these two sections, I explore why the participants use English and / or Vietnamese, and ultimately, what it means with regards to their identity(s).

In the next section, I explore English as their choice as a first language. I then explore their fluency (or lack of) in Vietnamese. For Vietnamese youth in Australia, English competence is a prerequisite for academic performance, while facility with their ethnic language has been suggested to enhance communication with their immigrant parents and access to their culture of origin (Luo & Wiseman, 2000; Phinney, 1990; Ying 1995). However, what does that mean in terms of speaking English in Australia, and one's identity as an Australian? Or as a Vietnamese person?

Speaking English

My first language was Vietnamese and now my first language is English. (James)

In discussing one's preferred language, it was discovered that regardless of country of birth, the first (and only) language growing up for many of the participants was Vietnamese. While I had expected that the overseas-born participants may not have been proficient in English upon arriving in Perth, I was surprised to learn that many of the Australia-born participants only spoke Vietnamese until they entered the Australian school system. Wanting to know more about their experiences being unable to speak English while growing up in Australia, I asked the participants to share their earliest memories of school.

Born in a Hong Kong detention camp for refugees, Phuong spoke only Cantonese until he started pre-primary. He shared

I definitely got into trouble in school because of the language barrier. For example, they'd tell you to do things and obviously, cause you don't understand you don't know what the hell to do. And sometimes they take it as misbehaviour, and I remember getting my first punishment. It was like a set of 20 lines, and I didn't understand what lines were, so I drew lines and apparently it was wrong and I had to do it again. But I didn't understand why I got into trouble.

Similarly, the language barrier proved difficult for Mai. Laughingly, she confessed to crying a lot when she first started pre-school. Unable to speak or understand English, an aunt would accompany her to school every day until she was confident enough;

I remember I couldn't convey to them that I wanted to use the bathroom, and they wouldn't let me go. So I just kinda stood up and went to the bathroom myself. It was hard, I think it was because I didn't understand the language at first, and a lot of things people said could have been insults but I didn't understand that. Maybe it was good in the sense that I was ignorant, calling me names, but at

the same time it was difficult for me to communicate and convey my thoughts and feelings effectively and proficiently. To be honest, I don't think I'm very effective now, but I think it was during mid-primary school, so probably Year 4 or 5 when I started getting better. I didn't have any Viet friends till Year 4 or 5, I had Aussie friends and that's why it improved then. I started picking up on a lot of things, but to be honest with you, I was pretty noob. I didn't understand half of the swear language till I was in Year 10.

It is interesting to note that for Mai, understanding insults and swear language is a marker of proficiency in the language.

Arriving in Perth at six months old, Sue also grew up unable to speak English. As an only child of parents who were not proficient in English, Sue only learnt English when she started school. Describing her English as “*really bad*”, she only attained fluency in Year 6 or 7. Conscious that her accent might be “fobby” and that I could tell that English was not her first language, it seemed important to Sue that she had an “Australian” accent. In fact, when I commented that I never would have guessed that English had not been her first language, she laughingly responded “*Really? Oh wow, I think that's a good thing. Compliment of the day.*”

Perhaps the self-consciousness and the importance placed on sounding Australian stemmed from being picked on constantly when Sue was younger;

They'd make fun of me and I didn't like being corrected. [Who did?] Classmates did, um... I'd have cousins who are older and know a lot more... Just general public I guess when you go out and you talk to someone, and they're like “no, this is how you say it”, cause like as Vietnamese people tend to forget to put on plurals, like we don't differentiate that, so it's like say if I want socks, I'd like “I want sock” and they'd just pick up on that... Yeah, friends used to make fun of me. They'd correct me all the time, like I'd be sitting there saying something and they'd just sit there and correct me and they'd be like, not make fun in a mean way, but sometimes they'd take it as a

personal joke. Not very nice... And well you do get one or two people that mimic you. You know how they're like you say something, and everybody will try and imitate you, but yeah, the rest just correcting. Most of them were Australian because like, comparing myself to most Vietnamese people, at that time, my English wasn't bad, but I grew up with Western people most of my life.

Despite feeling excluded and inferior from being picked on, Sue believes that it may have enhanced her learning. Proud that her command of the language has improved, Sue shared *"I feel more comfortable, cause even when I go out I meet some of my friends who like, you can tell from their accent that they're still new with the whole English, like their second language thing. And I'm like "oh, those days when I was like that."*

Phuong, Mai and Sue were not born in Australia, and while they report that they had difficulty in the initial years of arriving in Australia, they now speak English fluently and are more comfortable speaking English than Vietnamese. As Phuong commented, *"obviously cause I use it every day, not just everyday interactions, but with friends as well, interactions with people on the phone, whatever, also, you obviously learn in English, books and stuff that you read, obviously are in English."*

While it was somewhat expected that those born overseas would encounter difficulties in speaking English, it was discovered that other Australia-born participants also could not speak the language until they started school. Regardless of country of birth, most of the participants were required attend English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at school. Australia-born James shared that he grew up speaking only Vietnamese;

Up till seven or eight years old, I had to go to a special English class. At the time, I didn't really know what was going on. Like all the other kids would do just normal English class, but we'd get sent to a special class. I actually didn't understand why I went to ESL until after a few years later, I realised my English wasn't that great. [laughs] So yup, I think after like maybe Year 5 onwards, I started

understanding classes a lot more, cause before that I used to always speak Vietnamese to my friends in primary school. [laughs]

Similarly, Debbie shared, “*I didn’t speak English until I went to primary school cause I just talked Vietnamese to my mom at home, and I didn’t have any brothers or sisters to talk English to.*”

It is noteworthy that most of the participants that did not speak English until entering primary school are first-borns or the only child in the family. Without the opportunity to speak English with other persons, the participants grew up speaking only Vietnamese to their parents who were not proficient in English. This is in contrast with participants with older siblings; later born participants grew up speaking English because their siblings had already attended school and could speak English, and would then converse with them in English. As Emma shared,

I’d say it [my first language] is English, my brother, he was older than me so he went to school before me, so he spoke it and my parents spoke it, so you know but then again my parents spoke to me in Vietnamese, so it is Vietnamese but along with English as well, so a bit of both?

Similarly, the second of three children, Ashley shared,

English was more like my first language, Vietnamese is more like my second language. I think it would be cause my parents, they obviously came over at such a young age and they struggled for a bit, and they couldn’t really look after me, so I was always put into day care, so I went to day care when I was really young , so that’s where my English skills developed, exposed to all these different cultures, like Australian families, and my brother would always speak English to me cause he’s older than me, so that’s how I was brought up so I didn’t really need ESL.

This reflects previous research indicating that the larger the number of siblings, the greater the linguistic interactions in the host language at home, especially

for the youngest as compared to the oldest child, who by definition was for a time, an only child (Chiswick, Lee & Miller, 2005). Moreover, their parents had already been in Australia for a number of years and had the opportunity to learn the language.

Despite not being able to speak English, many of the other participants shared that it *“didn’t matter anyway, cause as a kid you don’t really speak to strangers anyway.”* (Hong) In exploring if he felt different because he was unable to speak English as a child, Thai shared, *“No, not really, I don’t remember much but I think I was watching so much TV I caught up on the language.”* Participants did not seem troubled by their lack of English proficiency before attending school; many shared that they gained proficiency within a short period of time. It is plausible that the social network established in ESL classes could have buffered any negative effects of not speaking the language. As James laughingly shared, *“Not that I remember any difficulty not being able to speak English, teachers were understandable then, and I had fun in ESL class cause all my other friends were with me as well. Asian friends.”*

For some of the participants, it was more important to be proficient in English, as compared to achieving fluency in Vietnamese. As Simone commented, *“Why would I need to speak Vietnamese?”* Perhaps this is an indication that the participants view Australia as home, and since Australia’s national language is English, it is a given that one should speak English, hence its importance. As Mark reflected, *“because we’re an English speaking nation, it’s more useful to speak English.”*

Speaking with an Australian accent also seemed pertinent in how language is a component of ethnic identity negotiation; i.e. “I don’t sound Vietnamese” or “I sound Australian”. Perhaps this change from adopting Vietnamese as a first language to adopting English as a first language is almost analogous of their identity negotiation – from being very Vietnamese to being Australian, and its duality in terms of bilingual and bicultural. All the participants shared that English is now their first language and that they are more comfortable speaking English than Vietnamese. This raises the question: what does speaking English mean in terms of their ethnic identity negotiation?

Identifying as Australian, Sue reflected, “*English... is my hometown*”, alluding to the importance of language to the construction of her identity. Similarly, born and raised in Perth, Simone grew up speaking only English. Speaking only English to her parents, Simone shared that she never needed to learn to speak Vietnamese. Having lived in Perth for a few years by the time Simone was born, Simone’s parents were able to speak and understand some English. In addition, as the youngest of three, her older siblings would converse with her in English. In fact, her older brother is also unable to read or write the language, although able to speak a little Vietnamese. With little need to, Simone never learnt to speak Vietnamese despite understanding it. Unlike the majority of the participants, her parents never pushed for her to attend Vietnamese school when she was younger. However, she shared that in recent times her parents have asked her to attend Vietnamese school. As she shared,

I’m not really keen. I see myself as an Australian and they hate it when I say that. They say I’m 100 per cent Vietnamese, I should be proud of it, which I am, but I consider myself Australian because I was born here and I don’t really speak Vietnamese. I am Vietnamese, but I don’t speak it, so I consider myself Australian. I was born here, I only speak English, so yeah, I’m Australian.

It is interesting that in her narrative, Simone identifies as both Australian as well as Vietnamese. She is Australian because she was born here and because she only speaks English; alluding to the nature of language as a marker of one’s identity. Yet, she is Vietnamese, and proud of being Vietnamese, despite not speaking the language. Rather than it being contradictory, I reiterate that her narrative of her ethnic identification hints at the multiple dimensions of her identity; that she is both Australian and Vietnamese, without having to only be one or the other.

Language has been proposed to have an effect on ethnic identity in that language retention of one’s mother tongue acts as a stronger connector to the ethnic community. Perhaps in Simone’s case, speaking Vietnamese is not a determinant of her ethnic identity as she was not encouraged to interact with other Vietnamese by her parents while growing up; kept separate from the

Vietnamese community, Simone did not need to speak Vietnamese. Even though her current group of friends are all of Vietnamese descent, they converse only in English. I argue that Simone's inability to speak Vietnamese does not play a role in maintaining a connection to the ethnic community as it exists through her friendship with other Vietnamese youth. In addition, as Simone's parents did not enforce that she learn Vietnamese at a young age, she never achieved the level of fluency needed to regard it as an essential element of their identity. Coupled with the lack of necessity in attaining fluency, the meaning of being Vietnamese may not be tied to her fluency in their heritage language.

Learning that Simone and Sue spoke English at home even though their parents were not proficient in English, I was curious as to the level of understanding between them and their parents. Existing research has suggested that acculturation differences between parent and child may be associated with more intense conflict because different levels of acculturation may signify less proficiency in English on the part of parents and less proficiency in the ethnic language on the part of children (Tseng & Fuligni, 2000). Language barriers may then present as obstacles to effective communication, which in turn, may increase the likelihood of increased conflict. It may also make it more difficult for parents and children to communicate about subtle or difficult emotional issues, resulting in an increased likelihood of negative mood and feelings of isolation (Lee & Zhan, 1998). The lack of fluency in a common language thus exacerbates possible strained relationship between parent and child, leaving families few bridges to span the inter-generational gap (Lee & Cynn, 1991).

In exploring the level of understanding between Simone, Sue and their respective parents, I asked them if their parents completely understood what they were trying to say, or if there were frequent misunderstandings. Simone shared, *"I speak to them in 100 per cent English. I don't know if they understand a 100 per cent of the things I'm saying but they speak to me in Vietnamese. I can understand Vietnamese but I can't speak it back just cause I've never really spoken it."* Similarly, Sue would speak to her mother in

English, *“she’d reply in Vietnamese, I’d understand it and then I’d reply in English. So yeah, and then she understands me but she can’t say it.”*

Despite not speaking the same language as their parents, both Simone and Sue do not report to experience a communication barrier with their parents. Also lacking fluency in Vietnamese, Thi shared, *“sometimes I don’t know how to translate, so I say it in English, and they’re like ‘huh? What?’ so you describe it, and then they’re like ‘oh yeah...’ it takes awhile, but they get it. I don’t really fight, I don’t really argue, so I don’t have to say much, but when we did, it’d be in both languages. But it was never a language barrier.”* Perhaps it is because both the participants and their parents have sufficient comprehension of the two languages that bridges the potential communication barrier; the participants understand Vietnamese despite not being fluent, and their parents understand enough English. Perhaps there is more to successful communication between parent and child than verbal fluency that existing research has not accounted for.

Researchers, policy-makers, educators and parents often express concern that the linguistic challenges faced by children from immigrant backgrounds might hinder their development in some way, and has led many to support monolingual English practices (Oh & Fuligni, 2008). However, although proficiency in English is important for success in Australia, it may not necessarily have to come at a loss of one’s heritage language. Contrary to available Australian statistics, all the participants identify as being more comfortable speaking English. This highlights the incomplete and perhaps inaccurate representation of the Vietnamese population, as provided by official statistics. Nevertheless, most of the participants continue to speak Vietnamese at home. The next section explores if fluency in their heritage language is a symbol of their ethnic identity.

Speaking Vietnamese

Do you mean as in communicating with them? I’d say half and half, half Vietnamese half English, but they speak Vietnamese to me. They

don't speak English to me cause mom's like "we're Vietnamese, we have to speak Vietnamese." (Ashley)

Growing up in Australia, an English speaking nation, all the participants speak English fluently and identify English to be their first language. However, most of the participants continue to speak Vietnamese at home. This section explores how comfortable the participants are in speaking Vietnamese, their heritage language. Moreover, in exploring the participants' ethnic identity, many of the participants identified that they are Vietnamese because they speak Vietnamese. Consequently, this section also explores whether heritage language fluency is indeed a symbol of their ethnic identity.

Phil shared that he continues to speak Vietnamese with his parents, although he speaks to his siblings in English. Similarly, Mark shared, *"Usually anyone older than me, I try to speak Viet. I'm fluent, but I'm fluent in the basic stuff. Enough to communicate."* Fluent in both English and Vietnamese, Phuong shared that he speaks Vietnamese to his parent,

Every now and then I spit out some English, maybe some Cantonese as well. Before because my parents didn't understand English fully, we were banned from speaking English up till my siblings got older and they decided to go to school and speak English as well. So mum and dad had to learn obviously. I guess it's cause they didn't want me to lose my sense of culture and my sense of where I came from. Oh and also they couldn't understand what I was saying, so...

From his narrative, it is evident that Phuong learned to speak Vietnamese because he was socialized by his parents within a Vietnamese-speaking household. However, the reasons for his parents encouraging the use of Vietnamese is two-fold; they did not understand English, and because they wanted him to retain an aspect of his cultural heritage. In fact, most of the participants were enrolled into Vietnamese school to encourage heritage language maintenance, and to instill Vietnamese values. Debbie attended the Vietnamese school at her Church,

I went since Year 6 till Year 10, I'm pretty sure. It was alright, nobody wanted to go. It was like a chore, but we still went cause our parents made us go cause we're Vietnamese, we need to learn to read and talk Vietnamese. I can read, I'm not very good at writing. I guess it's handy to read, but back then, I thought it was a waste of my weekend because the first half, for an hour and a half, it was Vietnamese school. And the second hour and a half, it was more like religious stuff. It's like religion – Sunday school. So yeah, it was Vietnamese school, break, and then we learn about religion and stuff.

Similarly, Martin was also required to attend Vietnamese school,

Yeah, a lot of Viets did. Once a week on Saturdays, on average of five to seven years and then you'd quit by the end of it because that's when you enter TEE and all that. You've got no time... [Were you forced by your parents to go?] Yeah, we were pretty much forced to go, but it was sort of love and hate. It was weird. Cause our parents would force us just to keep the tradition and all that. We were born here, but you're still Viet, so why not speak both. They didn't say you should only speak Vietnamese, they knew you should speak English, but why forget your mother tongue? So that was it and I'm sure every parent had the same idea... but we would enjoy it cause we had all these other Viets from other schools, and that's how we made more friends from other schools that were Viet. We learned naturally by being there so it helped. I wouldn't have been able to read Viet if I hadn't gone to Viet school. I'd have just been able to speak, but yeah it was a social thing, definitely. And that's what kept us going.

Yeah, now that I'm older definitely appreciate it, but at that time, you don't give a shit cause you're too young. But if you compared my English to my Vietnamese, my Vietnamese is like 3/10. Yeah, it's always Vietnamese at home but then I moved out a couple of years ago as well but I can still speak it. It's just not good enough to read a novel. I can read... reading's different. You can read it, doesn't mean you can understand it. It's like reading a really philosophical English

book, you can read every single word in it then you're like "what the hell does it all mean?" same with Vietnamese. So I wouldn't be able to read a book.

It is noteworthy that both Debbie and Martin's parents believed that they should speak Vietnamese because they're Vietnamese. Through their narratives, it is evident that the participants' parents thought it was pertinent that their children learn to speak, read and write Vietnamese. It is conceivable that their parents perceive heritage language to be an important marker of their ethnic identity; that is, their children would retain their Vietnameseness if they spoke Vietnamese. The participants' narratives are reminiscent of results from Moua and Lamborn's (2010) study on heritage language and ethnic socialization. As narrated by one of their participants, "Sometimes she [my mother] wants me to talk in Hmong. She really wants me not to lose my own background" (p.43).

The participants' narratives also reinforce how Vietnamese school provided an environment for ethnic socialization. Not only did the participants learn to speak, read and write Vietnamese, they were also taught Vietnamese values and practices. Moreover, it provided an additional social environment for this group of second generation Vietnamese youth to socialize with other Vietnamese youth; in turn, creating avenues for exploration of one's ethnic identity. As Hong described his memories of Vietnamese school, "*at that time I didn't mind going... because I had friends there as well...*" How peers may be a dimension of ethnic identity formation is explored further in the next chapter.

Curious about how fluent the participants are in their heritage language since all of them claimed English to be their first language, I asked each participant whether they could speak Vietnamese. Emma shared,

I'm good at Viet, I go to Church so I teach the kids, so I speak to them in Vietnamese as well. I speak to Mom's friends in Vietnamese? But otherwise, no. I can read, I can write, a little bit. And I can speak a lot better than I can read and write. I did Vietnamese school

for a great seven years of my life. Wait, it would have been eight years.

Similarly, Long shared.

I can read, write. I went to Vietnamese school for about ten years? [laughs] Plus, I got my brother, he teaches me as well. And after I got past that stage, I just taught myself. Being able to read and write is important. It's one of those things. My generation has stopped speaking Vietnamese, they just, a lot of my friends, their Vietnamese is not as good. I see all my mates, you know, they've lost... they don't speak or write Vietnamese, they can't. So I want to keep it. I want to keep my traditions, you know. I am Australian, but I want to keep my heritage, where I'm from, at least some part of it. I speak Vietnamese to my fiancée all the time, my brothers and sister, I don't speak English to them. Just mainly Vietnamese, I try and speak as much Vietnamese as possible to them. I like to keep it. So when people ask "can you speak Vietnamese? Can you write Vietnamese?" you know, I can say "yeah".

Long's narrative highlights how speaking Vietnamese is a reflection of his Vietnamese identity, as he shared "*I am Australian, but I want to keep my heritage, where I'm from, at least some part of it.*" This was mirrored in Debbie's narrative of what made her "Vietnamese"; Debbie laughingly shared, "*I don't know why. I speak it?*"

As discussed earlier in the section "Where are you from?", many of the participants "don't know" why they identify as Vietnamese, and what makes them Vietnamese. Despite not knowing what contributes to their ethnic identity Debbie and Emma inadvertently made reference to their ability to speak Vietnamese as a dimension of their ethnic identity. I argue that this is an indication of the salience and importance of heritage language fluency in ethnic identity development. This is consistent with existing scholarship that suggest that language based factors is a reflection and contributor of ethnic identity (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977; Imbens-Bailey, 1996; Laroche et al,

2009). As Giles et al. (1977) state “ingroup speech can serve as a symbol of ethnic identity and cultural solidarity. It is used for reminding the group about its cultural heritage, for transmitting group feelings, and for excluding members of the outgroup from its internal transactions” (p.307).

The salience of heritage language to one’s ethnic identity development is evident in Mai’s pride in her fluency in the Vietnamese language. As she shared,

My friends speak in English but when we can, like I really enjoy finding somebody who can speak Vietnamese, especially if they can speak fluently then it’s so much more easier to make fun of things, and they understand it. But if they don’t, then it’s “what’s wrong with you?! I watch Vietnamese stuff and talk in Vietnamese. There are times when I’m a big fob, like me knowing all these proverbs in Vietnamese, and every now and then I’ll slip it in and people are like “geez man, I don’t even know that kinda stuff” and you just say a proverb and like people look at you weirdly and you’re like ‘come on! Come on!’ Seriously there are times when people go ‘can you stop being so Vietnamese, God!’ I do like being a fob sometimes, you know, get in touch with your own roots. I’d never want my kids not to know Vietnamese. I would want them to know the proverbs. Everything I’ve learnt. There are certain values that you keep.

It is of interest that Mai is teased and labelled a “fob” by her Vietnamese peers for being fluent and well-versed in the language. It appears almost strange to other second generation Vietnamese youth that one of their own would want to speak Vietnamese outside the family, and to use proverbs. It is even more noteworthy that her friends would like her to “stop being so Vietnamese” when she speaks Vietnamese and uses proverbs in her everyday conversations. Which raises the question: when does one become “so” Vietnamese and is it a bad thing?

Without knowing more about her friends’ ethnic identity, it is impossible to draw a conclusion about the strength of their ethnic identity. It is conceivable

that it may not be Mai's language fluency that makes her "fobby", but rather the extent of her language knowledge; specifically, a deeper knowledge of the language than is generally expected of a second generation youth. Reflecting on Mai's narrative, I realised that my friends and I tease each other when we slip Chinese proverbs into conversations. However, I argue that it is not their ethnic identity (i.e. being Chinese) that we are poking fun at, but rather their level of literary knowledge. In fact, many native English speakers fail to use proverbs in their daily exchanges. Yet, we would never tease someone who uses proverbs as being too "English". Rather, we may accuse them of being pretentious.

Mai's narrative of her friends accusing her of being a "fob" is consistent with findings from Nguyen and Brown (2010) indicating that Hmong adolescents in America labelled other Hmong youth based upon forms of language use. As one of their participants shared

To the cool people they'll be the really fobby people, they'll be the low class people. People who are really Hmong, they know the language real well, they know the proverbs and the sayings and stuff. They understand the traditions and how it goes. And to the popular people that's the low class people. (p.857)

In their study, Nguyen and Brown found that the Hmong adolescents were likely to avoid being labelled as fob as it would ensure lower social status among peers.

Although being a fob is viewed in a negative light, Mai admits that she likes being a fob at times to "*get back to her roots*". I suggest that the enjoyment she derives from conversing in Vietnamese highlights the importance of language to the construction of her identity; she is Vietnamese because she speaks it and speaking Vietnamese makes her Vietnamese. In turn, the significance she places on achieving fluency in Vietnamese alludes to the importance placed on her identity as a Vietnamese person. Similarly, the importance and pride she places on language fluency, and her "Vietnamese"

identity, is highlighted in her desire for her children to speak Vietnamese. As she shared, *“There are certain values that you keep”*

Similarly, Thi aims to send her son to Vietnamese school so that he can learn to speak Vietnamese;

I'm Vietnamese and I want him to understand us when we're talking and I want him to be a part of our culture... He knows like simple stuff. He understands a little bit, not a lot. A lot of family come up to him and speak Vietnamese and he's like “what are you saying?” [Laughs] I'm going to send him to Viet school. He can do what I did, like just get the gist of it. He doesn't have to be fluent, but just enough to understand what people are saying.

Fluent in Vietnamese, this desire is echoed in Emma shared that she speaks Vietnamese at home,

I think it's important to be able to speak, yes, because if I grow up and have kids, I'd like my kids to speak Vietnamese. Maybe basic ones. Write, not so much cause I think, I don't know, I don't see where you're going to use writing for. Reading, I don't see a big deal in it. Where are you going to read Vietnamese from?

As previously discussed in Chapter Four, upon reflecting on the construction of her Vietnamese identity, Emma shared *“I don't know. Nothing, really. I can't really think of anything at the moment. Maybe when I'm at home, and speak to my mom in Vietnamese, that's about it.”* I argue that despite not knowing what it means to be Vietnamese, perhaps the significance Emma places on heritage language fluency alludes to the salience of her Vietnamese identity. Her desire for her children to speak Vietnamese further reinforces the notion that Emma's identity as a Vietnamese person is important to her global self-identity.

It needs to be noted that while Emma professes to be fluent in the language, she admits that it is weird to have a conversation in Vietnamese. Mirroring other participants, the ability to read and write Vietnamese is insignificant to

Emma. When asked whether she enjoyed Vietnamese school, Emma vexed “*It was horrible, I hated it, oh my god. I don’t know. I just didn’t really like it. I don’t see how it was necessary in life to know how to write Vietnamese, like, where am I going to write Vietnamese? I’m eventually going to forget anyway*”. Growing up in Perth, one perhaps does not need to read and write Vietnamese, in fact, there is little opportunity for one to read or write Vietnamese. Unlike the Vietnamese towns of Footscray in Melbourne and Cabramatta in Sydney that cater to the Vietnamese community, Perth lacks a strong Vietnamese ethnic enclave where restaurants and businesses cater to the mainly Vietnamese community. Aside from the Vietnamese restaurants in Perth, one would be hard pressed to find businesses or services with signage in Vietnamese; perhaps without the opportunity or need to, the participants do not perceive the ability to read or write Vietnamese as important. It may also be this lack of pressing need to read or write Vietnamese that reduces the salience of one’s heritage language competency as a constructor of one’s ethnic identity as a Vietnamese person.

The findings from this study indicate that some of the participants identify speaking Vietnamese as a reflection of their ethnic identity; they are Vietnamese because they speak Vietnamese. The participants also speak Vietnamese because they are Vietnamese. The importance the participants’ placed on their ability to speak Vietnamese is consistent with Cho’s (2000) finding of a positive relationship between heritage language (HL) competency and ethnic identity. Similarly, the participants’ desire for their children to learn Vietnamese and maintain their heritage language is echoed by participants in Cho’s study. As one participant, Evelyn, shared, “when I raise my future, children, I want them to be able to speak Korean” (p. 378).

In Cho’s (2000) study of the effects of heritage language maintenance from the perspective of second generation adult Korean Americans, 114 participants were included in the analysis; 98 participants completed a questionnaire which included open-ended questions and 16 participated in in-depth interviews. Their results indicated that those who had “strong HL competence” had a strong sense of who they were (i.e. being proud of their culture and ethnicity),

were strongly connected to their ethnic group (i.e. had strong group membership) and had greater understanding and knowledge of cultural values, ethics and manners. As one participant shared, “Most of my Korean contact comes from church, being with my church friends who are Korean. I feel good that I’m capable of reading in Korean... I like being able to speak Korean” (p. 375). Mirroring the findings from the present study, the results from Cho’s (2000) study indicated that even though the participants were born or raised in the United States, many claimed their heritage language to be an integral part of their ethnic identity.

However, does the extent of one’s proficiency in their heritage language predict the strength of one’s ethnic identity? Findings from Oh and Fuligni’s (2010) study of the role of heritage language development in the ethnic identity and family relationships of adolescents from immigrant background suggest that it is one’s proficiency in their heritage language that is an indicator of the strength of their ethnic identification. It is not language choice or use but rather, it is about how well they speak it. They suggest that the adolescent’s proficiency in their heritage language is an indicator of their connection and respect for their heritage culture. However, the findings from Oh and Fuligni’s study also suggest that factors other than heritage language proficiency are involved in second-generation Asian American adolescents’ choice of language. They suggest that perhaps second-generation Asian American adolescents have fewer opportunities to speak their heritage language overall.

The findings from the present study do not support Oh and Fuligni’s (2010) suggestion that proficiency in heritage language is an indicator of the strength of their ethnic identity; describing his Vietnamese as “*very broken*”, Nick shared,

Most of my friends even though we’re Viet we speak English to each other. So even with my brother, I speak English to him. Even since when I was a kid, there’s a lot of English in the Vietnamese. So say for an example, if I spoke a sentence with ten words, three or four of those words would be English words.

Despite the lack of fluency in his heritage language, Nick identifies strongly as Vietnamese. Conversely, Emma is fluent in Vietnamese, yet is unable to pinpoint what makes her Vietnamese aside from her heritage language maintenance.

Rather than challenge the assumption that heritage language fluency is an essential component of ethnic identity, I posit that perhaps the acquisition of heritage language and strength of ethnic identity are two parallel developmental processes. Perhaps their experiences of being firmly planted in Australia, while maintaining strong ties to other Vietnamese-Australian friends and families have created positive associations with the use of both languages.

I argue that proficiency in one's heritage language is not a determinant nor marker of one's ethnic identity for all participants. It is possible that similar to the Asian American teenagers in Oh and Fuligni's (2010) study, this group of second generation Vietnamese young persons have no need to learn Vietnamese and have little opportunity to speak it. Perhaps this group of second-generation Vietnamese youth do not see the relevance in learning their heritage language, and therefore do not perceive it necessary to their ethnic identity. Furthermore, it may be that they are unable to achieve a level of fluency sufficient to use as a basis for establishing an ethnic identity.

As Edwards and Chisholm (1987) point out, language is not necessary for group identity. Similarly, in their sample of Vietnamese adolescents in Los Angeles, Phinney and colleagues (2001) noted that the participants' low-levels of ethnic language proficiency did not negate them from their sense of oneself as an ethnic group member. They suggested that because of the small Vietnamese community in Los Angeles, many of the participants probably communicated with their Vietnamese friends in English because they had less opportunity to interact with same-ethnic peers and use their ethnic language.

Akin to Phinney and colleagues' study (2001), the Vietnamese community in Perth is small, and while many of the participants are proficient in Vietnamese, all of them speak English to their (mainly Vietnamese) friends. This suggests

that one can maintain a strong ethnic identity independent of language usage, providing support for existing research (Phinney, 1998; Phinney et al, 2001) and with little need to speak, read or write Vietnamese in Australia, there is little value attached to attaining fluency. Perhaps being “Vietnamese” is less tied to fluency in the language. This is consistent with findings suggesting that fluency in the Chinese language was not an important factor in influencing the ethnic identity of Chinese-American children (Cheng & Kuo, 2000). Similarly, in a study by Kim and Chao (2009) on the relationship between heritage language fluency and ethnic identity, they found that second generation Chinese adolescents in America did not place a large emphasis on heritage language fluency for deriving their ethnic identity. In their empirical study, the researchers found that despite lower language fluency scores, second generation Chinese adolescents had similar ethnic identity scores as compared with first generation Chinese. Thus suggesting that among Chinese, a high sense of ethnic identity can be achieved with a low level of heritage language fluency. Conversely, fluency in English does not de-emphasise one’s ethnic identity. The only participant that did not identify as being Australian, Phil shared

I never think I’m Australian, so what if I speak English, I don’t sound Asian. But I have an Asian heart. I’m always Vietnamese, always Asian. Strongly Asian. I just feel proud. I don’t even like White girlfriend or anything. It’s an Asian thing.

It is also necessary to consider the different meanings ascribed to language preference by ethnic minority adolescents. Some adolescents may choose not to speak their heritage language exclusively because of the implications for their social standing (i.e. being labelled as a fob), while others may choose to speak their heritage language to maintain a connectedness to their cultural heritage (Nguyen & Brown, 2010). Despite being labelled a “fob” for speaking Vietnamese, Mai continues to enjoy conversing in Vietnamese to “get in touch with [her] roots”. Conversely, while not explicitly expressed, it is possible that other Vietnamese youth may not speak Vietnamese in fear of being labelled a “fob”; as Mai shared, her friends tell her to “stop being so

Vietnamese”. The participants’ narratives suggest that being able to speak Vietnamese (even if only to their parents, and other Vietnamese elders) is important to some of the participants. However, it is not so for all participants; I argue that for some of the participants, ethnic identity may be tied to other dimensions of ethnic identity, such as traditional cultural values emphasized by their parents rather than to their use and proficiency in Vietnamese.

Summing it up

This chapter explored the ethnic identification of this group of second generation Vietnamese youth. Most of the participants identified simultaneously as Vietnamese and Australian, highlighting the multitude of identities that contribute to their global self. In the section “Where are you from?” I argued that the participants’ amalgamation of values represent their Vietnamese and Australian identities. Raised in a Vietnamese household, and socialized within Australian schools, media and peers, these Vietnamese young persons have evidently internalized values and practices from both cultures. Their narratives also indicate that rather than perceive the different cultural values as conflicting, the participants are able to skillfully navigate between the two cultures. The salience of either identity is situational, and the participants are able to emphasise or de-emphasise a particular identity to fit the needs of the particular situation. For example, identifying as Australian when encountering a racist audience, or identifying as Australian while overseas.

The second section explored heritage language as a marker of their ethnic identity. The findings from the present study indicate that this group of second generation youth is proficient in English. This is in contrast to existing literature and statistics that suggest that the second generation Vietnamese youth in Australia present with low-proficiency in English. I acknowledge that this may not be representative of all Vietnamese youth in Perth due to the inclusion criteria for this present study; only individuals who are proficient in English were interviewed. Nonetheless, the findings from the study indicate that all the participants identify English as their first language, and are more comfortable conversing in English. The participants’ narratives also revealed

that most of the participants are also fluent in their heritage language and speak Vietnamese at home.

In reflecting on their ethnic identification, many of the participants made reference to speaking English or Vietnamese as a marker of their ethnic identity; that is, they speak Vietnamese because they are Vietnamese. The findings from the study highlight that language is indeed an expression of one's ethnic identity; some participants identify as Vietnamese because they speak Vietnamese. However, language as a symbol of their ethnic identity is not limited to their identity as a Vietnamese person; speaking English is a reflection of the participants' Australian identity as much as speaking Vietnamese is a reflection of their Vietnamese identity. The findings also argue that contrary to existing literature (Oh & Fulgini, 2010), proficiency in heritage language may not be an indicator of their ethnic identity. Despite a lack of fluency in Vietnamese, some participants identify as Vietnamese. It is posited that there are other dimensions, such as traditional values and food choices that contribute to one's ethnic identity.

As we explored their ethnic identification, the participants' narratives revealed different phases of ethnic identity negotiation. Some of the participants talked about how they were more "Viet" in high school, while others were more "Aussie". The next chapter explores how this group of young people has come to identify as Australian, and Vietnamese.

Chapter Six: Ethnic Identity Negotiation

Like I would say, I was a lot more Asian Pride back then? But now, it's not like that. It started in high school. I think during high school, that's when you're trying to develop yourself, develop your own personality and stuff like that. (Hong)

As discussed in Chapter Two, it is recognised that second generation Vietnamese youth in Australia may have faced challenges in negotiating an ethnic identity. Growing up with parents that may continue to hold fast to the language, culture and practices of the past, while socialized within the Australian school system which emphasizes English proficiency and Australian customs, this group of second generation were required to negotiate two different cultures. In addition, school provided them with the arena to interact with peers both from their own ethnic group and from other cultures. The differences between the ethnic culture and dominant culture present these young people with choices in language use, choice of friends and cultural practices (Phinney, Romero, Nava & Huang, 2001). This chapter explores the process and content of ethnic identity negotiation as these young people navigate between the two different cultures.

The first section explores their stories as they identify the different phases of identification; some participants identified as more “Asian” in high school, while others are more comfortable in identifying as “Vietnamese” now. The second section explores how social networks may be an indicator of the participants’ ethnic identity and how they may have played a role in their ethnic identity formation. With no intention to anchor this study within any particular framework, the participants’ choice of friends as they moved from primary school to high school, and after, reflected Phinney’s (1989) model of ethnic identity development.

Phases of Ethnic Identity Development

It just feels right to say Vietnamese. I think I just matured after high school and I feel more comfortable with myself. (Sharon)

Growing up in Singapore, I identified as Chinese. Legally, my race is documented as Chinese. I spoke Chinese or more specifically, Mandarin to my paternal grandmother, I studied Mandarin in school as a second language, I ate Chinese food at home and celebrated Chinese festivals. I was therefore, Chinese. It was an identity that I took for granted and embraced. However, upon arriving in Perth when I was 16 years old, I stopped speaking Chinese, I stopped eating Chinese food (largely due to my lack of culinary skills), and ignored every Chinese festival. It was not something I questioned, nor something I did intentionally. It just happened.

After sixteen years in Australia, I now speak Mandarin at every opportunity; I listen to Chinese music and watch Chinese movies and television serials. I have even expanded my culinary repertoire to include my favourite Chinese foods. I am also proud to celebrate every Chinese festival, and adhere to Chinese customs that I used to despise – I now spring clean the house for Chinese New Year. I am again, Chinese. Whilst on this research journey, I have too uncovered my portfolio of identities – that I am not only Chinese, but also very much Indian. Since embarking on this research journey, I am slowly re-discovering my Indianness - an identity that has been largely suppressed except when celebrating Deepavali, the Indian Festival of Lights, every year with the maternal side of my family.

Why now? I suppose it is because I am older and my ethnic identity is more important to my global identity and sense of self, especially as an Asian person in Australia. It could also be that I have finally negotiated an achieved ethnic identity as a Chinese woman, and am comfortable with it. However, I may still be exploring my identity as an Indian person. I also believe that I will continue to explore my Chinese, Indian identities; not to mention, continually negotiate my Singaporean and Australian identities.

Likewise, the narratives of these second generation Vietnamese youth have alluded to phases in their negotiation of an ethnic identity. While some participants were more “Viet” in high school, others were more “White”. Describing high school as a time when he did “*Asian things, listen to Asian music, watch music movies and stuff like that*”, Hong made reference to being

“Asian pride”. A popular phrase (and phase) amongst Asian youth in Australia, Asian pride (or Azn pryde) denotes being proud to be an Asian, especially in reference to “Asian” behaviours and practices. Used by immigrant or second generation Asian youth, it is conceivably a means of creating a connection and perhaps, solidarity with other Asian youth. A few participants referred to ‘Asian pride’ when discussing their high school experiences, and it is during this phase where they explored being Vietnamese in Australia. As Hong reflected, *“I think it’s just ... when you hang out with Asians, it’s just passed on to you in a way...”*

Long admitted that he, too, went through an Asian Pride phase, along with his other friends. He described,

All the Asian guys, you had to wear thongs, ripped jeans at the bottom, the hairstyle. The way you sit, stand, hang out at Pot Black. Luckily I didn’t stay that long in that phase. I think a year or two? And they kept doing the same thing over and over again, and I went “nah, no more”.

The concept of Asian Pride was echoed by Martin in exploring how he has come to identify as being Australian,

Obviously back then, I felt Viet, like when I was a teenager, Asian Pride and all that. When you’re 16, going through teenage puberty and all that you do go through an identity crisis... Everyone’s like wanting to create an identity for themselves during those years but I probably only started identifying as Australian strongly two years ago? I was only 23 which is still pretty late... before that not really giving a shit about it at all? So I think it’s just with age.

Reflecting on his ethnic identification as a Vietnamese person, Martin shared,

It’s weird like, yeah it’s hard to explain. I know I am, it’s [laughs] can’t explain it. Only cause now that I’m older, obviously back then, I felt Viet, like when I was a teenager, Asian Pride and all that. And as you get older, you realise that everyone’s just different. There is

no set thing, even if you're White you're still different to every other White guy, so there's no boundaries.

It is interesting that Martin declared it “obvious” that he felt more Vietnamese when he was a teenager; this raises the question, why obvious? It is possible that Martin claimed it “obvious” to feel more Vietnamese as a teenager because Asian Pride was viewed as a rite of passage amongst his peers; if all Vietnamese teenagers were Asian Pride, he too was “obviously” more Vietnamese. Referring to puberty as a stage where an identity crisis is experienced, Martin perceived the construction of his identity as part of growing up; that with age, one finds oneself.

Conversely, Thai identified as being more “Australian” in high school but is now more “Asian”. Reflecting on the changes in his ethnic identity negotiation, Thai shared,

I think in high school it's a different way of living, I used to go to the beach, play sports on the weekend and all that stuff... I think I feel more Asian now, that's mainly because of my job. Because I work in an Asian environment, so I'm more Asian...I probably just like the Asian culture more now than I did back then. Just the way of life for an Asian, I'm more suited to it. White people are like nine to five, do their thing on the weekend. I just party in the night time, White people go out earlier, I go out a bit later with the Asian people and stuff.

The participants' phase of Asian pride, and Thai's “Aussie” phase in adolescence is consistent with existing research that suggests a period of exploration as they enter adolescence (Kibria, 2000; Kim, 1981; Lee, 1997; Tse, 1999). In a qualitative study with African American adolescents, Phinney and Tarver (1988) found that some adolescents had begun to engage in exploration regarding their ethnicity, even at ages 12 - 14. These adolescents expressed interest in finding out about their ethnic heritage and actively did so by talking with family and friends about ethnic issues, reading books on the subject, and thinking about the effects of ethnicity on their lives.

However, now that the participants are older, many of the participants identify as both Vietnamese and Australian. As Hong commented, "*I live as an Australian, but inside I'm still Vietnamese... [Are you less Vietnamese now?] Not losing, but not as interested.*" Similarly, Sharon shared that she was uncomfortable in identifying as Vietnamese when she was younger. A possible explanation for the relation between age and ethnic identity may be found in ego identity literature. Research suggests that older individuals are more likely to have an achieved ego, while younger ones exhibit less mature identity (Adam, Bennion & Huh, 1989). Since ethnic identity is a part of an individual's overall identity, the positive relationship between age and ethnic identity could be related to the maturation of ego identity as one grows older.

As I re-read the interview transcripts, I was struck by what appeared to be a lack of conflict in the negotiation of an ethnic identity amongst this group of second generation Vietnamese youth. Rather than feel a need to be Australian, the findings from this study indicate that the participants naturally identify as Australian. As discussed in Chapters Four and Five, the participants identify positively as Australian, due to various dimensions such as language spoken, country of birth, and adopted value-system. This lack of conflict in their identity negotiation is contrary to existing literature that suggests that youth from ethnic minority backgrounds identity perceive to be different from the dominant culture, and in exploring their ethnicity, reject the culture.

In her study, Kim (1981) conducted in-depth interviews with Japanese American students, half of whom had been raised in predominantly White neighbourhoods and the others in racially mixed settings. She found that during their adolescent years, many of the participants experienced painful periods of negative self-image, derived mainly from comparisons made between themselves and prevailing White models. Results also indicated that many of the participants embraced their own culture and rejected mainstream White culture. Kim also noted that after a period of identity exploration, the students figured out which parts of themselves were "Asian" and which parts were "American". In this stage, they reported to feel better about themselves

and felt more self-confident; they became proud to be an ethnic minority American.

Similarly, a study by Thai (1999) found that second generation Vietnamese Americans found that they felt socially marginalized in childhood and adolescence, neither fully American nor fully Vietnamese. Many of these young people experienced childhood in America as a time when they wanted to assimilate into mainstream American society and “acting White” was commonly reported during their childhood. And as they entered young adulthood, it was suggested that they had been brainwashed into accepting and valuing White practices and norms at the expense of Vietnamese identity and practices.

While the participants’ narratives suggest a period of exploration in high school that reflects existing research, the participants’ stories differ in that rather than realizing that they are “different” from the dominant society, they believe they are part of and belong to the dominant society. As Thai claimed, *“I always felt like this is my home. I’m Australian. I never felt like I didn’t belong here, always felt I belonged here. I have every right to be here.”* Furthermore, in spite the participants’ embracing their ethnic culture, the participants’ narratives do not reflect a rejection of mainstream culture. As Long laughingly shared *“I love cricket, AFL, sport. I love a barbie. I watch Neighbours, I haven’t watched it for awhile but I love Neighbours. I love the Australian thing, just having a beer and a barbie.”* However, their adoption of Australian cultural practices does not infer a rejection of their ethnic culture. As previously discussed in Chapter Five, the participants demonstrate an acceptance and integration of both Australian and Vietnamese cultural practices and values; because they identify as Australian and Vietnamese, the participants have integrated the different values within their value-system.

The results from this study demonstrate that being a member of two cultures does not mean being between two cultures, but that one may be part of both cultures. Reminiscent of previous research, the participants’ narratives indicated a time-related process of ethnic identity exploration. In Jasinskaja-Lahti and Liebkind’s (1999) study of Russian-speaking immigrant adolescents

in Finland, their results indicated a transition from a high degree of Finnish identity and a low degree of Russian identity in their first year of residence, to a strong biethnic identity with greater prevalence of its Russian component after three years of residence. In the authors' study, the ethnic self-identification of Russian-speaking immigrant adolescents clearly followed Phinney's (1989) three-stage process of ethnic identity development. Their results also highlight the continual process of exploration; participants had to actively reassess the relationship between different components of their ethnic identity and to reevaluate their importance in a new cultural context.

While it is noted that the participants in Jasinskaja-Lahti and Liebkind's (1999) study were adolescent immigrants that may already have been confronted with ethnic issues in their country of origin as compared to second generation youth, I posit that growing up in a mainly Vietnamese household before entering school is a parallel situation. Socialized concurrently in a Vietnamese household as well as Australian schools and media, the participants may have had to re-evaluate different dimensions of their ethnic identity before achieving their Vietnamese and concomitantly Australian identities.

In exploring their familial and social experiences growing up in Perth, it was established that the composition of the participants' social network has changed over the years. Many of the participants had mainly non-Vietnamese friends in primary school, but developed a predominantly Vietnamese peer group in high school. While many of the participants continue to have mainly Vietnamese friends, some of the participants share that their social network consists of persons from different ethnicities. In extending the argument that one's friends are a reflection of their ethnic identity development, I put forward that one's choice of friends reflects the different stages of ethnic identity development. While I reiterate that this study was not anchored within any particular framework, the participants' stories were found to reflect Phinney's (1989) model of ethnic identity development. This is explored in the next section.

Social Network Composition

I've always had mixed friends. Actually I think I had a lot more Australian friends than Asian friends. But I had my phases. Like in primary school, it'd be more White people, and like, the beginning of high school, it'd be Asian people, and then it'd just go back to White people, and then it'd be like mixed. And now, I've got White friends and I've got Asian friends. (Thi)

Through the years, Northbridge has remained the popular meeting spot for Asian youth in Perth. As Perth's official Chinatown and the epicentre of Asian youth activity, one is likely to see groups of Vietnamese youth loitering at Pot Black on James Street or at the various Bubble Tea cafes at any given time. In fact, I met with many of the participants at a bubble tea café in Northbridge; a venue chosen because of its centrality and its familiarity. Interestingly, one would be hard-pressed to spot a White Australian amongst these groups, which raises the question, if friends are an expression of one's ethnic identity, do Vietnamese youth only befriend other Vietnamese youth? And if they identify as being Australian, do they have White Australian friends? Or is it that they drink bubble tea only with other Asian friends?

The emic nature of this study has allowed for an insight into the motivations behind their choice of friends and how and why it has changed. This section explores whether there is indeed a relationship between choice of friends and ethnic identity. In particular, it explores their choice of friends and how it may be an aspect in one's negotiation of ethnic identity. In addition, I propose that as an expression of one's ethnic identity, one's choice of friends is a reflection of different stages of ethnic identity development. Existing scholarship has suggested that adolescents may spend more of their time with their peers who may often have different backgrounds and values, and may likely serve as triggers and contexts for ethnic identity development (Hurtado & Gurin, 2004; Phinney et al, 2001). As the participants progressed from primary school, to high school, entering University or the workforce, they narrated a change in their choice of friends. That is, they had mainly non-Vietnamese friends in Primary school, before socialising pre-dominantly with Vietnamese peers, and

now having a tight-knit group of Vietnamese friends while maintaining friendships with White Australians. This section explores how the participants' choice of friends in primary school right through to the present were found to reflect Phinney's (1989) model of ethnic identity development, and is perhaps a reflection of their ethnic identity negotiation.

The participants' narratives suggest that there are three phases where friendships were made and lost;

- (i) Primary school – mostly White friends. Dependant on demographics.
- (ii) High school – mostly Asian friends. Again, dependant on demographics.
- (iii) Current – a mix of both Asians and White Australians. Mainly Asian friends.

As previously discussed in Chapter Five, most of the participants were unable to speak English before entering Primary school. Consequently, choice of friends was initially limited to other Vietnamese children. However, as their proficiency in English increased, so did their circle of friends. As Hong recounted, *“Well once I could speak English, I wasn't restricted by just hanging around Vietnamese kids, I was friends with anyone”*

This progression from having only Vietnamese friends was echoed in Thai's story;

Back then, I think in my age group there were a lot of people like me who couldn't speak English, so I spoke Vietnamese with them. I found it easier to connect with the Vietnamese because I could only speak the language. Yeah, my friends were mainly Vietnamese and then you sort of branch out because you can speak English and can connect with the other kids as well. After I spoke English, I found it easy to get along with everyone. I had heaps of White friends.

While language dictated the choice of friends in the beginning, participants widened their social circle to include persons of other races and ethnicities

once they were more comfortable with English. Without a language barrier to prescribe their choice of friends, participants had pre-dominantly non-Vietnamese friends. As Martin shared, *“In primary school, my best friend for a few years, he was half Australian half Malaysian, and another best friend after that was Australian.”* As children and adolescents spend the majority of their day in school, the school environment provides an important context for them to meet and interact with other people from different races and ethnic groups. Through their stories, it appears that the participants’ choice of friends was largely dependent on the demographics of the student population. Attending the same primary school, Ashley and Emma shared that they had mainly White friends because the school had few Vietnamese students. As Ashley recounts, *“in primary school, I was closer to Italians because be my primary school is actually full of Italians, and there were few Vietnamese people, so I was closer to Italians.”*

On the contrary, Debbie’s first friend in primary school was Asian. She described her primary school as having a big Vietnamese community; *“So in primary school, there were lots of Asian kids. My first friend was Asian, she was Vietnamese too [laughs] I had more Asian friends cause it was an Asian school.”*

A common theme was that choice of friends was not determined by race or ethnicity. As Phuong described,

In Year 8 to 9, it was all the same to me. I didn’t really care. To be honest, my circle of friends was quite small, there was limited to about four to five of us. It was mixed - one other Asian guy, couple of White guys and a Sri Lankan. It was really funny though, we used to be like hell racist to each other. Obviously because we don’t care and obviously cause we’re all friends. I mean, I didn’t care. I didn’t see it as a race thing – I mean I knew everybody in the year, I was friends with everybody in class.

It is interesting that Phuong described that amongst his friends, they would be “hell racist” yet “don’t care”; perhaps their “racist” comments were based on

physical visible differences, rather than the meaning of their ethnic differences. I propose that this disregard for ethnicity in choosing one's friends reflects the first status in Phinney's (1989) ethnic identity development model, unexamined, which is characterised by a lack of ethnic identity exploration. Children at this stage of ethnic identity development display a lack of interest in ethnicity, with minimal exploration of the meaning of their ethnicity. It also includes those with views based on the opinions of others, and may not have adopted positive ethnic attitudes from family or other adults. They may also have no clear personal understanding of their own ethnicity, and may show a preference for the majority group. However, according to Phinney, a preference for the majority may not be a necessary characteristic of this stage. The young person may simply not be interested in ethnicity and may not have given it much thought. Alternatively, he or she may have absorbed positive ethnic attitudes from their elders and therefore may not show a preference for the majority group (Phinney). As such, it may be possible that their disregard for ethnicity in choosing friends is a reflection of this.

This stage is believed to continue until the individual realises that he or she is simultaneously a member of two cultures, and particularly, of a minority group. It is posited that this realisation transpires as they enter high school, and their choice of friends by ethnicity is a reflection of this second status of ethnic identity development. As the participants moved from primary school into high school, they started having more Vietnamese friends. As Long shared, *“all my friends in primary school were multicultural, Aboriginal and all that, but once I hit high school, I just, I leaned towards the Asians, where all the Asians were hanging, so you have to follow them a little bit.”*

This was echoed in Nick's narrative,

I hung out with mainly White people until Year 10 and then after that I hung out with Asians [pause] I don't know. You're just Asian, so you tend to stick together more. But maybe in Year 7 actually, that's when things started, you start seeing things differently. Yeah, Year 7, that's when there was distinct Asians vs. Caucasians, and then when we'd play soccer at lunchtime, we're like Asian team vs. Caucasian

team. Yeah that's when the split started happening. Before that, everyone got along with everyone.

In his narrative, Nick identifies his Asianness, and how it determined his choice of friends. This perhaps reflects the second status, moratorium, of Phinney's (1989) ethnic identity development model. The second status of exploration or moratorium is characterized by an increasing awareness of one's ethnicity and active involvement in meaning-making, but with a lack of commitment. It typically involves a period of immersion in one's own culture through activities such as reading about one's culture, talking to people, and participating in ethnic cultural activities. I posit that seeking peers of the same ethnicity is a means of exploring one's ethnic identity.

I argue that the choice of friends and the progression from having predominantly White friends in primary school to developing closer friendships with Vietnamese or Asians in High school is indicative of one's exploration of one's identity. As Martin reflected, "*It all changes when you get to high school because that's when you start becoming yourself. You know how, when you're young, you'd just hang out with anyone. As you get older you start to have your own identity.*" Perhaps having friends of the same ethnicity is not only an expression of ethnic identity, but a means of exploration. Previous literature has suggested that the extent of social interaction spent with peers from one's own group is an influence on ethnic identity. Alba (1990) suggested that social interaction can provide a means by which ethnicity is expressed and experienced, and social interaction with same-ethnic peers is likely to reinforce ethnic identity. In Phinney and colleagues' (2001) study of influences on ethnic identity, they found that interactions with same-ethnic peers were significantly related to ethnic identity. It is possible that in seeking peers from one's own ethnicity, the participants were unconsciously exploring his/her ethnic identity.

Interestingly, demographics of the student population continued to be identified as a factor in choice of friends in high school. Studies have shown that school ethnic diversity consistently promotes cross-race friendships (DuBois & Hirsch, 1990; Phinney et al, 1997; Quillan & Campbell, 2003).

Moreover, Joyner and Kao (2000) found that when students did not have any one of the same race to interact with, they were compelled to interact with other races. Self-described as “Aussie” in high school, Thai shared, “*It was always mixed in my school anyway, it was never a pre-dominant Asian or pre-dominant White group.*” Similarly, Martin shared that because his school was multicultural it probably made a difference in his choice of friends.

I'm sure there were a lot of schools that were pre-dominantly Viet so you'd just hang with Viets. I heard that Perth Technical was full of Viets and the Viets would hang with Viets and they would speak Viet during lunch. We always heard that they were really fobby. Like Perth Technical is fobby, they don't even care to speak English. So I think for me, I'm pretty happy that I went to a non-fobby school cause it helps, then you're a bit more open to everything, otherwise I'd probably be hanging with Viets, and first of all not speak proper English, and be in fights and that just because of influence? I'd say in high school it was half Asian and half Australian. Yeah, so in a group of like, cause we always hung in groups for fun, so maybe ten guys, five would be Asian, mostly Vietnamese and the other five would be Australian. Yeah, it was good, everyone did get along. There wasn't any racism at all and I think it's the school, cause I heard it's pretty bad in other schools. So none of us got picked on which is pretty good, but like, we, cause in the 80s there was a lot more racism so we'd get picked on outside of school, like at the bus stop you'd get random White kids going “ching chong” and all that crap, but in the school itself, there was none of that crap, so it probably made such a difference going to a school like that.

Conversely, James shared, “*The high school I went to was very ... people were in their own groups. White people in their group, Asians would be in their own group, it wasn't very multicultural as well. So it was quite racist or discriminatory.*”

Interestingly, participants that hailed from the same school and from the same year described school demographics differently. Some participants shared that

they had more Australian friends because their school had very few Vietnamese. Yet, other participants had more Vietnamese friends for the very same reason – that there were very few Vietnamese. Attending Riverdale High School, Ashley shared,

In high school, most of my friends were Vietnamese. I mean, it was a pretty Italian school, but our year was good, we got along with everyone. It was good. But obviously, we had our own group, and were known as the Asians. We'd get along, we'd get go out with other groups as well, but we were obviously closer to our own group.

Also from Riverdale High School, Simone shared, “*It's quite odd. In high school, I went to Riverdale High School, just down the road, and it was mainly Italians and Europeans, there wasn't many Asians, and my group was Australians or Italians.*” Hailing from the same school, Simone chose to interact more with non-Vietnamese while Ashley had a pre-dominantly Vietnamese circle of friends. With the same school demographics, what then prescribed their choice of friends? It is conceivable that Simone's choice of peers was dictated by her parents,

My parents didn't encourage me to have Vietnamese friends, cause they knew Vietnamese people would compare everything. So growing up having Australian friends, they were probably happy about that as long as I didn't mix with the wrong crowd, like the druggie Australians, they were ok with it.

Reflecting on his choice of friends, Thai shared that while most of his friends were White in high school, his friends are now pre-dominantly Asian.

I was always in a mixed group in high school. There were Asian groups but I was like an Aussie in high school basically. I think it's because I grew up here. In high school I was never that Asian, I was more Aussie. And I don't see anything wrong with hanging out with White people, but I'm not close to my White friends anymore. I don't know, after high school, just different career paths and didn't have time to catch up and stuff. You meet different friends and different

groups. My close friends are pre-dominantly Asian now. [pause] Hmm, why do I hang out with Asians more now? It's pretty weird. [pause] I think I feel more Asian now, that's mainly because of my job. Because I work in an Asian environment, so I'm more Asian.

Pausing to contemplate his choice of friends, it is conceivable that Thai's exploration of ethnic identity was largely unconscious. Thai's narrative suggests that reflecting Phinney's (1989) second status of moratorium, he explored his identity as an Australian in high school, and continued to explore his identity as a Vietnamese when he started work. His narrative also highlights the social construction of his ethnic identity and the importance of context and situation in the negotiation of one's identity; surrounded by White Australians whilst in high school, Thai's Australian identity was more salient. Comparatively, Thai now works in a predominantly Asian environment and has more Asian peers, which has brought his Vietnamese identity to the foreground. His narrative also it highlights how identity development is an ongoing cycle that extends throughout the lifetime, with many new periods of exploration, revisioning and remaking of the individual's identity (Parham, 1989; Yip et al, 2006).

Reflecting the third status of ethnic identity development, where a secure ethnic identity is achieved, James shared

When you get a little more mature, I think you just start going off to your group, people that you're familiar with. After high school, we tend to move into just the Vietnamese and Chinese, the Vietnamese and Chinese have similar cultures, so yeah. I also noticed that as you get older you get more distant from your White friends, I think because of the cultural difference? Like the way we treat each other, I notice with us Asians, we treat each other more like family with our friends. With Western people, it's more just themselves. They'd be friends but they won't give themselves like family, compared to us. That's one difference. For me, I don't tend to be friends with people I don't trust.

Most of the participants reported that their current social circle consists of predominantly Vietnamese or at least Asian peers. Nick's closest friends are now mostly Vietnamese, and are friends from primary school that he has known from most of his life. He too shared that it is because *"I've known these boys our whole lives and we've basically like done stuff together our whole lives."* Similarly, Mai shared, *"I only have the same group since high school. So I only still have five or six friends and probably two, three of them are Vietnamese, one is half. So three and a half. Yeah."* However, all the participants asserted that their choice of friends was not based on ethnicity despite having pre-dominantly Vietnamese friends. Many of the participants continue to have friends from other ethnicities; as Mark shared, *"I mean I hang out with my work colleagues, they're mixed races, South Africans, Indians, Chinese, Aussies, Italians, yeah. I mean, with my circle of friends there are different tiers, there's a different order."*

Similarly, despite a core group of Vietnamese friends, Long shared *"I've got Chinese friends, I've got Italian, Macedonian, I've got yeah, I've got friends from pretty much every culture. And my school was Aboriginal, like full of Aboriginals, and I've got a lot of Aboriginal friends and all that."* This is consistent with previous scholarship that indicate that second-generation Asian Americans generally prefer co-ethnic friendships to non-ethnic friendships, but continue to maintain social interactions with White Americans (Hong & Min, 1999; Kibria, 1997; Min & Choi, 1993).

While schools and the work environment influence contact and availability, it may be that the quality of one's friendship is determined by more than ethnic composition. As friendships mature, shared interests, language and identity play a more significant role. Sharing common values was identified as a reason for having more close Vietnamese friends than White friends by many of the participants. In exploring her choice of friends, Debbie shared,

I think I get along with them better? I don't know why. We have more things in common. I think cause we have the same beliefs, we have the same views on things. Like our family, we value our family more. Like White people, they grow up, they move out, they don't really

care about their family. We always have a family day that we'll always have for our family, and we'll always have that in our minds and we'll always talk about it. Loyalty? I think I find my friends more loyal? Like I see with my White friends, they become close and then drift apart and become close to someone else, like with us, we stick together, we're supportive. Yeah, that's what I see.

The loyalty and deep friendship shared between Vietnamese persons is consistent with existing research; as Henkin and Nguyen write (1981), friendships without commitment is not uncommon in American society, but is less frequent in Vietnamese society where friendships usually involve deep engagement. Friendships formed within Vietnamese communities tend to be long-lived, durable and demanding of understandings. Another common theme in the participants' stories is a common understanding of what it is like to be Vietnamese, and that Australians just don't "get it". As shared by Ashley,

I guess it's like, you have more things in common, you understand each a bit more because of the culture, and yeah, I think that's why we were a bit closer. Like you know, your parents won't let you go out because you have to study, and some other cultures won't understand fully, but a Vietnamese family would. So that's why like when we joke around about this and that, our childhood, some people would be just like "what?" but then again we get it, cause we all experienced the same thing.

Similarly for Emma, she shared that her Vietnamese friends understand her better than her White friends,

I think it is because of the way my parents treat me, so it's easier for them to understand. For instance, when mum doesn't let me do something, like she won't let me go clubbing, White people don't get it, whereas Asians tend to get that problem because their parents want them to study. Same with studying, Asian parents tell their kids to study more, and White people don't understand that, whereas Asian kids understand that. I don't know whether I get along because

they understand me because they're Vietnamese or because we just get click. So you know, I have White friends and I talk to them and we click as well, so it's not just a Vietnamese thing, but there are certain things like dealing with my mom and stuff that I talk to with my Vietnamese friends, and they understand where I'm coming from whereas my White friends don't. But in regards to everything else, it's the same. If that makes sense?

Interestingly, only the female participants identified that the ability to share problems as a factor in their choice of close friends. Perhaps it is because as females, they are subject to more rules and regulations. Or perhaps it is because their ethnic identity is more salient and they identify strongly with Vietnamese values? As Thi laments, *"I mean we try, we try to have White friends, but when it comes to family problems or like something bad, they just think, all they ever say is 'why don't you move out?' They don't understand it's not an easy thing to just move out in Vietnamese world."* I put forward that the narratives suggest the identification of common values and shared beliefs is an acknowledgement of one's own cultural values and beliefs. Moreover, the recognition of similar values, and choosing friends based on values is a reflection of one's ethnic identity, and specifically, a reflection of an achieved ethnic identity.

It is interesting that most of the participants say "I don't know" when reflecting on their choice of friends. Many of the participants asserted that their choice of friends was not based on ethnicity, but on common values and how well they got along with them. Perhaps this group of second generation Vietnamese youth may not consciously choose their friends based on ethnicity because of the salience of both their Vietnamese and Australian identities. As Thi reflected,

I guess the White people are less judgmental. The White people – I sound racist. [laughs] With them, they're more carefree, and you just have fun and do what you want and nobody really cares. Whereas with the Asians, you have to watch what you say, what you do, and people will start talking, drama here, drama there. But then now, I

feel like everybody's like that. Everyone can be judgmental and it depends who your friends are. And yeah, I just stopped hanging out with people who talk too much and judge. I just hang out with the carefree people now. Yeah, just whoever doesn't judge me for who I am or where I am right now. [So it's never been because of ethnicity?] No, never. Cause I'm Aussie and I'm Asian."

It is interesting that Phil, who identifies very strongly as being Vietnamese shared that he only had Asian friends. Only able to speak Vietnamese when he first arrived in Australia at age six, his best friend in primary school was also Vietnamese. He shared that he continued to only have Asian friends, despite going to a high school with very few Vietnamese;

Well in high school, the whole year there's only like two or three Vietnamese out of the whole year. Yeah, there were a lot of White friends in my school, but outside of high school, my friends were all Asians. It's just that I don't want to hang around with them. It's like I'm Asian, I only hang around with Asians, like everyone you see in my Facebook that you see is White, they're mostly all from high school, the rest is all Asian. My next door neighbour went to Riverdale High School, it was full of Viets and I didn't know, and when I was in primary school my mom said "I want you to go to Riverdale High School and I said 'nah, they wear those gay as uniforms, I don't like it'" and by Year 10 I was like, damn, I regret it, I should have gone there, I should have gone to Riverdale High School cause there were so many Vietnamese.

It is interesting that he regretted his choice of high school based on the lack of Vietnamese students within the school population. It is plausible that his ethnic identification as a Vietnamese person was intensified because he was one of the few Vietnamese persons in his high school. Put another way, his status as an ethnic minority in high school increased the salience of his ethnic identity. In addition, Phil's identity as a Vietnamese person may be more salient because he was born in Vietnam and arrived in Perth at a later age; he was also socialized in Vietnam prior to growing up in Australia. As a

reflection of his ethnic identity, Phil only has Vietnamese friends. As he commented, “*I just never liked any Whites. It’s just that we don’t ... not the same topic sort of thing...*”

In contrast, Sue, who identifies strongly as Australian shared that most of her friends are White, and that she is more comfortable with non-Vietnamese as compared to Asians;

I grew up with Western people most of my life, I wasn’t around a lot of Asians cause my parents were like involved in a lot of business that were with Western people, and we don’t have a lot of family members here either, so we just picked up friends as neighbours or through business. And then in High school I was the only Asian in my year. But I like it, I don’t mind it. I think my perspective of the crowd of people that I like to hang out with do change from it, cause say sometimes when I start hanging around a lot of Asians, I’m like “em I feel uncomfortable” it’s as if it’s not my crowd of people. I’m definitely more comfortable with Western people, cause you grow up and you like learn or pick up, adapt to their jokes and their way of thinking, and their way of living, and here comes in the one or two Asians who look at you and they’re like “I don’t know what you mean by that” and I don’t know your little jokes and stuff. My best friend is Italian actually, but mostly Westerns. I do have occasional friends, so only when I do have parties or birthdays, then I go and celebrate with my Asian friends. Yeah, I kinda just like know friends of friends. I didn’t immediately meet an Asian friend and became friends. Not that I have anything against them, they’re just different. But yeah, movies, hang outs, chill outs, mostly Western friends.

It is conceivable that Sue has predominantly White Australian friends because she identifies strongly as an Australian; that is, her choice of friends is indeed a reflection of her identity as an Australian. Alternatively, it may be that Sue identifies strongly as an Australian because she is surrounded by White Australian peers; that is, her peer relationships have contributed to the negotiation of her identity. It needs to be acknowledged that Sue does have

Vietnamese friends, and does not deny her Vietnamese heritage. I posit that this is also a reflection of the multiple dimensions to her ethnic identity; she has Australian friends because she is Australian, and has Vietnamese friends because she is Vietnamese. In contemplating the participants' narrative, I wondered if possessing a different sense of humour or thought process is an extension of one's ethnic identity; just as Sue is uncomfortable with Asians, Phil is uncomfortable with White Australians because they have different perspectives.

Interestingly, some of the participants shared that many of their friends were from Vietnamese Church, Temple or Vietnamese school. As proposed earlier in Chapter Five, Vietnamese Church and School serves as a means for ethnic socialization. Perhaps attending Vietnamese school served not only to preserve the Vietnamese culture in terms of language and values, but also in providing a platform for Vietnamese children to make friends within their own culture. As Emma shared,

The people that I do hang out with, they're from Church. But some of them aren't, like the Asian friends that I've made, they're all one big group and it just happens to be that some of them are from the Vietnamese Church that I went to school with, so yeah.

Similarly for Long,

My core group of friends now is all Vietnamese. I spent a lot of my teen years, my younger years in a youth group, a Buddhist youth group? And everyone there was Vietnamese and I hung around them and then they became my core group of friends, so yeah.

In exploring their choice of friends, the conversation inadvertently veered to choice of romantic partners. While Simone shares that she gets along better with Australians, she would rather not date a White Australian ;

That's the thing, I think their values are, I don't know, we always talk about this because my group of friends, one has dated an Australian and that didn't work, I think due to his morals and values. So even

though I'm definitely more attracted to Australians, I don't think realistically it'd work out that well, just because you'd find with a lot of Australians, they don't really value or respect their parents and that's the downside to them. And with religion, you don't find many that are religious. They just don't care, or they actually have no religion. They don't want to be religious... Personal thing, I think. I really think that family's important. If they're not close to their family and they don't respect their family, I don't think, then that's something, that's a really, really important value, so if you don't agree on something like that, it's going to cause a lot of problems in the future.

In her narrative, Simone highlights the importance of congruent values and practices in choosing one's partner. I put forward that the choice of romantic partner may be a reflection of one's ethnic identity; because Simone subscribes to traditional Vietnamese values, she would like to date someone who embraces the same values. This was echoed in Mark's narrative;

Honestly, I wouldn't date a White chick. No. Just cause there's a whole different set of values. I guess I don't know what would be different actually, but all I know is that I wouldn't marry an Aussie girl. At this stage, I mean who knows, in the future it might be different, but at this stage I wouldn't. And I don't know what it is, maybe cause I see the majority of my White friends and I see the way they act and it just turns me off as a girlfriend. They're not very caring or nurturing, not very respectful. They don't conform to my idea of a girlfriend. I want someone, I wouldn't say subservient, but gives you that respect that you rightfully deserve as a man. On the street, I mean at home, if they walk all over you that's fine, that's at home, but in the street, if she walks alongside me she has to give me that face in front of my friends, in front of everybody else. I am the man. But at home she can beat me up I don't care. I can do the dishes, I do that at home. But on the street than the status has to be defined as I'm the patriarch.

On the other hand, Nick has dated White Australians previously and would not preclude dating another non-Vietnamese in future. Interestingly, Nick acknowledges that there is indeed a difference in cultural practices between Caucasians and himself, yet does not believe that this difference to be a problem. It is plausible that there is more to a relationship than having similar cultures, and being aware of other cultures. He shared,

I wouldn't mind. I find that there is a big difference in culture. I find Caucasians very naïve about their own culture and Asian culture. Whereas we know lots of different cultures but they don't. So yeah, I don't mind mixed relationships... I just find it weird but it wasn't an issue.

Similarly, Lisa had been in a previous relationship with a non-Vietnamese, and was dating another non-Vietnamese man at the time of the interview. She shared,

My boyfriend is Australian, and there's a lot of things that I've noticed is quite different, so even though my parents are Westernised it's still different from my boyfriend's family. Like, for example, he has a brother, and he saw him last week and it was probably the first time in months. Do you know what I mean? Whereas I'm at my brother's house like three days a week. So that's one thing. He sees my brother more than he sees his own brother because I'll tell him to come with me.

When they go out to dinner and stuff with the family, everyone has to pay separately. And that's just really strange to me, cause my family like, either one person pays for it or... pretty much one person pays for it all. You don't normally split the bill I mean like, if you do it's because the other person doesn't have much money and you just pay whatever. But yeah, usually when we go out with my family, one person pays for it all, so when we're out with his family, I saw that and I was like "oh yeah that's different." Even though he lives at home still, he has to buy everything for himself, and he doesn't pay

board or anything like that. But his car, he had to buy it himself, he works for his dad but he still has to be on wages and do you know what I mean? His parents would cook for him during the week, but when it comes to the weekend and they're buying take out, they won't buy it for him? He'd have to go buy it himself? Just little things like that. Like, at first I was like "oh okay..." but now I get where they're coming from.

What else can I think of? Family holidays, if we go together, my parents pay and he thinks that's so wrong. He's like you have to pay for yourself and things like that. But I'm like "I really can't afford to, I'm still at uni, how can I pay for a Europe trip?" so he doesn't get angry at me but he'll be like "you can't keep doing that, that's something you've got to grow up." It's different, he thinks I'm spoon-fed. But next year I said, go on a holiday with me, and he said I'll go with you if you pay for yourself, and not take money from your mom. And I'm like "I can't do that... but ok" [laughs] I think that's the main thing. Money, they deal with money quite differently, they're not as close. Yeah like everything's really separate, if I buy something for his mom, she's always like "oh I'll give you the money for it" and I'm like don't worry about it. But she thinks I'm really nice, but it's the way you do things, cause especially like sometimes I stay over and I feel bad. So I try and buy groceries and things like that.

It is interesting that in spite of the differences in values and family practices, both Nick and Lisa are accepting of these incongruities. Perhaps socialised to Australian cultural values and practices from a young age, the participants are aware and accepting of cultural differences. It is also acknowledged that differences in values and practices are not solely determined by ethnicity; an acceptance of differing values may translate across ethnicities and backgrounds. I put forward that if one's choice of friends is not solely determined by ethnicity, then it is a safe assumption that one's choice of dating partners would not be. As Lisa shared, *"In primary school and stuff, my best friend was Polish and the other was Australian. It's not like out of*

nowhere I brought home a White guy, you know, no, it's been my whole life as well."

Summing it up

This chapter has explored the phases the participants moved through as they negotiated an ethnic identity. Many of the participants identified a period of exploration as they entered high school, characterised for some by a period of Asian pride. For other participants, high school was a period when they were "Aussie". This is consistent with existing studies (Kibria, 2000; Kim, 1981; Lee, 1998; Phinney, 1989, 1990) that postulate a period of exploration during adolescence. In the next phase of their ethnic identity negotiation, the participants' narratives indicated that they currently identify as both Australian and Vietnamese. Contrary to existing literature that suggest immigrant youth never perceive to be completely part of the dominant society (Kim, 1981; Thai, 1999), the findings from the present study indicate that the participants believe they are Australian, and that they belong in Australia. Moreover, in contrast with previous research, the participants' narratives suggest that their ethnic identity exploration was relatively conflict-free.

In the section "Social Network Composition", I explored how the participants' choice of friends reflected the phases in their negotiation of an ethnic identity. Specifically, how it appeared to reflect Phinney's (1989) model of ethnic identity development. The participants' narratives suggested that as they entered primary school, they were in the unexamined status of ethnic identity, and their choice of friends was not determined by ethnicity. As they moved into the second status of moratorium, the participants developed more friendships with other Vietnamese youth. I argued that this reflects an exploration of their Vietnamese identity, as well as providing another means for exploration. Finally, as they negotiate an achieved ethnic identity, or identities, the participants' social network now consists of peers from different ethnicities. The participants' narratives suggested that their choice of friends is not informed by ethnicity, but by shared cultural values and practices. However, most of the participants have pre-dominantly Vietnamese friends, suggesting the salience of their Vietnamese identity. The importance of

common values in forming friendships was also found to spill over into informing their choice of romantic partner for some participants; Simone shared that it was important to her that her partner embraced the same values as she did. In contrast, Nick and Lisa are more accepting of differences in values between their partner and them; perhaps there exists other factors that contribute to a romantic relationship.

The participants' narratives suggest that the Vietnamese population is non-homogenous; their narratives have made reference to "fobs" and "being fobby". The next chapter explores this in more depth. The seemingly different profile of the participants' younger siblings further suggests that the Vietnamese population in Perth is not homogenous. The next chapter also explores how the stories shared by this group of second generation Vietnamese youth suggest that the Vietnamese population is indeed on an upwards trajectory.

Chapter Seven: Incidental Findings

I embarked on the research journey seeking to explore the ethnic identity negotiation of the second generation Vietnamese young person in Perth. The previous chapters have explored the familial and social lived experiences of this group of youth and how these experiences relate to the process and content of their ethnic identity negotiation. Along the journey, it transpired that the Vietnamese population in Perth is not a homogenous one. The participants' stories also lead me to believe that Perth's Vietnamese population is indeed on an upwards trajectory. This chapter aims to explore these emergent themes in further detail.

The Vietnamese in Perth: A non-homogenous community?

From the participants' narratives, it is apparent that the Vietnamese community in Perth is not a homogenous group. In their narratives, the participants make frequent references to "fobs" and "being fobby". A colloquial term referring to "fresh off the boat", "fob" does not necessarily refer to one's actual immigration status or how one entered Australia, but to one who is perceived as "too traditional". Referring to those who retain cultural values or behaviours that are not "Australian", it generally has a negative connotation. On the opposite end of the social spectrum are "whitewashed" adolescents; those perceived to be too "Australian" or too "White". Being whitewashed, too, generally holds negative connotations. In fact, when seeking referrals for participants, some participants suggested that I speak to a particular friend "because he's whitewashed". Strangely enough, no one suggested a "fobby" friend.

In the middle of the social spectrum are the adolescents who balance both Vietnamese and Australian cultures. Through their narratives, it appears that most of the participants in this study sit comfortably within this category - even those participants that were referred by their friends for being whitewashed. In exploring the determinants of these social markers, the

participants referred to language style and behaviour as delineation of cultural boundaries. As Long laughingly described,

They just don't respect the culture of the country they live in... My mom's still a fob, because like in Vietnam or Hong Kong, you can go out and you can just chuck rubbish on the ground. If they can do it, why can't you. That's what I hate about my mom, she'd eat something and chuck it on the ground. The clothes they wear -rags. Their accent, you can tell they haven't been in Australia for long. I can spot a Vietnamese fob from miles away.

Similarly, Mark described being fobby as “*speaking with an accent, dressing like a fob: white pants. Or black. For both girls and guys... Girls – boob tube and you know those flared slacks? Those black flared slacks?*” The accent-tinged English spoken by “fobs” was also identified by Nick, who shared,

Their English is really bad. It's just funny, the way they speak. I think they should learn to speak much better, because they're in another country so they should respect that country's values. And they'd probably get further in life if they choose to live in a Western country. I think it's very important to adapt. So if I'm living in China, then my main priority is to learn to speak Chinese very well.

In their study of language and style choices amongst Hmong adolescents in America, Nguyen and Brown (2010) found that the boundaries of identity archetypes (e.g. fob, whitewashed) are policed by the youth themselves, relegating those who violate these boundaries to lower social status among peers. Their findings suggest that language choice is a representation of the ethnic self, while style is a presentation of the self. By cultivating meaning ascribed to language and style, adolescents are active agents in constructing their own identity. Nguyen and Brown suggest that individuals are viewed as having personal agency in making style choices, rather than displaying style behaviours out of ethnic group obligation. In other words, one's style is determined by personal likes or dislikes, rather than because one is

Vietnamese. As such, style is regarded as a social identity marker and used as such by adolescents to delineate popularity and peer group types.

While the participants laugh at fobs and do admittedly relegate them to lower social standing, they express an understanding of why they are fobs. Rather than it being a conscious decision to act or sound like a fob, the participants believed that a lack of adaptation to the Australian culture is to blame. As Long shared,

It's not really their fault, you know. They've come over in their teens, and they're not going to know the Western culture, they don't know what it's like. So all they know is to go by what they know and keep going with it. That's all. I think they should adapt a bit more to the Western culture when they're here cause you know, it's the Western world.

Similarly, Martin shared that he did not believe there was anything wrong with being a fob.

It's just that some of the guys choose not to adapt and I think because there are some Viet communities in Perth, of course it's always easier to just not try. Cause even in Curtin, if you're like a Business student but you're European, you might be the only person from Estonia so you would try and speak English, if you're Asian you're going to be able to find other Asians that speak your language and you can just stick to your language. And I think that's an Asian thing, because Asians are everywhere, you can easily find someone to team up with and not have to adapt because you can still be yourself. Whereas other cultures, they have to.

In addition to the social spectrum that ranges from the “fobs” to the “whitewashed”, the homogeneity of the Vietnamese community is affected by a seemingly different profile of the younger Vietnamese youth. Some of the participants shared that their younger siblings have adopted different values and practices. Five of the 20 participants have considerably younger siblings, and shared that their parents are more lenient with their younger siblings. In

fact, the participants were responsible for their youngest siblings and were required to raise them on behalf of their parents. Twelve years older than her youngest sister, Thi shared,

She was basically brought up by us, cause we were older and our parents got really busy with work, so they relied on us to bring her up. But she's also really lazy. Because of the age gap, she has nobody to encourage her, to go to school, have fun at school. Whereas we had each other, we loved school, going to school, because we all went together, and she has nobody and she's just by herself, so she wants to be like us, she wants to be old already. She doesn't like school, she's really lazy, she's really stupid. She's not learning or wanting to learn. We keep telling her, back when we were in school, we loved school, we were really good at school, it was awesome. And she's like "meh". Each generation gets lazier and dumber because they're enjoying this awesome life that they're having. They don't know anything about hardship, they're born into good lives. It's only the kids that aren't having it so good that are studying. My brother and sister went to uni, they got a car each. I didn't go to uni, I didn't get a car. So yeah, we had to work for our stuff. And now my little sister, my dad tried to use that against her the other day "oh if you get into uni, I'll get you a really nice car." And she just turned around and says "I don't want a car, why do I want a car for." She's got real attitude. It's so "oh my god" I want to hit her.

Similarly, sounding bitter about the different treatment that her sister receives from her parents, Mai shared,

I remember when I was her age, there was no such thing as going to the TV when you go home. It's straight to the shower, have your shower and then do whatever you want. She sits there, watches TV till 5pm, and then she has her shower. And then, not just that, she asks her dad to shower her, for God's sake.

Thirteen years apart, Mai believes that her sister has been spoilt by her parents, receiving everything that she asks for. Hating her sister for what she terms a “channelling of resources”, Mai shared a typical conversation with her parents,

I never got that when I was young. And they'd be like “well, we were poor, you got to understand” and I do understand, and now it's like ‘We're not poor now, so everything she gets, does that mean I get now? It's like she gets piano lessons, does that mean I get piano lessons?’ They go “Yeah you can. But you pay for it yourself.” Like “why? She's your daughter. I'm your daughter.” It doesn't make sense.

Without interviewing the younger siblings or their parents, it is impossible to draw a conclusion on the reasons for the differential treatment. However, it is possible that as their parents acculturated to the Australian culture, they changed their parenting styles and have become more lenient with the laterborn children. Moreover, the improvement in finances has allowed the participants' parents to spend more time with the laterborn children and cater to their material wants and needs. As Thi lamented, her youngest sister is lazy because she did not experience the same financial hardships as Thi and her other siblings did. Similarly, Vuong believed that his brother had it “easy” compared to his own “tough” childhood. He shared,

Well it was easier, our situation changed. Before, if I even wanted something I had to work very hard for it. Well our motives are different as well. For me, because I've been working, so I can see the point of making a lot of money and how to make a lot of money. But for him, he's still lost. He's back where I was before, but at least now, he's got me to tell him what's going on. Before, I didn't have anyone. So it's a bit different.

This is echoed by Phil,

Like my mom right now, she says to my little sister, if you get into uni, she will get you a car, \$40 000 and below. And \$10 000 spending money. I give her \$2000. That's like \$52 000 just to get your ass in

uni. And I didn't even get that. My sister didn't get that. I guess it's cause my family is wealthy now. Not wealthy, but better than the first few years when we first came here.

The diffused discipline and expectations then raises the question, “would the relaxed and reduced discipline result in a “lazy” generation, as described by the participants?” In turn, would there be less social mobility in the next generation of Vietnamese youth in Australia? As the parents and older siblings become more “Australian”, these laterborn siblings may have a reduced likelihood of learning traditional ethnic culture. While this present study has identified facets of the ethnic identity negotiation of this group of second generation Vietnamese youth in Perth, it is recognised that it is not representative of all Vietnamese youth. This is especially salient in light of the non-homogeneity of the Vietnamese community in Perth, and especially, the Vietnamese community in Australia.

It is possible that I may have captured a group of second generation Vietnamese youth that whilst different from the demographics previously captured in existing literature, are also different from the upcoming generation of young Vietnamese persons – the youth who are currently teenagers and still in high school. Perhaps being born while their parents were still struggling has influenced their ethnic identity formation, and their desire to succeed; the gratitude they have for the sacrifices their parents made are still foremost in their minds as they witnessed the struggles. Future research exploring the lived experiences of the new younger Vietnamese persons in Australia may be valuable in informing social work and social policy needs to ensure that the needs of this new cohort are met. Nevertheless, the participants’ narratives suggest that the Vietnamese population in Perth are indeed on an upwards trajectory; this is explored in the next section.

The Vietnamese in Perth: On an Upwards Trajectory?

The narratives from this group of second generation Vietnamese youth suggest that the Vietnamese community in Perth is indeed on an upward trajectory. As previously mentioned in Chapter Two, existing literature from the 1990s

suggested that the second generation Vietnamese youth in Australia may face considerable nutritional, educational, economic and social disadvantages due to the low levels of income in Vietnamese families (Thomas, 1999). However, findings from this study demonstrate otherwise. The youth interviewed are either tertiary educated, work in a professional setting, or are business owners. Contrary to available statistics, the participants not only speak fluent English but also identify English as their first language, and their families are seemingly above the low income bracket. It is evident that existing scholarship and available statistics do not depict an accurate picture of the Vietnamese community in Perth today.

Reflecting the same determination they expect from their children, the Vietnamese immigrants in Australia have not only found employment but have climbed out of the poverty that once characterised them. It may be noteworthy that the Australian Bureau of Statistics has stopped collecting statistics specific to the Vietnamese population in Australia; the lack of recent statistics may be recognition of their upward trajectory. Indeed, the absence of professional Vietnamese organisations is indicative of the successful migration and integration of the Vietnamese community in Perth. Unlike the other Australian states where there are numerous health services and professional organisations dedicated to the Vietnamese community, Perth does not appear to have such services. The lack of Vietnamese professional organisations or health services dedicated to the Vietnamese community in Perth may be an indication of their successful acculturation; if it is not present, it implies that it is not needed.

Moreover, today's second generation Vietnamese youth appear dissimilar to the delinquent Vietnamese young person as portrayed by the media. Although I started my research journey wanting to explore the relationship between self-concept and anti-social behaviour in Vietnamese youth in Australia, it was not my intention to explore delinquency in any detail after I embarked on this particular journey. Nevertheless, the topic was inadvertently raised as we chatted about their memories of high school. Based on a different demographic of Vietnamese youth, the cohort of Vietnamese adolescents that

contributed to the stereotype are not only older than the participants of the present study, they would have arrived in Australia at an older age. As Martin described the Spider boys (a gang of Vietnamese youth),

Some of the guys that I knew from Greenwood, they were part of the whole Spider gang and all that. So those guys who were a few years older than me weren't born here, they'd come to Australia when they were three or four, five or six and I think that made a big difference. Yeah, I don't think any of those guys were born here. They even stayed back a couple of years and stuff during primary school cause of the English. So it would have been a struggle for them just to learn? So I think there was no motivation, because how can they do well in school if they can't even understand? They're the ones that would have fought all the time, and their English, it makes such a difference and obviously because their English was so shit, coming to Australia, they would have been picked on. Whereas how can we get picked on if we go to a school that's mixed, everyone can speak English. And I think it would have made such a difference that we were born in Australia, so we wouldn't have felt the need to prove ourselves?

Similarly, Nick discussed the Spider Boys and the Dragon Boys (also a gang of Vietnamese youth),

A lot had to do with pride and I guess they didn't value education as much, or they weren't as smart. They just wanted pride about themselves being better, or just respect. Respect from other people. They were in a gang because they knew nothing else. And most of them were born in Vietnam as well, that's the difference. Because we were born here, we're more Westernized, we're not as violent. Yeah, that's the main bit. Most of the kids are born here, they're not as aggressive or violent. All the fights you hear about now on the streets are all fist fights, back then it was knives and stuff. Big difference. The Dragon Boys, and they were even more violent because they grew up in Vietnam till they were teenagers. Whereas the Spiders, they were in their pre-school years. As people became more

Westernized, or were born here, they became less aggressive. Less to prove? Less to fight. Just not the fighting blood.

Identifying the lack of emphasis placed on their education as a cause of delinquency, both Martin and Nick believed that the lack of proficiency in English was one of the main differences between the previous cohort of Vietnamese youth and themselves. Another main difference was place of birth –it was suggested that the anti-social behaviour of the previous cohort of Vietnamese youth stemmed from being born in Vietnam and only arriving in Australia at a later age. Identifying more strongly as Vietnamese, it is possible that acculturation-related variables would have resulted in conflict as they negotiated the two different cultures.

As Martin shared, “*They would have had a lot of Viet pride.*” It is possible that their self-esteem was affected as they found themselves negotiating a different culture, especially when faced with the task of learning a new language. In turn, it may be that engagement in anti-social behaviour buffered their self-esteem. As Martin and Nick noted, the adolescents felt a need to prove themselves and wanted to gain pride or respect from others. This is consistent with previous studies that attribute immigrants’ delinquent behaviour to conflicts that arise between the individuals’ ethnic culture and the host culture. This explanation focuses on a susceptibility to pressures and the internalization of negative stereotypes that prevail in the host society. This in turn would evoke feelings of marginalization and bring about problematic behavioural outcomes (Turjeman, Mesch & Fishman, 2008). Moreover, the discrimination in the 1980’s and 1990’s may have increased the propensity for anti-social behaviour. This is reminiscent of Deng, Kim, Vaughlan and Li’s (2010) study that demonstrated that delinquent behaviour increased when discrimination increased, but only when participants showed high Chinese orientation.

Perhaps the difference in ethnic identification and perception of belonging is why the participants in this present study did not share stories of involvement in delinquent behaviour, and why they differ from Vietnamese immigrants that came before them. Growing up in Perth, and orienting to the Australian culture

from a young age, the participants have a strong sense of belonging to Australia. Identifying strongly as Australian, and Vietnamese, the participants appeared to have negotiated an ethnic identity relatively conflict free. While it is impossible to assume the level of acculturation or ethnic identification in the previous generation of Vietnamese adolescents in Australia, it is proposed that the participants in this present study identify more strongly as Australians than the previous group of Vietnamese youth. Consequently, it is this sense of belonging, and lack of conflict in negotiating an ethnic identity that may explain the lack of anti-social behaviour in this group of Vietnamese youth. Perhaps the diminished presence of Vietnamese youth within the criminal justice system is another marker of successful integration. As Nick described, *“I’ve got the Australian blood. I’ve got better things to do. [laughs]”*

Another marker of successful integration may be the proclivity of intercultural dating. This is contrary to existing research that shows how overseas Chinese community leaders in European countries construe marriages between Chinese and non-Chinese in terms of cultural loss and assimilation (Liang, 2004). Some of the participants have dated outside their culture and have family members that are married to non-Vietnamese persons. As Nick shared, *“My ex-girlfriend is Caucasian, Australian. My cousin is married to a White, Italian girl. My other cousin’s married to an Irish guy and one of my other cousins just got married to an Australian. But they’re very Westernised.”* At the time of the interviews, eight of the participants were in a relationship with non-Vietnamese persons, with four of the eight participants dating White Australians. Thi shared,

My boyfriend now is Eurasian. He’s half-Aussie half Chinese-Malaysian. They’ve [my parents] grown to not care anymore which nationality we date. Yeah. Cause our family, our extended family, our cousins and stuff have different nationality boyfriends, so yeah. They understand they are in Australia, and we do tell them a lot, you can’t live like you’re in Vietnam, because you’re not in Vietnam. We tell them all the time. Like if we don’t want to date a Vietnamese, we’re

not going to date a Vietnamese. They can't force us to date a Vietnamese if we don't want to.

In their narratives of dating outside of their culture, the participants make reference to their families being “Westernized” and hence, accepting of inter-cultural relationships. It is the acceptance of different values, specifically Australian values that have encouraged such relationships. For that reason, I posit that the presence of inter-cultural relationships, in particular between Vietnamese and White Australians, is a marker of the Vietnamese community’s successful acculturation and integration into the dominant Australian society.

It is conceivable that Australia’s multicultural policy has been successful in promoting an ethnically diverse society; in turn, growing up in multicultural Perth has perhaps encouraged successful integration. The changes in both Australia’s official policies and public attitudes towards Asian immigrants since the dismantling of the White Australia policy have been enormous. As a nation, we have moved from an indefensibly racist immigration policy of exclusion of almost all non-White peoples, to one that enshrines the principle of racial non-discrimination at its core (Mackie, 1997). The Hon. Dr. Geoff Gallop, previous Premier of Western Australia in his speech on multiculturalism shared (2003),

Multiculturalism has shaped us as a dynamic, colourful and vibrant society... I think we can be also proud that we live in a relatively peaceful, tolerant multicultural community. Race related violence is rare. Such criminal behaviour is not tolerated under the law or by the vast majority of the community. In our democratic society people are free to be who they are, and who they want to be, within the confines of the law, without fear, harassment or degradation. In our culturally plural society ethnic minorities have the right to celebrate their own culture and practice their own religion.

Berry (1995) emphasized that the process of acculturation and cultural adjustment depends on the larger socioenvironmental context. Specifically, he

predicted that a culture tolerant of cultural diversity would ease the acculturation process for immigrants. Moreover, the meaning of ethnic identity may be shaped by the larger socio-environmental context. In Tsai, Mortensen, Wong and Hess' (2002) study of Asian Americans in Minneapolis and San Francisco, they found that there were greater differences in the meaning of "being American" between Asian Americans and European Americans in the Minneapolis sample than in the San Francisco Bay area sample. This was attributed to the more homogenous mainstream American culture in the Midwest than in San Francisco.

Similarly, Perth has a largely multicultural demographic. As Nick shared, "*Australia is pretty multicultural, so we're very diverse.*" According to the 2011 Census, 40 per cent of respondents in Perth were born overseas, with England, New Zealand, Scotland, South Africa and India being the more common responses (ABS, 2012). In Chapter Five, it was introduced that globalization and advancement of technology may have introduced diasporic cultural practices and identities. That is, the formation of their ethnic identity may have been influenced by the transnational ties maintained by their parents, and further strengthened by practices such as listening and watching Vietnamese shows and movies, regular communication with family in Vietnam over MSN and Skype, and travelling to Vietnam. Although globalization in many ways has shown to change traditional cultural beliefs and everyday practices, at this juncture, I propose that globalization may also introduce other cultures to the dominant culture, in turn encouraging a truly multicultural culture.

Arnett (2002) proposed that many adolescents in today's world of globalization develop a "local" identity based on their indigenous tradition, as well as a "global identity" based on their exposure to a global (often Western) culture conveyed through the media. I put forward that with the growing popularity of Asian popular culture, one's "global" identity may now include more than just Western culture. Rather than only serving to strengthen the ethnic identity of Asian youth, the availability and accessibility of Asian media may modify the "local" identity of other Australian youth. The Deen

nightclub in Perth organizes Japanite, a Japanese themed event regularly; Metro City Club has also successfully organized K-Holic, touted as the biggest K-Pop (Korean pop) party in Perth in September 2012. Most notably, South Korean rapper Psy infiltrated the international music scene with his Korean song Gangnam Style in 2012; not only is it in the Guinness Book of World Records for most “liked” video in YouTube history, the song debuted on various international music charts. Psy’s song also received regular airplay on mainstream Australian radio stations. I propose that this is evidence of globalization changing the dominant Australian identity, and introducing other cultures. That is, if non-English music is played on mainstream Australian radio, it signifies an acceptance of other cultures, and the integration of other cultures in to the Australian culture.

Correspondingly, Bhabha (1993) writes that cultural difference and diversity within a population should be understood as being constructed from a range of different interests, cultural histories, and sexual orientations, and that these cultures and identities are constantly in a state of flux. Rather than conceptualising cultures as binary or dualistic, he introduces the concept of hybridity that is premised on difference and translation of cultures. Bhabha writes that hybridity is the “third space” that enables a new position or expression to emerge. Within this third space,

The concept of a people is not “given” as an essential, class-determined, unitary, homogeneous part of a society prior to a politics; ‘the people’ are there as a process of political articulation and political negotiation across a whole range of contradictory social sites. “The people” always exist as a multiple form of identification, waiting to be created and constructed. (Bhabha, 1990, p.220)

It is also in this third space that new signs of identity and contestations emerge. I propose that this group of second generation Vietnamese youth have constructed Perth to be a third space, facilitating the negotiation of the multiple dimensions to their (ethnic) identity.

Extending the argument of a third space, I argue that Perth's cultural diversity has allowed for the participants to negotiate their ethnic identity relatively conflict-free. Compared to Sydney and Melbourne, Perth has a smaller Vietnamese community. The 2011 Census reports 15 312 persons of Vietnamese ancestry; this is in stark contrast to the 79 410 and 79 353 Vietnamese persons in Sydney and Melbourne respectively (ABS, 2012). Furthermore, without an ethnic enclave such as Cabramatta or Footscray, there is a distinct absence of a strong Vietnamese community or town. As Thomas (1997, p.293) noted, while spatial concentration enables "cultural ties of language and shared interests", there is a risk that living in an ethnic enclave reduces English proficiency, thereby perpetuating disadvantage. Participants shared that they know of Australia-born Vietnamese persons living in Cabramatta who are unable to speak English because they have no need to. Perhaps it is because there is no strong Vietnamese enclave that has "forced" the Vietnamese in Perth to "integrate", and embrace Australian culture; thus identifying as Australian. However, there is a sufficient Vietnamese presence in Perth to encourage the maintenance of their ethnic culture; thus identifying as Vietnamese.

This is reminiscent of Easter, Dinh, McHale and Valsiner's (2009) finding that Vietnamese adolescents who lived outside an ethnic enclave felt neither negatively nor positively towards their identity exploration. This is in stark contrast to the confusion expressed by the adolescents within the enclave as they struggled to balance inputs from multiple influences. Non-enclave participants felt no immediate pressure (internally or externally) during their exploration and hence, may have been able to maintain a more neutral balance (Easter et al, 2009). Expanding on this finding, the narratives from the present study capture adolescents' ethnic identity negotiation from outside an ethnic enclave. Specifically, that it was relatively conflict-free; many of the participants "*don't know why*" they identify as Australian or Vietnamese, suggesting that they were never forced to contemplate their ethnic identity negotiation.

However, it is plausible that because that the participants in the present study did not grow up within any obvious ethnic enclave that their parents emphasised ethnic socialization. As many of the participants shared, they were not only forced to speak Vietnamese at home by their parents, they were also sent to Vietnamese school to learn to speak, read and write Vietnamese. This is reflective of Easter and colleagues' (2009) findings that participants living outside an ethnic enclave were expected by their parents to speak their heritage language at home and associate with Vietnamese people. Utilizing thematic and grounded narrative analysis of journal writings, the authors set out to compare the adaptations of twenty-six adolescents living in the ethnic enclave of Little Saigon in California with twenty "non-enclave" participants (Easter et al, 2009). While six of the 20 adolescents outside the enclave wrote of the specific expectation of speaking Vietnamese at home, none of the "enclave" participants described their parents as making similar demands. The findings are indicative of the extent to which "non-enclave" participants found themselves regularly negotiating explicit directives from their parents about how to properly negotiate an acceptable ethnic identity. This is in contrast to the participants living in the enclave, where such expectancies are more subtle and seldom voiced explicitly (Easter et al, 2009).

Existing literature suggests that non-enclave dwelling promotes integration, and the relinquishing of ethnic cultural values in view of adopting the dominant group's values (Berry et al, 2006; LaFramboise et al, 1993). In contrast, the findings from the present study indicate that the Vietnamese adolescents in Perth continue to embrace values from their cultural heritage despite concomitantly adopting Australian cultural practices. The participants' narratives demonstrate that they continue to uphold some traditional Vietnamese values. In fact, in discussing their ethnic identification, it is the Vietnamese values that they embrace that make them Vietnamese. The retaining of Vietnamese cultural values is evident in the participants' desire to impart the same values to their children. Most of the participants also believed that it was important for their children to be able to speak Vietnamese. As Mai commented, "*I would never want my kids to not know Vietnamese, I would want them to know the proverbs, and everything I've learnt. There are certain*

values that you keep, but at the same time, I would want to modernise them to this world as well.”

It is noteworthy that despite wanting their children to understand Vietnamese, and adopt certain Vietnamese cultural values, it was important to the participants that their children also grow up “modernised” and speak English. I argue that the importance placed on imparting both Vietnamese and Australian values and practices is a nod to the participants’ own ethnic identifications; because they are Vietnamese, and Australian, they want their children to embrace the same values and have similar experiences. Interestingly, James and Martin shared that they would understand if their children were unable to speak Vietnamese. As James reflected,

I think no matter what, they’d be more Western, cause the Asian tradition is dying as each generation goes by, but I’d still teach them the family values. I don’t really care about that [speaking Vietnamese] cause I’m not 100 per cent with Vietnamese as well, as long as they can understand it I guess. I don’t care if they can speak it, but they have to understand it.

Similarly, Martin shared,

But at the end of the day, if they weren’t and they totally forgot [how to speak Vietnamese], well it’s not really anyone’s fault because then they’d just be third generation. It just happens. It’s like you go to the US, the Chinese are up to the seventh generation for some families, and some of them don’t have, they still look Chinese but they can’t say a single word, and that’s through the generations.

Future research could examine the ethnic identity negotiation of future generations of Vietnamese youth in Australia. It would be beneficial to know if there is indeed a dilution of traditional values that reflects existing literature.

Compared to existing Australian and American literature on immigrant youth, where the negotiation of an ethnic identity by Asian youth seem largely conflicted, the participants in this study appeared comfortable and secure in

identifying as Australian and Vietnamese. Performance artist and photographer William Yang, who grew up in country Queensland in a large Chinese-Australian extended family that had arrived in Australia decades before Yang was born, wrote of his experience of racism: “One day when I was six years old one of the kids in school called me “Ching Chong Chinaman, born in a jar, christened in a teapot” (Graham, 2002, p.156). He spoke of the disconnection he felt from his Chinese heritage during his youth and the negative feelings that accompanied it. Growing up in Australia, Yang and many others ignored their non-Anglo cultures as much as they could in a society that marked them as ‘Chinamen’. Similarly, in Ngan’s (2008) study with generational identities of third and fourth generation Chinese in Australia, her participants shared that despite having a strong sense of belonging and identities grounded in Australia, they often do not fit into the master narrative of the dominant “White” Australian culture. And while they may see themselves as Australian, they continue to be viewed through a prism of “otherness”.

In contrast to William Yang’s story, the participants shared positive stories of being Vietnamese and growing up in Australia. Despite their belonging and Australianness being questioned when asked “where are you from?” their narratives remain largely un-conflicted. It is acknowledged that the participants grew up in a very different Australia from William Yang. Born some 40 years after William Yang, and almost a decade after the multicultural policy had been implemented in the 1970s, the group of participants in this present study grew up in a city that one would like to imagine had already recognised cultural diversity and developed a tolerance of “multicultural Australia”. While there are no demographic details of Ngan’s (2008) study, it is possible that the third and fourth generation Chinese participants were from Sydney or Melbourne. Furthermore, as recent migrants, the Vietnamese youth in the present study may acknowledge that they may be different in some ways, and are more accepting of these differences.

Another possible reason for lack of conflict in their ethnic identity negotiation is that unlike America, Australia has repressed “race”. One of the important

indications for the way “race” has been repressed is the foreground of the term “ethnic communities” in the discourse of multiculturalism in Australia. Rather than label by one’s race, there is a rhetoric shift towards one’s “ethnicity”. Thus when the Vietnamese refugees were granted entry in Australia, their integration into Australian culture, supported by multicultural policies, was never discussed openly in terms of their “racial” differences (Ang, 2001). Officially, the Vietnamese were added to the growing list of ‘ethnic groups’. In the Australian discourse of multiculturalism, migrant groups are designated an ethnic identity based on their country of origin, rather than a racial one. Thus the Australian census classifies people according to “birthplace” and “language spoken at home”, “ancestry” and as such distinguishes people from “Vietnam”, “China”, “Singapore”, “Korea” and so forth. The racial term “Asian” does not officially appear at all. Perhaps the repression of race as a marker of differentiation is the reason why the narratives of the participants do not reflect existing literature from America. Their stories do not seem racially inclined and do not contain stories of needing to mold to a specific racial type.

I have posited that Perth’s cultural diversity coupled with the emphasis placed on ethnic socialization has allowed this group of second generation Vietnamese youth to retain values from their cultural heritage. Moreover, while their parents encouraged ethnic socialization, they did not deter the participants from exploring the Australian culture. Rather than view the mainstream Australian culture as a threat, most of the participants’ parents understood the importance of being proficient in English as Australia is an English speaking nation, and wanted the participants to gain proficiency in English rather than Vietnamese. Perhaps it is because their parents understood the importance of integration that has enabled the Vietnamese community in Perth to be a “success story”. In addition, this acquiescence has allowed the youth to negotiate a value system of “best-fit”; as discussed previously, possessing multiple dimensions to their ethnic identity, these second generation Vietnamese youth are able to choose salient cultural values and practices that “best fits”, dependant on context and situation. As Long shared,

When I was younger I was more Western, more Australian because that's what my parents wanted me to learn "you're living here now, learn this, learn that, learn that" but when I got older, my brother started teaching me "don't forget about your heritage" so I went back to the Vietnamese side of it so now I'm just a mix.

The findings from the present study also suggest that the participants' ethnic identity negotiation was aided by the ethnic diversity in the schools in Perth, or at least in the schools attended by the participants. As described by the participants in Chapter Six, their schools were largely multicultural, which not only expedited their proficiency in English, but also encouraged cross-ethnic friendships. This is consistent with findings from Pyong and Kim's (2000) narrative study of ethnic and racial identity formation of Asian American youth that suggested the switch from striving to blend into the mainstream culture to adopting their ethnic culture in college was largely influenced by its multicultural and cosmopolitan environment, as well as the significant proportion of Asian Americans within the college student body. Differing from Pyong and Kim's findings, the findings of this present study suggest that exposure to ethnic diversity in Perth's primary and high schools encouraged an earlier exploration of the participants' ethnic identity. This may in turn inform future social policy-making. In light of the multicultural population of Perth and Australia, it may be that ethnic diversity in schools would be of benefit to the successful integration of recent migrants.

Through their stories, it appears that the participants have "integrated" successfully into the dominant Australian culture. They all identify to be Australian and belong. However, it does not preclude them from also identifying as Vietnamese. What is of interest is that the participants did not articulate a need to adopt certain behaviours to *be* Australian; rather, they *are* Australian. I put forward that the participants' strong sense of belonging to Australia is another marker of the successful integration of the Vietnamese community as migrants in Australia.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

This thesis has been concerned with how second generation Vietnamese youth in Perth negotiate an ethnic identity. This study has employed an interpretive narrative approach to explore the lived experiences of this group second generation Vietnamese youth as they negotiate between two cultures, which has allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the ethnic identity negotiation of this group of young persons. In particular, what ethnic identity and ethnic identity negotiation “looks” like and what it entails. In this final chapter, I re-trace the major findings of this research, and reflect upon how the general perspective adopted by this study has encouraged a more nuanced understanding of the process and content of ethnic identity negotiation. I conclude with reflections on the implications of my analysis for understanding the ethnic identity negotiation of second generation Vietnamese youth in Australia. While the present study has focused on this group of second generation Vietnamese youth in Perth, the implications of these findings are transferable to other immigrant youth.

Re-tracing the Journey

Growing up in Perth

Chapter Four, Growing Up in Perth, explored the participants’ familial experiences growing up with immigrant parents. As recent migrants, many of the participants grew up in considerable poverty as their parents worked long hours to provide for the family. Research has shown that family time – that is, time spent together as a family, has positive consequences for immigrant family members (Lee & Chen, 2000). Findings demonstrated that the lack of face-to-face interaction was found to have resulted in a strained parent-child relationship for some participants, while other participants continued to share a close relationship with their parents. Specifically, the firstborn children reported a strained relationship as compared to laterborn children. It is conceivable that the high expectations placed on firstborns, coupled with the responsibilities of looking after their younger siblings affected the parent-child

relationship. The strained relationship may also have been compounded by the fact that their parents had only recently arrived in Perth, and were trying to survive and adjust to life. Upon arrival in Perth, their primary concern would have been to ensure economic survival and that their most basic needs are met. This may have made the participants' parents less emotionally (and physically) available to attend to their children's emotional needs.

Many of the participants referred to the expectations placed on the firstborn as a "Vietnamese" thing, and a review of existing research reveals a lack of research on the topic. However, the responsibilities and expectations placed on firstborn children appear to have impacted on the parent-child relationship. Future research should explore the relationship between birth order and the quality of the parent-child relationship, especially in immigrant families. In other words, does birth order mediate the relationship between parent and child? Do firstborn children really have a more tenuous relationship with their parents? As parent-child relations may mediate the transmission of cultural values, psychological well-being (Bean et al, 2003; Chen et al, 2000; Spera, 2005) and behaviour (Choi et al, 2008), it is pertinent that we have a better understanding of the phenomenon.

The participants' narratives also suggest that siblings provided a buffering effect against the effects of their parents' long hours at work. It is conceivable that siblings provided a distraction from their parents' absence; they also acted as an additional attachment figure. A review of the literature also revealed a lack of research on siblings and how they mediate the parent-child relationship when parent(s) are absent; while research has suggested that sibling relationships may protect against life stressors (Gass, Jenkin & Dunn, 2007), it is important that we have a better understanding of how siblings relationships mediate the relationship between parent and child, and possibly serve as a protective factor.

It is noteworthy that the participants bear an acceptance and appreciation of the long hours spent away from home. Rather than fault their parents for the lack of time spent together, the participants revealed a gratitude for their parents' hard work. I suggest that it is this gratitude that has mediated the

parent-child relationship despite the lack of time spent with their parents. It may also be that this is a function of the strong familistic values as espoused by traditional Vietnamese values. The findings of this study suggest that the participants continue to embrace some traditional Vietnamese values, indicating that ethnic socialization had taken place despite the lack of interaction; perhaps it is not the quantity of time spent together, but rather the quality of time.

Chapter Four also explored the academic excellence demanded of this group of second generation Vietnamese youth. Describing their parents as “very strict”, the memories of their high school years were centred on studying. As prescribed by traditional Vietnamese values, all of the participants were expected by their parents to enter University and graduate with a formal qualification. It needs to be recognised that this expectation was also informed by their parents’ belief that a University degree would ensure a respectable career with good pay. In light of their financial struggles and their physically demanding jobs, many of the participants’ parents believed that the participants would have a better chance of succeeding in Australia if they possessed tertiary qualifications.

I argue that the emphasis placed on academic excellence has encouraged the upward trajectory of the Vietnamese in Australia. The findings from this study indicate that this group of second generation Vietnamese youth also recognise that education is a key factor in their future success in life. This is perhaps an indication that they too have internalized the need for academic excellence as espoused by traditional Vietnamese values. The participants’ narratives also suggest they have not taken the sacrifices their parents made for them for granted, and view their academic achievement as a means of repayment.

Chapter Four also explored how the decision to not pursue a tertiary degree proved to be a site of tension for some of the participants. Stemming from a disparity in values, the participants’ espousal of the Australian practice of work experience, in contrast to their parents’ traditional Vietnamese values of education resulted in conflict within the family. However, it needs to be noted that the participants who do not possess a University degree have been

gainfully employed since leaving high school, or are self-employed. It should also be recognised that the participants' decision not to pursue University qualifications is not a rejection of the importance placed on education, but a personal belief that they were not academically inclined.

The findings from the present study also indicate that the participants' adolescent years were marked by parent-child conflict. Largely due to the disparity in values between parent and child, intergenerational cultural dissonance appears to be the underlying cause for much of the tension within the family. Socialized within the Australian school system, amongst Australian peers and by the media, the participants have embraced some Australian values and practices while their parents continue to cling to traditional Vietnamese cultural beliefs and practices. While conflict in families with adolescents is not uncommon, second generation immigrant youth, such as the Vietnamese youth in Australia, may be particularly at risk of alienation from their parents. Many family rules and values that were effective in Vietnam may now be ineffective as the second generation Vietnamese youth adopt Australian values. Typical parent-adolescent conflict is thus exacerbated by the cultural conflict between slowly acculturating first generation parents and the rapidly acculturating second generation adolescent.

Future research exploring the intergenerational cultural gap between parent and child may provide a valuable window into more extended acculturation processes that unfold within immigrant families over time. For example, parents and children may approach similar levels of behavioral acculturation yet retain differences in the degree to which they adhere to traditional cultural values. For example, Thi's parents celebrate Christmas and Australian day, yet continue to have strong "traditional" ideas of marriage and dating. The participants' narratives suggest that a narrowing of the intergenerational cultural gap would reduce the level of conflict between parent and child; as Nick shared, he's closer to his father "*because he's Westernized more. He understands things on more my level.*"

The findings from the present study reflect existing literature that have demonstrated that immigrant children face a unique set of challenges,

including unrealistic parental expectations regarding academic and career success, parental over-involvement in their lives, and general negative attitudes from parents regarding their behaviour (Rhee, Chang & Rhee, 2003). The findings discussed in Chapter Four demonstrated that the parenting style adopted by the participants' parents was a source of conflict in their adolescent years. The participants identified a lack of parental warmth as one site of tension; the participants' expectations of parenting norms have been shaped by their perception of Australian parenting norms that espouses open communication, and physical and emotional expression. This is in huge contrast to the traditional culture norms and authoritarian parenting style experienced at home. In addition, many of the participants desired more freedom and personal autonomy; as Phuong shared,

I was shielded from the outside world pretty much for a long time, spent it all at home doing nothing. Honestly, I don't remember going out or doing anything till Year 7. The first time I went out with my friends was in Year 7. It was when they actually trusted me by myself, taking the bus. They thought I was too young to look after myself outside the house. I wasn't protected, more like, restricted.

However, the desire for increased autonomy and thus, increased conflict, is not exclusive to immigrant families. As children reach adolescence, the growing desire to increase their sense of autonomy and independence introduces a certain amount of tension into parent-child relationships. Existing research suggests that children become less satisfied with their parents' authority over their personal lives and activities, and are more inclined to openly disagree with their parents; in turn, leading to heightened conflict (Smetana, 1988a; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). While I do not deny that intergenerational cultural dissonance may result in conflict within the family, I argue that parent-child conflict is not culture-specific. Rather, an intergenerational cultural gap may exacerbate developmentally normative sites of tension.

The reliance on physical discipline by the participants' parents was also a site of tension when they were younger. It is of interest that many of the participants do not continue to bear negative feelings towards their parents for

the physical discipline; rather they believe that it may have been valuable in their character building. I propose that the perception of physical discipline as a parenting norm in Vietnamese households may have buffered any potential negative effects. Moreover, the participants' parents ceased employing punitive measures when the participants reached an age where verbal discipline would have sufficed in disciplining the participants.

Chapter Four also explored the preferential treatment perceived to be accorded to their brothers as an additional site of tension between the female participants and their parents. Consistent with existing research (Fuligni, 1998; Pyke & Markson, 2003; Rohner & Pettengill, 1985; Seymour, 1988), the female participants believed that they were responsible for more household chores, and subject to stricter rules than the males in their family. However, we need to acknowledge that the differential treatment may not always be culturally motivated. One participant shared that her brother was indulged by their parents to compensate for the financial hardships and struggles he experienced when the family first migrated in Perth. The preferential treatment may also simply be a reflection of gender-typing in the socialization of young females, regardless of ethnic heritage (Allison & Schultz, 2004).

This chapter also explored the decrease in conflict in parent-child relationships as the participants moved into late adolescence. Many of the participants shared that the relationship they now share with their parents is not as tenuous as it was in their adolescent years. The analysis of the narratives revealed empathy for their parents, with an increased consideration for their views and feelings. I argue that as they negotiate an achieved sense of identity, the participants begin to acknowledge values that are similar to their parents', hence narrowing the perceived intergenerational cultural gap. We also must not disregard the presence of other factors that may impact upon the parent-child relationship. These may include the degree of parental involvement, and the compatibility of the parents' and child's personalities (Ying et al, 2001).

I argue that the increasing conflict as the participants entered adolescence may not only be a function of normative development as they desire more personal autonomy, it may also be a reflection of their ethnic identity negotiation.

Before exploring their ethnic identity, and without internalizing values from either culture, there is little disparity of values between parent and child. As the participants began to examine their ethnic identity and internalize values different to their parents, the intergenerational cultural dissonance was most evident. Consequently, the parent-child conflict was magnified. As the participants reach an achieved ethnic identity, the acceptance and integration of values from both their heritage and Australian culture may have encouraged an increased understanding for their parents' views and feelings, as well as their values. Accordingly, the conflict between parent and child decreases, and the parent-child relationship improves.

This could perhaps explain why all the participants profess to share a close relationship with their parents in spite of the parent-child conflict prevalent during their adolescent years. However, the decrease in parent-child conflict does not imply that the intergenerational cultural gap ceases to exist. Rather, it is possible that the participants are more capable of dealing with different perspectives and do not perceive the cultural gap to be as wide as they used to. This is consistent with Lee and colleagues' (2000) study where children of immigrants reported that the acculturation gap with their parents was not limited to adolescence but was a natural part of life, and may not be necessarily harmful to the well-being of their family.

Despite the strained relationship with their parents in their adolescent years, many of the narratives are imprinted with stories of their cultural heritage, and of values as taught by their parents. It is evident that the participants have been socialized to Vietnamese values at home, despite the lack of face to face interaction, coupled with the sites of tension identified in their narratives. As transmission of values is mediated by the parent-child relationship, it is important that we have a deeper understanding of this relationship. I posit that the parent-child conflict identified in these narratives is not exclusive to second generation Vietnamese youth. In fact, the strained relationship could have been tempered by the embracing of Vietnamese values, especially that of the importance of family and respect for one's elders. As Formoso, Gonzales and Aiken (2000) write, children whose cultures emphasize family loyalty and

preservation of strong emotional ties among family members may be more likely to benefit from the buffering effects of positive bonding when faced with high levels of cultural dissonance and parent–child conflict. It is imperative that practitioners understand the implications of cultural differences and how they are a source of tension in immigrant families. Practitioners also need to be aware of these sites of tensions when working with second generation Vietnamese youth in Australia. Perhaps by increasing awareness of Eastern and Western values, and teaching effective communication techniques to both the parents and adolescents, parent-child conflicts can be prevented or managed.

Ethnic Identification

As discussed in Chapter Five, all the participants identify as being Australian, and Vietnamese. In answering the question “what do you say when people ask where are you from?” most of the participants were able to answer confidently that they were “Australian” and “Vietnamese”. I have demonstrated that the participants do not feel predominantly Australian or Vietnamese and more importantly, do not feel the need to identify as either. I put forward that this is indicative of the multitude of identities they possess; they are Australian, and Vietnamese.

The findings of the present study are consistent with previous scholarship that argues for multiple identities. The findings also highlighted the situational nature of ethnic identification. As introduced in Chapter Two, as a social identity, one’s ethnic identity is constantly re-appraised. According to Espiritu (1992), the public presentation of ethnic identity is situational, revealing the plural or hybrid character of modern ethnicity. Most of the participants in this study identify as Australian, and/or Vietnamese depending on the context. It was also demonstrated that the participants’ Australian identities were more salient when overseas, further reinforcing the situational nature of ethnic identification.

Extending the argument for multiple identities, of which ethnic identity is one, the participants’ narratives indicate that other facets of one’s identity are all

intertwined and cannot be separated. The participants' narratives demonstrate that their ethnic identity is closely linked to their identities as student, daughter, son, friend and partner. Thus illustrating Frable's (1997) argument regarding the importance of "seeing people as whole" (p.159) rather than fragmented individuals with discrete identity domains.

It was of interest that some of the participants shared that they "used to" identify as "Australian", but now clarify that they are "Vietnamese" when asked "Where are you from?" This raised the question: would second generation Vietnamese youth self-identify as Vietnamese if their belonging was not challenged? In exploring why they identified as Vietnamese, the participants' narratives illuminated the importance of traditional Vietnamese values and practices as salient to their ethnic identity formation. Their stories also suggest that they have embraced both Australian and Vietnamese values, and are able to identify what dimensions of their values are considered "Australian", and which are "Vietnamese". According to the participants, they prize the Australian values of freedom of speech, independence, and the freedom to date and marry whom they like. Comparatively, they continue to embrace traditional Vietnamese values such as familism, respect for elders, as well as loyalty and a sense of brotherhood amongst friends. Rather than experiencing a sense of conflict while manoeuvring the two disparate cultures, the findings from this chapter indicate that the participants' possess an amalgamation of the different values. As Mark articulated,

I'm Australian, and I'm proud to be Australian but with a Vietnamese background. I'd say my nationality is Australian but I was born in Vietnam... I'm not true Viet. I mean I've got Aussie values on top of a different set of systems, a different set of values as well.

As addressed in Chapter Two, the emic nature adopted by the present study has allowed for the uncovering of dimensions of content salient to the participants. By allowing the participants to identify what is salient to them, it has enabled the present study to explore various components of what it means to be Vietnamese and Australian. These include place of birth, country of origin (Vietnam), their physical appearance, the way they dress, cultural

values and practices, food consumed, and religion. The importance of ethnic socialisation was also discussed; in particular, how the amount of time spent with their parents, and the quality of the parent-child relationship affects the transmission of ethnic values, and in turn, the negotiation of an ethnic identity. In other words, a close relationship with one's parents encouraged the enculturation of traditional Vietnamese values, promoting a positive Vietnamese identity. Conversely, the socialization that took place within the Australian school system allowed for the transmission of Australian values and cultural practices, in turn, promoting a positive Australian identity.

Findings from the present study also suggest that this group of second generation Vietnamese youth may not view ethnicity as central to their identity. However, participants' desire to impart Vietnamese values, practices to the next generation may be an expression of pride in their ethnic heritage. Another indication of Thi's enculturation of Vietnamese values is her desire for her son to be socialized as she was;

I want my son to know what all that is, temple and Buddhism and stuff like that, but not push him into practising it fully. He is half-Vietnamese. He's half-Filipino. But yes, I want to teach him the Vietnamese way... My direct family, he calls them uncle, aunty, grandma and grandpa.

Similarly, many of the participants expressed a desire for their children to speak Vietnamese and attend Vietnamese school as they did. The use of language as a symbol of ethnic identity was also discussed; it was revealed that all the participants are more comfortable conversing English than Vietnamese and identify English as their first language. It is acknowledged that the sampling criteria mediated this finding; only persons fluent in English were invited to join me on this research journey. Nonetheless, the findings from this study contradict previous studies and statistics (Thomas, 1999) that suggested that the second generation Vietnamese youth in Perth report low-proficiency in the English language.

This chapter demonstrated that language is a marker of their ethnic identity for some participants; some of the participants identify to be Vietnamese because they speak Vietnamese, while others identify to be Australian because they speak English. Conversely, they speak Vietnamese because they are Vietnamese, and others speak English because they are Australian. It was also put forward that the acquisition of heritage language and strength of ethnic identity are two parallel processes; one may not be proficient in Vietnamese but still identify positively as Vietnamese. In other words, proficiency in one's heritage language is not a determinant of ethnic identity for all participants. With little opportunity to speak Vietnamese in Perth, there may be little value in gaining proficiency in the language. Moreover, it was argued that the participants may have been unable to achieve a level of fluency sufficient to use as a basis for establishing ethnic identity.

Ethnic Identity Negotiation

Chapter Six explored the ethnic identity negotiation of this group of young persons, in particular, the phases they went through as they grew up in Australia. The findings from this study suggest that the participants' orientation to the Australian culture is unrelated to their orientation to their heritage culture; that is, the participants are as Vietnamese as they are Australian. Despite phases of exploration in high schools, characterized by a period of Asian pride for some, while others described themselves to be "Aussie", the participants in the present study did not refer to rejection of "mainstream" values.

The findings from this chapter also suggest that the ethnic identity development of this group of second generation Vietnamese youth has been largely uncomplicated. This is in contrast to existing scholarship (Kibria, 2000; Tse, 1999) that suggest that second generation immigrant youth perceive to be separate from the mainstream culture, despite a conscious effort to "be American". In her qualitative study on race, ethnic options and ethnic binds, Kibria (2000) conducted in-depth interviews with second-generation Chinese and Korean Americans. Highlighting the importance placed on "walking and talking like an American" to be accepted in the dominant U.S. society,

participants from Kibria's study shared that being accepted as "American" was for them an achieved and provisional task rather than a taken-for-granted and stable matter. Rather than try to be "Australian", the findings of the present study suggest that this group of young persons *are* Australian. As Thai shared, *"This is where I live. I always felt like this is my home. I'm Australian. I never felt like I didn't belong here, always felt I belonged here."*

The findings from Chapter Six also demonstrated that the participants' choice of friends reflects their ethnic identity exploration. While I did not set out to identify any processes of identity development, or document a clear path of exploration, the findings suggested that the participants' choice of friends reflected Phinney's (1989) model of ethnic identity development. As they entered primary school, the participants possessed an unexamined ethnic identity. This first stage is characterized by a lack of interest in their ethnic identity, and a preference for the dominant group; the findings suggest that participants in this stage had more White Australian friends. However, rather than a preference for the dominant group, the findings suggest that friendship in primary school is dictated by school demographics.

As the participants entered high school, and the second stage in their ethnic identity development, they embarked on a period of exploration. Individuals in the moratorium stage are characterized as displaying an increasing awareness of their ethnicity, and may involve an active immersion in one's ethnic culture (Phinney, 1989). The participants reported to have more Vietnamese friends in high school, and I argue that this is a reflection of their increasing awareness of their identity as a Vietnamese person. As a reflection of their ethnic identity status, many of the participants went through an Asian Pride phase during high school. I propose that having pre-dominantly Vietnamese friends is not only an expression of their ethnic identity; it is also a function of exploration. Finally, as the participants negotiate an achieved ethnic identity, they are confident in their Vietnamese and Australian identity. Accordingly, they report to have friends of different ethnicities and cultures. While many of the participants have pre-dominantly Vietnamese friends, they also report to have acquaintances of other cultures. It needs to be acknowledged that the

participants assert that their choice of friends is not dictated by ethnicity, but rather shared values.

Reflections on Existing Theories of Ethnic Identity

I propose that the general perspective adopted for this study has allowed for a better understanding of the nuances of ethnic identity negotiation. The findings suggest that as a social identity, ethnic identification is situational, and that certain contexts make the participants' Vietnamese identities more salient, and vice versa. For example, when overseas, the participants are more inclined to identify as Australian. Their narratives also highlight that the participants do not only possess a single (ethnic) identity. As Nagel (1994) posited, the individual carries a portfolio of ethnic identities that are more or less salient depending on situation and audience. The findings have highlighted that this group of second generation Vietnamese youth identify concomitantly as Vietnamese and Australian.

That an individual may possess a multitude of identities that are not experienced as contradictory intimates a complex model of ethnic change. In particular, the findings from this study reflect a pragmatic sensibility with which this group of second generation Vietnamese youth have found ways to reconcile potentially conflicting identities. Rather than being constrained by a fixed notion of identity, they have actively negotiated a path that transcends group categories. In fact, the participants' narratives lack stories of conflict in their ethnic identity negotiation; this contradicts previous scholarship that highlight periods of conflicted identity exploration.

Furthermore, Phinney's developmental framework suggests that ethnic minority youth have an initial preference for the dominant culture, and then go through a moratorium status which is characterized by active exploration of their ethnicity, before negotiating an achieved ethnic identity. Whilst the participants' narratives reflect a phase where they identified more strongly as Australian or Vietnamese, their stories of ethnic identity negotiation did not fit into Phinney's model of ethnic identity development; in particular, the narratives did not infer a distinct second status of exploration. This perhaps

suggests that there is more to the process and content of ethnic identity exploration that may not be accurately captured by the model. It is however, interesting that their choice of friends reflected Phinney's three status model. Adopting Phinney's model of development to interpret their narratives of changing social networks has perhaps enabled a more nuanced understanding of how one's choice of friends may be a reflection of their ethnic identity, but also a function of exploration.

Reflections on the Journey

At the start of this research journey, I could not answer the question "Where are you from?" when asked. Now that I'm at the tail end of this journey, I realise that rather than an uncertainty of my identity, the many answers that flit through my head represent all my identities. When I am asked "where are you from?" in Singapore, I reply "Singapore, but I live in Australia". When asked in Australia, I sometimes reply "Singapore", but more often than not, I simply reply "here." Highlighting the importance of context in the salience of identities, I recognise that my answer not only depends on where I am, but also the audience.

Living in Singapore until adolescence, I had formed a strong Chinese identity. Being Chinese was intuitive and natural, despite having a poor command of the language. Having a Chinese father, I was Chinese all the time; I was Chinese in school and at home. However, as a Chinese in Australia, I have had to re-negotiate my ethnic identity. When I first arrived in Australia, not only was I Chinese, I was Singaporean. After almost 16 years, I feel like I belong in Australia. Yet when people ask me "where are you from?" I hesitate to identify as being Australian; I also hesitate to answer "Singapore" immediately.

Not only has this research journey explored the ethnic identity negotiation of this group of second generation immigrant youth, it has made me re-examine my ethnic identification. In retrospect, my ethnic identity had to be re-negotiated upon my arrival in Australia. The ethnic identity that was once secure in Singapore, had to be re-examined as a Chinese person in Australia. It

appears that much of my journey resonates with Phinney's (1989) model of ethnic identity development; upon arrival in Australia, my ethnic identity as a Chinese female was unexamined. I did not prefer my ethnic Chinese culture, nor did I aim to assimilate into the dominant Australian culture. I eventually went through a few years of exploration, where I spent most of my time in Northbridge with other Asian youth. It was a period of time where I did mainly "Asian things" like watch Chinese movies at the then Chinatown Cinema, and spend my nights at the Asian karaoke venues. At the height of my Chineseness, I was fascinated with traditional Chinese silks and embroidery, and would wear any I could get my hands on.

After 16 years in Perth, I would like to think that I am approaching an achieved ethnic identity as a Chinese in Australia. While my social network remains pre-dominantly Asian, I have friends from other ethnicities. Reflecting the participants' narratives, I argue that my choice of friends is not determined by ethnicity, but rather values that are aligned with mine; regardless if the values are "Chinese", "Singaporean" or "Australian". However, I believe that my ethnic identification is in a constant state of flux, and testament to the multiple identities I carry with me. I am not only Chinese, I am concomitantly Indian, Singaporean, female, a student, and a daughter. I am also very much from Australia.

Implications for Social Work Practice and Social Policy

The findings of the present study highlight the apparent success of Australia's multicultural policy in Perth; that is, the level of belonging professed by the participants and the lack of discrimination experienced is testament to the strength of support for cultural diversity and social inclusion in Perth. Whilst this study has focused on the lived experiences of twenty second generation Vietnamese youth in Perth, the findings of this study may be relevant to other second generation immigrant populations. It has highlighted the importance of viewing these second generation Vietnamese youth as unique individuals; identifying simultaneously as Vietnamese and Australian, practitioners need to recognise that descriptions of ethnic groups that rely on traditional aspects of their cultures may only apply to those families whose members actually

originated in their home countries. Later generations, such as this group of second generation Vietnamese youth, who were born and raised in Australia may be more likely to hold beliefs and values that are consistent with the dominant culture. Therefore, practitioners need to be aware of these differences in working with second and eventually, future generations of immigrant youth in Australia.

In addition, practitioners need to recognise within-group differences. Rather than treat all Vietnamese in Perth as a homogenous group, this research highlights the need to recognise within-group differences when working with this population of youth. Identifying as Vietnamese and Australian, the participants have negotiated an amalgamation of values from both cultures. However, it needs to be recognised that this amalgamation of values may be different for each individual depending on the salience of their identities. Moreover, the findings from this study highlight a need for culturally sensitive practices when addressing conflict within Vietnamese immigrant families. The findings of this study have demonstrated how intergenerational cultural dissonance contributes to conflict within the family. It is possible that the adolescents' understanding of their parents' cultural norms may reduce the level of conflict, and ameliorate the negative consequences of such conflicts on the parent-child relationship. Youth need to understand the cultural norms of their ethnic heritage, and parents need to understand the pressures adolescents experience in trying to fit in with the mainstream society.

Moreover, as parents' use of authoritarian parenting and physical discipline may stem from their adherence to Vietnamese cultural values, it might be beneficial for persons working with second generation Vietnamese youth to validate the cultural basis for the parenting styles. Informed by traditional values, Vietnamese parents may consider parental control and guidance as paramount. This is in contrast to the participants' desire for parental warmth and personal autonomy. Practitioners could help parents to understand that their children may value parental warmth and autonomy based on their cultural orientation to the dominant Australian culture. They could also help parents to be aware of how children may respond to their parenting style and

how the youth's own reactions may affect the effectiveness of such strategies. In addition, normalization of intergenerational conflict by contextualising them as predictable consequences of adaptation may convey acceptance and understanding of second generation Vietnamese youth.

An important implication from the findings of this present study is that immigration does not necessarily threaten social cohesion. The fears and public outcry surrounding the arrival of Vietnamese refugees appear to be unfounded. Rather than a being too different to fit in, these second generation Vietnamese youth identify strongly as Australian, and claim a sense of belonging to Australia. This could perhaps be attributed to the success of Australia's multicultural policy. It may well be that the strength of multiculturalism in Australia will also serve to foster social cohesion and integration for recent migrants. The findings also suggest that ethnic diversity in schools is important in encouraging cross-race friendships. In turn, serving to reduce discrimination and perhaps, promote an understanding of other cultures. The findings might have implications for social policy making in terms of how ethnic diversity in school may further promote multiculturalism.

More importantly, the findings of the present study have highlighted the social construction and situational nature of ethnic identity. Rather than pigeon-holing persons from ethnic minority groups into positivist, singular constructs, both practitioners and social policy-makers need to recognize that second generation youth may identify concomitantly with their heritage ethnic group as well as the larger dominant culture. In light of increasing globalization and immigration across the world, it is imperative to acknowledge that it is possible to identify with one's ethnic group without it being a threat to the social cohesion. In other words, one can be Vietnamese without being any less Australian. Conversely, it is possible to identify as Australian without a loss of one's Vietnamese-ness.

Scope for Future Research

Future research could incorporate quantitative measures that examine the strength of one's ethnic identity; it would be interesting to compare qualitative

findings with a quantitative measure of one's ethnic identification. The present study has argued that this group of second generation Vietnamese youth possess multiple identities; quantitative measures may provide another perspective on the salience of these dimensions. The findings from this study also suggest that ethnicity may not be central to this group of young persons' self-concept; future research could assess the importance placed on ethnic identity by second generation immigrant youth.

Finally, further research incorporating the stories of immigrant parents would further expand our understanding of the sites of conflict within the parent-child relationship. While the focus on the participants' stories has allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the content of ethnic identity and the relation of ethnic identity in different aspects of their lives, it would be of value to explore the ethnic identity of immigrant parents, and their perceptions of the intergenerational cultural dissonance. Future research could also explore the parents' perceptions of parenting style and ethnic socialization practices.

As this study has demonstrated, the Vietnamese culture discourages outward signs of defiance and conflict; a lack of expressed emotion may not mean there is none. This raises the question: are immigrant parents aware of the sites of conflict and their underlying reasons? Finally, it would be of value for further research to explore the importance Vietnamese immigrant parents place on maintaining their ethnic heritage; if immigrant parents believe that their children should remain "Vietnamese" and discourage acculturation to the dominant society, how does it then affect their children's ethnic identity?

Final Remarks

I embarked on this research journey to explore the ethnic identity negotiation of this group of second generation Vietnamese young persons. In particular, I sought to explore their familial and social lived experiences and explore how these experiences relate to the process of ethnic identity negotiation. Adopting a reflexive narrative approach, I uncovered insights about this group of young people that would not have been possible using quantitative methods. In exploring their lived experiences, it was revealed that intergenerational

cultural dissonance resulted in strained parent-child relationships during their adolescent years. Growing up in Australia and within the Australian school system, the participants adopted values that were at odds with their parents' traditional Vietnamese values that often resulted in tension between the participants and their parents. Without denying the existence of an intergenerational cultural gap, I proposed that this parent-child conflict could be a reflection of normative developmental practices. Nonetheless, I argued that the parent-child relationship inadvertently affected the transmission of traditional values; in turn, shaping the participants' ethnic identity negotiation.

The narratives from this study also highlighted the multitude of identities that these participants possess; concomitantly identifying as Vietnamese and Australian, these participants appear to have skillfully navigated between the two cultures. Their narratives revealed various dimensions salient to their construction of an ethnic identity; namely, country of birth, looks, parental upbringing, cultural values and practices, and language spoken. The participants revealed an amalgamation of values that represent their identities as Vietnamese and Australian; for example, they are Vietnamese because they respect and show deference to their elders, and they are Australian because they value independence from their parents. Language was also demonstrated to be an expression of their ethnic identity; some participants identify as Vietnamese because they speak Vietnamese, in contrast, others are Australian because they speak English. However, I posit that proficiency in one's heritage language is not necessarily an indicator of one's ethnic identity; that is, one may not be fluent in Vietnamese yet identify positively as Vietnamese.

In exploring their ethnic identity negotiation, the participants' narratives suggested phases of ethnic identity exploration. Many of the male participants identified a period of "Asian Pride" in high school where their Vietnamese identities were brought to the fore. In contrast, some of the participants claimed to be more Australian in high school. After leaving high school, most of the participants identify as both Vietnamese and Australian; suggesting that both identities are equally salient. It was also revealed that the composition of their social networks changed as they moved from primary school, to high

school, to now. Interestingly, the change in ethnic composition of their social circle reflected Phinney's (1990) model of ethnic identity development; their choice of friends in primary school was not influenced by ethnicity reflecting the unexamined status. As they moved into a status of moratorium in high school, the participants sought out other Vietnamese peers. Entering the third status of achieved identity, the participants' social network now consists of peers from different ethnicities, reflecting their Vietnamese and Australian identities.

Perhaps one of the more important contributions of this research is that the participants had the opportunity to freely define and discuss the meaning of their ethnic identity. This is in contrast to previous research that imposed quantitative measures of ethnic identification or pre-imposed categories (Vietnamese or Australian). By allowing them to discuss what it means to them and what it looks like to be a Vietnamese person in Australia has provided insight into the complexities of their experiences and the social construction of their ethnic identity(s). The findings of this study highlight the need for research to move away from studying ethnic identity as a static, singular construct and move towards a more reflexive, dynamic social construction.

Whilst I acknowledge that the participants' stories are not representative of all Vietnamese persons, I conclude this research journey with the postulation that the Vietnamese community in Perth is indeed on an upward trajectory. Contrary to existing research and statistics, the participants all speak fluent English, are gainfully employed or are business owners, or pursuing a tertiary degree. Moreover, their parents have appeared to escape the cycle of poverty previously suggested (Thomas, 1999; Viviani, 1996). I posit that the emphasis on academic excellence is perhaps the key to social acceptance and economic success; it may also be in part due to the participants' gratitude and appreciation for their parents' struggles. Of greater pertinence, this research has demonstrated that this group of second generation Vietnamese young persons are skilful navigators as they negotiated between two potentially conflicting cultures. Contrary to existing scholarship suggesting that ethnic

identity can be particularly challenging for adolescents from immigrant families facing the challenges of acculturating their cultural traditions alongside the dominant culture (Lee, 1997; Lee et al, 2000; Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000; Rumbaut, 1994; Szapocznik & Hernandez, 1988; Ying & Chao, 1996), the participants' narratives do not indicate as such. That is, rather than being "between" two cultures, the participants are active members of both.

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