

Identity Construction of Vietnamese Immigrants living in Finland in Their Narratives Telling About Their Life Experiences

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Accelerated globalization has motivated people to become more aware of the differences existing among us. While diversity is embraced, it appears to pose uncertainty at the same time, leading to a phenomenon addressed as “crisis of belonging” (Dervin & Risager, 2015, p. 8). This phenomenon is one of the reasons drawing more people’s attention to the question of identity, challenging the pre-existing approach in viewing identity as stable and fixed psychological entity. With that in mind, I approached the Vietnamese immigrants living in Finland to ask for their participation in this study, so that the taken-for-granted social categories and preset images used for identifying immigrants were examined critically.</p> <p>I set up more than one meeting with each study participant to collect the data. While the method is acknowledged to be similar to semi-structured interview, these meetings were still treated as casual conversations between me and my study participants. The meetings were recorded and transcribed. In order to study the fluidity and continuity of people’s identities throughout their courses of life, the transcripts were analyzed applying Narrative Analysis.</p> <p>The data reveals that the participants’ identities constructed are flexible in accordance with the meanings used to make sense of them; hence, their identities presented in this study are merely temporary, locating in their specific social interactions with me. Their identities also appeared to be multi-faceted and continuous throughout their lives, which are in relations with the others in their story-worlds, as well as in relation with me, as the ‘other’ in the interactional world. Besides, the data suggests these study participants’ identities were not bounded to a few pre-determined social categories, but they reflect a complex picture in comprehending a person’s identity. Furthermore, the findings also reflected their experiences being immigrants living in Finland, showcasing that the categories and the knowledge people draw on for their sense-making processes are socially constructed by human themselves. Similarly, the pre-existing identity categories are also socially constructed, which should not be considered as ‘naturalized’ knowledge.</p> <p>Based on the findings of this study, I want to recommend people to avoid identifying themselves and others in terms of preset categories, but understand themselves more as a continuous process along their lives.</p>	
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	3
2 RESEARCH TOPIC	11
3 LITERATURE REVIEW	16
3.1 The Question - “Who am I?”, and Essentialist View of Identity	16
3.2 Identity Politics Theory	18
3.3 Social Constructionist View of Identity	22
3.4 Post-structuralist View of Identity	28
3.5 Narrative and Identity	31
3.6 Previous Research	35
4 DATA & METHODS	40
4.1 Qualitative Research	40
4.2 Narrative Analysis.....	40
4.3 Narrative Account: Narratives in Interview	44
4.4 Data Collection	47
4.5 Methodology	50
5 ANALYSIS & FINDINGS	53
5.1 Analysis of Narratives	53
5.1.1 Circumstances of relocation to Finland	53
5.1.2 Experiences of being an immigrant living in Finland.....	63
5.1.3 Life milestones.....	75
5.2 Narrative Analysis.....	81
5.2.1 Study participant – C	81
5.2.2 Study participant – A	83
5.2.3 Study participant – B.....	86
5.2.4 Study participant – D	88
6 DISCUSSION	93
7 CONCLUSION	101
7.1 Limitations	102
7.2 Practical Implications.....	104
7.3 Recommendations for Future Research	105
REFERENCES	107
APPENDIX 1: Prepared set of questions for guidance only	115
APPENDIX 2. Original Vietnamese extracts from study participants’ narratives	117

1 INTRODUCTION

The era we are living in, which has placed higher emphasis on diversity within societies, has led us to question many naturalized ideologies, or in another expression – ‘common senses’, that were surrounding us, and were taught to us when we grew up (see, for example, Dervin & Risager, 2015). This era of accelerated globalization has somewhat enhanced more the wave of changes in our societies. Majority believe that globalization began in business worlds, with transnational deals, expats programs, and moving migrant workers from developing countries to developed countries. Academic researchers, on the other hand, believe globalization have existed much further back in our history (Pieterse, 2000). For instance, there had already been cross-cultural trade established between countries earlier in human history such as through the Silk Road. Therefore, globalization is not a new phenomenon. However, it has been more accelerated in modern times due to our advancing in technology and communication. Consequently, globalization may be more than merely cross-cultural movements in politics and economy areas. It has also created space for “multi directionality of cultural flows” across national borders (Connell & Marsh, 2010, p. 107; see also, Boner & Kramsch, 2010, p. 497), and allowed more transnational activities and movement that were not possible in earlier times of human societies (Kosonen, 2008, p. 210). Kosonen (2008) also pointed out that because of the flows and movements generated from globalization processes, how people understand themselves and others could be influenced and adjusted (p. 211).

According to Gikandi (2001, p. 110), “the discourse of globalization seems to be perpetually caught between competing narratives, one of the celebration, the other of crisis”. While many good events resulted from globalization are celebrated, globalization may also be perceived as a threat of uncertainty to many people. For instance, in the global news that we have seen in the past recent years following from the migration to Europe in 2015 (BBC, 2016), our differences can also be applied to draw up separation between human societies. Whether we celebrate the differences, or see it as “crisis of belonging” (Dervin & Risager, 2015, p. 8), we may still find the discourses about ‘who we are’ and ‘who they are’ have involved more, or again, the topics of our ethnicity, our skin colors, our races, our traditions and our nations. In his work about *Identity and Culture*, Weedon (2004) has quoted Mercer (1990, p. 43): “[...] identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty. [...]”; hence, it seems relatively predictable that we return to our ethnical and/or our national backgrounds to refer to who we are, in the time with intensity of changes, which is shaking what we have

always perceived and treated as stable knowledge in regard to the notion of identity (see also Dervin & Risager, 2015, p. 8). Additionally, Weedon (2004) pointed out that in the current global world with migration, diasporas and other processes of globalization, identity and the idea of belonging had been, in truth, placed forward for questioning (p. 2). According to Dervin and Risager (2015), research on ethnicity and identity, as well as on the topic of interculturality, have “moved from *primordialism* (ethnicity is natural) to *instrumentalism* (people choose identities as they see fit); from *essentialism* (ethnicity is stable) to *situationalism* (people identify with different categories depending on the situation); and from *perennialism* (ethnicity is stable) to *modernism* (ethnic distinctions are changing)” (p. 8). Following from their statement, the theoretical perspectives seeing identity (as well as ethnicity) as unchangeable and seeing that a person’s cultural background govern his or her identity, should also be challenged, in our current times (ibid.) (see also, for example, Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). They suggested researchers to ask the question of ‘how’ one constructed what he or she perceived as his/her identity, instead of the question of ‘what’ one’s identity was (ibid.). Like anthropologist Ewing (1996) has said:

I argue that in all cultures people can be observed to project multiple, inconsistent self-representations that are context-dependent and many shift rapidly. At any particular moment a person usually experiences his or her articulated self as a symbolic, timeless whole, but this self may quickly be displaced by another, quite different “self”, which is based on a different definition of the situation. The person will often be unaware of these shifts and inconsistencies and may experience wholeness and continuity despite their presence. (quoted in Dervin & Risager, 2015, p. 4.)

Her statements further remind people the necessity of context in understanding our selves, and encourage us to realize the instability of our self-representations, in correlation to the situational contexts. Some of us may sometimes deduce our ways of behaving, our ways of thinking, as well as others, to the casual effects of our roots and our cultures, allowing our and others’ identities to be strongly bounded in these categories. Not only people but some studies have also been reported to turn the concept of culture as an agentive explanatory element (Dervin & Risager, 2015, p. 4). However, when we get the chances to tell other people stories about our lives, we may find our resistance to others’ pre-determined identification of us. As we ourselves may also make sense of our lives at the same time telling the stories (Weedon, 2004, p. 62), we may prefer others to not build presumptions about us, without knowing about our life stories well enough. Similarly, when we quickly determine others’ identities, for instance, in terms of their birth countries, we also forget the diversity possibly existing in people’s communities and societies (i.e. Dervin & Risager, 2015, p. 109), as well as the commonalities people can share despite their different nationality and/or cultural backgrounds (i.e. Pieterse, 2000, p. 392). This was one of the motivation for this thesis research, because I

wanted to study and explore identity in distance from the assumptions that identity was natural and could be explained in absolute senses; or in the terms described earlier by Dervin and Risager (2015, p. 8) – I wanted to study and explore identity in theoretical spectrums of the other end of the continuum (*instrumentalism, situationism, modernism*).

The concept of language can also be applied to identify us and others. According to Dervin and Risager (2015, p. 17), question such as “what is your mother tongue?” can place people in the position of choosing one language that they can identify with, while there are always possibilities that in their countries, they may speak several languages in their daily lives. On the other hand, Dervin and Risager (2015) also pointed out that people sharing the first language might not always mean they thoroughly understood each other, because in each society, there could also be the diversity in using language forms (p. 17). Dervin and Risager (2015, p. 17) has suitably stated then:

The “natural” and “biological” links that are often made between language and culture are somewhat deterministic and problematic, as they seem to imprison individuals in cultural and linguistic cells.

In this sense, while conducting the literature review for this research, I leaned more on the non-essentialist theoretical spectrum about identity (*social constructionism* - Burr (2015); *post-structuralist approach for identity concept* – Kramsch (2015), Drzewiecka (2017), *identity brought along or brought about* – Baynham (2015)). The concept of identity in this paper was studied then as being constructed through people’s discourses, in relations with others (see, for example, De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg (2006)). The objective of my research was to explore how identities were constructed in people’s narratives telling about their life stories. The study participants approached for this study were Vietnamese immigrants residing in Finland.

According to Kosonen (2008), “the first few hundreds of Vietnamese refugees came in several waves in 1979 – 1986 to the Helsinki region and later to other areas of Finland”, and Finland was described to be a rather mono-cultural country in comparison with other European countries at the time, as well as for most of the 20th century (p. 5). This means that Finnish society is somewhat still new to inter- and multi-cultural interaction with the ethnic communities. Additionally, according to Valtonen (2019), Finland can be addressed as a “new gateway”, comparing to “old gateway” countries that are considered as traditional immigrant-receiving places (p. 23). Valtonen (2019) further explained that “in older gateways, immigration and immigrant minorities have had time to become a familiar and integral feature of the society” (p. 23). Following from this description, in “new gateway” countries, as Finland, with less experiences and shorter times exposing with immigrants from ethno-culturally

diverse backgrounds, immigration and immigrant minorities may not have had as strong the ethnic community networks and as wide the spaces to become more integral in societal development, as in the “old gateway” countries (Valtonen, 2019). Valtonen (2019) further stated that the main purpose of Finland receiving the first group of Vietnamese refugees was humanitarianism under the refugee Quota-system, as “the plight of the ‘boat people’ aroused the sensitivities and sympathies of the receiving population” (p. 23). As a “new gateway” country, Finland was described to also adopt the multicultural model of integration, referring to “the active measures in the society to bring about the inclusion of refugee and immigrant groups so that they have opportunities to function fully in mainstream society” (Valtonen, 2019, p. 24). According to Kosonen (2008), since Finland traditionally and legally had had established systems supporting bilingualism and biculturalism, due to the Swedish-speaking population and to the fact that Swedish was acknowledged as second official language spoken nationally, Finland’s bicultural ethic motivated its enacting the Integration Act in 1999, which had been amended several times since, in order for improving the integration of new minorities in the society (p. 6). However, realistically, the integration of immigration has not always been that smooth, and immigrants can still encounter ethnic discrimination (Kosonen, 2008, p. 8). Taking this background information about Finland and its immigration into consideration, I decided to approach precisely the immigrants residing in the country, because their identities and profiles as immigrants in this relatively mono-cultural society and ethno-culturally evolving society could be likely more triggered, and be used for “simplistic boxing” (Dervin & Risager, 2015, p. 27). Kosonen (2008), has further stated, “in Finland the term immigrant is often used as an overall category and as an almost permanent level for all people of foreign birth moving to Finland more or less permanently” (p. 13), which may consequently overshadow the diversity in immigrants’ communities and lead to general assumptions about the immigrants’ identities. This is not to say that similar cases will not happen in countries considered as “old gateway”; however, my focus in this study was to encourage better understanding between international residents and the ones speaking Finnish as first language in the society, where the integration of immigrant minorities might be still progressing. I hoped to demonstrate through my research the individualistic diversity in everyone’s life story and journey, especially regarding the topics of identity. At the same time, I wanted to emphasize the complexity of the concept of identity, in order to highlight that identity should be acknowledged as an on-going and in-flux process, which was constructed temporarily in the form of discourses, situated in the social interactions with others in specific contexts (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2015, p. 3; see also Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Besides, my motivation to

reach out the immigrants in Finland was also driven from my profile as an international resident in Finland.

As I expressed earlier, the concept of language could also be used as a deterministic factor in placing people sharing same language in the same identity position (Dervin & Risager, 2015, p. 17), without considering the individualistic differences among these people. In this sense, as a person speaking Vietnamese as my first language, I wanted to explore those differences when interacting with my study participants, who also shared same first language. I presumed that these differences strengthened the diversity existing among our life stories, even when we share similar linguistic and cultural background. At the same time, it should be acknowledged the important roles both language and culture play in influencing how the study participants shaped their narratives. Even though identity has been argued here to not be determined only in regard to where one is from, or what one's native language is, the study does not ignore the relations between a person's language, cultural background and his or her identification. The roles of language and cultural background specifically were most relevant in the narratives constructed in my conversations with my study participants. For instance, the collected data showcased that we could share mutual understanding about certain social phenomena in Vietnamese societal context, without further explanation from each party for more details. This relevantly constructed their and my identity as people growing up in Vietnamese societies. This was another reason why I was motivated to reach out Vietnamese immigrants, so that I could also explore the similarities between me as the researcher, and my study participants, who all spoke Vietnamese as first language.

In addition to these reasons, according to Kosonen (2008, p. 22), a traditional theoretical viewpoint about immigrants' adaptation to their new home living environment sees the unidirectional acculturation process of immigrants, which focuses merely on the ideas that the immigrants change along with the mainstream society, and eventually may lose the original ethnic identities (see also De La Garza & Ono, 2015). However, Kosonen (2018) mentioned in her research the bi-dimensional models of adaptation process that proposed the opposite, stating that "acculturation can take several paths" (p. 22). De La Garza and Ono (2015) additionally introduced the theory of *differential adaptation*, demonstrating "adaptation is a complex and dynamic process that requires researcher to start by looking at the specific contexts, resources, and desires that shape an immigrant's relationship to culture" (p. 270). By conducting my research that studied how the Vietnamese immigrants' identities were constructed in the narratives telling about their lives, I also wanted to understand the dialogical

and dynamic characteristics of their adaptation journeys to the Finnish societal environment. As a result, my research could help confirming to the non-traditional viewpoint about adaptation processes of immigrants, underlining that one does not necessarily have to reject their Vietnamese ethnic-cultural backgrounds while adopting different cultural values and languages during the adaptation process (Kosonen, 2008, p. 22). Furthermore, as Vietnamese immigrants in Finland were praised by the president Halonen of Finland as “one of the best integrated immigrant communities in Finland [...] with Finns and Vietnamese both placing a value on hard work and competence”, in her speech to the president of Vietnam in 2008 (Kosonen, 2008, p. 15), I wanted to see what the expression “best integrated communities” could be understood and reflected through my study participants’ narratives about their experiences living in Finland.

It is additionally worth noting here the motivations behind my aims to explore both the differences and similarities between me and my study participants, situated in our interaction and conversations. According to Chawla (2017, p. 1), othering and otherness are crucial in the study of contemporary human identity and culture. In their study about ethnic identity development, Svensson, Berne and Syed (2018) has also highlighted the role of others in the process of one exploring what meaning ethnicity can bring to one’s self-understanding (p. 187). Trinh (1989) has also said, “you and I are close, we intertwine; you may stand on the other side of the hill once in a while, but you may also be me, while remaining what you are and what I am not” (p. 90), which suitably draws up a picture where we come to understand ourselves in relations with others, in terms of the differences to others; and we are as much in the role of “others” as in the role of “us”. Following from this perspective, as the researcher interacting with my study participants, I also participated in their narratives’ construction, such as by asking them further questions for clarifying, and commenting on their statements, or by constructing my narratives encompassing my opinions and telling about my own different life stories. Their identities constructed were correlated specifically to their social interactions with me, who shared their linguistic and cultural backgrounds; and vice versa. Moreover, during my data analysis process, I textualized and re-textualized their narrative few times before reaching my final findings. Through my own configuration and interpretation of the data, I presented the findings as most relevant for this research’s purpose, which again highlighted my direct participation in this research, as well as in the construction of my study participants’ identities.

As this research’s main objective was to study the participants’ identities constructed through their narratives, narrative analysis methodology was applied. In their study that also applied a

narrative approach, Svensson and Berne (2018) stated, “it is through the stories that people tell that identity is constructed and through which individuals make sense of who they are and what they have experienced” (p. 188), which additionally confirmed the suitability of applying narrative analysis as the study’s methodology. Besides, as identity was established earlier to be constructed, in-flux, and continuously changing and processing (Bardhan & Orbe, 2012, p. 10), studying about people’s identities cannot provide an absolute truth, but merely a capture of the temporarily constructed ones, represented through how they recounted their life experiences in the narrative forms, and through how they made sense of themselves in relation with others reflected through those experiences (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006, p. XXXIV). Further justification for choosing this methodology for my study will be discussed later in chapter four.

The paper began with discussion about essentialist assumptions about identity. Starting from that point, the paper elaborated theoretical points about identity politics in order to demonstrate the vastness of this concept, beyond the essentialist view that identity was merely internal psychological entity. Later, non-essentialist theoretical spectrums about identity (social constructionism, post-structuralism) would be elaborated, so that the instability and ever-becoming characteristics of identity could be highlighted. With narrative analysis methodology applied, I proposed the number of meetings with the study participants to be at least two times, and each meeting should not be less than 30 minutes. I treated the first meeting with each study participant as us getting acquainted with each other; and I saw that the length of each meeting as positively correlated with the extent and depth of the life stories they could share with me. The meetings were audio-recorded and the narratives were then transcribed. I conducted my analysis with dual focuses. The final findings presented the themes inductively derived from the collected data from the paradigmatic analysis viewpoint, as well as presenting each study participant’s constructed identity on a more coherent level. The latter was from a narrative analysis viewpoint. In the findings, the themes represented the shared concepts reflected throughout all four study participants’ narratives, which related with their identities as Vietnamese immigrants living in Finland to a certain extent. At the same time, these themes also represented other shared concepts their narratives had in commons, that related with their other life milestones independently from their migrating experiences, such as the similarities they shared in the identities being parents, or in the conditions of arriving to Finland as international students. From the standing point of paradigmatic point of view in analyzing the narratives, its strength has been described as the “capacity to develop general knowledge about a collection of stories” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15), while also automatically underplays the

unique and individualistic characteristic of each story (ibid.). Due to such a reason, the narrative analysis viewpoint was also applied to produce a further coherent and organized description of each participant's constructed identity, illustrating the individualistic factor in their identification and their narratives. This viewpoint also allowed me, as the researcher, to present my findings about each of them, as storied episodes of their on-going lives (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15).

2 RESEARCH TOPIC

According to Dow (2011), whether migration happens by forced circumstances or by voluntary, it is still a stressful event (p. 210). Encountering a new societal environment, a person needs to process new knowledge, and create new social relations that are sometimes based on different values. For instance, as Dow (2011) said, “many migrants come from cultures with a strong emphasis on the family and find it very challenging to adapt to a country with a culture that emphasizes individuality and independence” (p. 210). Whether people do expect those differences moving to a new place or not, they may then still recount to experience a process of adjustment to the newness, at little or great extent (see Dow, 2011). This reported adjusting process is unique for each individual when relocating to a different living environment, for everyone has different agencies, different perceptions about things, and each person can evoke his or her societal and cultural knowledge differently. It has been additionally suggested that “culture is never just ‘culture’, but is always ‘culture in action’ through the various identity categories that people invoke during local, and contextually specific forms of social interaction” (Stokoe & Attenborough, 2015, p. 89). In this sense, when a person relocates, he or she may have complex relationships with both their ethnic ‘cultures’ and the ‘cultures’ of their new living environments. It should not merely be the cultural environment imposing on the person as an independently existing entity, but the person’s reported adjustment process is a two-way communication between him/her and the people living that culture, reflected through their social interactions and social relationships, which can evoke both sides’ different knowledge and possibly construct new meanings for each other at the same time.

And yet, there exists a term “cross-cultural adaptation” as an “all-inclusive sense to refer to the complex process through which an individual acquires an increasing level of ‘fitness’ or ‘compatibility’ in the new environment” (Kim & Gudykunst, 1987, p. 9). According to De La Garza and Ono (2015), an immigrant’s recounted adaptation process, or in another word – acculturation process, in fact can vary greatly “in relation to the ways that agency, power, and discourse structure” his or her experience (p. 275). Their study on *differential theory of adaptation* highlighted both the diversity of each individual’s unique migrating paths, and the dialogical aspect of immigration experience (De La Garza & Ono, 2015). It is this dialogical aspect which I consider as one of core factors that encourage the immigrants’ self-reflection and adjusted self-understanding, given their interaction with different societal and cultural contexts. In fact, there are also many cases of immigrants relocating because they seek for

experiences from differences, and many of whom have hinted at the expansion in their worldviews, the adjustment and/or maturity in their life perspectives through those experiences. Baynham (2015, p. 79) has in fact, compared migration as being similar to the experience of “a young man going out into the world”.

As a result, these individuals may eventually obtain “a personal transformation beyond the boundaries of any single culture and beyond “either-or” characterization” (Kim, 2015, p. 4). Therefore, I decided then to invite study participants with immigrant backgrounds for my study. Furthermore, it has been said that the topic of identity is arguably essential in the context of immigrant communities (Hatoss, 2012, p. 47). According to Hatoss (2012), identity in these communities can be more than a choice of the home or the host country, as the immigrants may be presented with interconnected identity choices that “are co-constructed through everyday dialogic discourse with members of the host country” (p. 47-48). Hatoss (2012) underlined the complexed involvement of both immigrants and their new home living environments, in their identification during their adjustment processes; and that how these immigrants understand, as well as construct their identities in the new context, is certainly not straightforward as to choosing the right answer between two given options. Additionally, taking into consideration what Bhabha (1994) said discussing about his concept of “Third Space”,

The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with “newness” that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. [...] it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent “in-between” space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. (p. 7)

The “borderline work of culture” that Bhabha (1994) mentioned in above paragraph can be considered to imply at the spaces where contact and communication between difference cultural backgrounds, such as in the case of immigrations, happen (Ikas, 2009). It was described that in this “in-between” space, “the negotiation of identities assumes new dimensions” (Ikas, 2009, p. 129). This motivated me further to view the circumstances of immigration as distinctive case to explore the immigrants’ identification and adjusted self-understandings. They may be encouraged further to look beyond the “cultural and linguistic cells” (Dervin & Risager, 2015, p. 27) in their comprehension of selves, as well as to be free from the knowledge and practices which have been ‘naturalized’ for them, so that they can find new meanings upon their own negotiations between different societal and cultural backgrounds. As Bradatan (2014, p. SR12) points out, cultural uprooting, “should you survive it, can be the greatest of philosophical gifts, a blessing in disguise ... [it] gives you a chance to break free. All that heavy luggage of old “truths”, which seems so only because they were so familiar, is to be left behind” (cited in Kim, 2015, p. 4).

In current accelerated global era, it seems though, that the acts of quickly labeling a person's identification based on pre-determined identity categories still carries on (see, for example, Hilde & Mills, 2017) as reactions upon possible feeling of threat and the rises in questions of belonging (i.e. Weedon, 2004). Hilde and Mills (2017) further said, "what is missing [...] is an understanding of the sense making processes that certain immigrants face when attempting to make sense of their new country [...]" (p. 151). The gaps in understanding about immigration experiences and their sense-making processes might have led people to presume about each other based on existing generalizations. In the context of immigration, these gaps can affect their integration and commitment to their new home living environment (i.e. Hilde & Mills, 2017; Hatoss, 2012; Korhonen & Siitonen, 2018), which can arguably influence the harmony of the society in a negative way. Placing Hilde and Mills' (2017) statement in this research regarding Vietnamese immigrants, there also appeared to be a lack of studies exploring these immigrants' sense-making processes. These processes can be reflected in the immigrants' narratives talking about their experiences; and it is through such processes that the immigrants' identity works can be understood (Baynham, 2006, 2015).

When people speak, their discourses may not be merely linguistic tools to express their inner thoughts; but their discourses can also construct their identities at the same time. People's discourses were further considered as allowing their abstract and in-flux self-identification process exist in temporary forms, at the presents moments when people interact with others (see also, for example, Drzewiecka, 2017). The interaction is continuous and mutually between speaker and listeners, through which identities of both parties involved are co-constructed, through their own discourses as well as through discourses of others. (De Fina et al., 2006) Additionally, story-telling has always been considered as essential in human's lives, helping people – whether individually or in larger social units – "to make sense of what exactly has gone on" (De Fina, Georgakopoulou & Barkhuizen, 2015, p. 28). In this sense, discourses, or more precisely, the stories people tell about their lived experiences can be the exploratory grounds for the construction of identity, reflected through interlocutors' choices and management of words, sequences of talk, what stories and how they tell the stories, situated in that specific social interaction (see, for example, De Fina et al., 2015). Besides, while speaking, and interacting, interlocutors may also reach to certain reflections and new thoughts emerging about themselves. This way of looking at identity is particular in current post-modern times. (see, for example, De Fina, 2003)

Based on these theoretical points, I wanted to examine the ways immigrants made sense of themselves and others, reflected through their life stories. Baynham (2006, p. 396-397) has also described as following,

narratives of migration and settlement surely highlight pervasive characteristics of self-presentation and identity work, particularly perhaps in relation to the revalorization of existing identity categories and the integration of new and emergent ones into complex lamination of the self, this providing a rich source of insights into the construction of identities in discourse.

Moreover, according to Kosonen (2008), even though there had been a few research focusing on the Vietnamese immigrants in Finland, they mostly concerned the topics of ethnic identity and psychological well-being during acculturation (p. 17). This specifically underlines the necessity for conducting more research about Vietnamese immigrants residing in Finland, as well as broadening the research' topics to the areas. For instance, we can notice that both Kosonen (2008) and Valtonen (2019) centralized their researches about the Vietnamese refugees arriving in Finland around the years of 1970 - 1980. There seemed to be no studies yet regarding later waves of Vietnamese immigrants relocating to Finland, or the ones who arrived first as sojourners (i.e. international students, expats), who changed their statuses to immigrants afterwards upon their decisions to stay permanently in the country. Additionally, Kosonen (2008) pointed out that the majority of studies conducted about Vietnamese immigrants' acculturation had been then situated in the United States, Canada or Australia – “where there is the opportunity for frequent co-ethnic relations, support, identity models and chances to ‘act and be Vietnamese’ among Vietnamese” (p. 56) (see also, for example, Hatoss, 2012; Hilde & Mills, 2017; Torress & Wicks-Asbun, 2014). However, studies exploring Vietnamese immigrants' acculturation, or in general, Vietnamese immigrants' experiences in Finland, may still be relatively low. In her work, Kosonen (2008) also described that Finnish societal context in regard to immigration is much contrasting to immigrant-rich countries, where “ethnic communities can be sources of support and social capital for their members” (p. 16). Valtonen (2019) also addressed Finland as “new gateway” country, with shorter tradition of immigration, comparing to countries as Canada and United States. This further highlighted the uniqueness of the Finnish societal context regarding its immigrants' experiences and the needs to have more scientific studies in this area.

Because of these reasons, I decided to conduct this research with the aim as to draw attention, and to recommend future research on the diversity of Vietnamese immigrants' experiences in Finland, which stretched beyond the experiences of the first Vietnamese refugees in the country. In addition to that, it seemed that there had been mostly studies done in the topics of acculturation processes, and psychological well-being of the Vietnamese immigrants while

adapting to their new home living environment (i.e. Kosonen, 2008; see also Liebkind, 1996b; Liebkind & Kosonen, 1998; Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000); cultural identity, ethnic identity formation or the identity development of the Vietnamese adolescents of immigrant backgrounds in their new living societal contexts (i.e. Nguyen & Williams, 1989; Phinney & Ong, 2002; Vo-Jutabha, Dinh, McHale & Valsiner, 2009); while studies that viewed these immigrants' identities as constructed through discourses or narratives are rather limitedly available, especially in the scope of the past 10-20 years. Therefore, I aimed to have my study fill in such a gap, in order to additionally encourage more research in future in the spectrum of non-essentialist theoretical approach towards identity concept. I was also motivated to design my research to embrace the story-telling factor in exploring my study participants' narratives. When the research finalized its findings, one main aim I hoped to achieve was breaking down the 'imagined' boundaries established for my study participants' identities in terms of preset categories, e.g. nationality, physical appearance, mother tongue. Their identities should also be acknowledged as continuous processes since their lives are still on-going journeys. As post-structuralist approach regarding identity would be mentioned in the study (see further in chapter 3.4), the elusive and instability characteristics of meanings would be underlined, which consequently further illustrated how our identities might not ever be fixed, be guaranteed or be ascertained (Drzewiecka, 2017, p. 2). On the other hand, although the study participants' identities as Vietnamese immigrants living in Finland were brought forward in this study, they were not applied to define these immigrants wholly, but they were treated as a narrowed focus of this study. An important distinction I wanted to convey in my research, was that my study participants' experiences being Vietnamese immigrants in Finland were part of their identifications, but did not govern and limit their identities that would always be in becoming. Given all these elaborations, I proposed the thesis research question as following:

- How are identities of the Vietnamese immigrants, who live in Finland, constructed in the narratives encompassing their life experiences?

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 The Question - “Who am I?”, and Essentialist View of Identity

“Who am I?” - This is neither a question with clear answer, nor a question people may here only one time in their lives. It is a question requiring people to pause, to look at themselves, at their lives, so that they may form certain ideas of what their answers are. We come across more studies talking about the concept of identity through raising that exact question, and debating what matters in our lives can determine, or help defining us (see, for examples, Stelzl & Sligman, 2009; Moro, Skandrani & Vijayaratnam, 2019). According to Luyckx, Schwartz & Vignoles (2011, p. 2-3), “the term identity is sometimes applied as a catch – all label for biological characteristics, psychological dispositions, and/or social-demographic positions”. However, they stated that these characteristics “only became part of identity to the extent that they are interpreted and infused with personal and social meanings, and that these meanings are applied to define individuals or groups – in other words, to the extent that people use them to answer, ‘who are you?’” (Schwartz, Luyckx & Vignoles, 2011, p. 2-3) It can be understood that these identity characteristics then do neither tell whole ‘truth’ about ourselves nor define us wholly, but they have been chosen by us in describing who we are. In addition to this, Brubaker and Cooper (2000) pointed out, while daily discourses produced by ordinary social actors in our daily lives regarding identity is important phenomenon, they are not sufficient for analytic purposes (p. 5). They further stated, “just as one can analyse ‘nation-talk’ and nationalist politics without positing the existence of ‘nations’, or ‘race-talk’ and ‘race’ – oriented politics without positing the existence of ‘races’, so one can analyse ‘identity-talk’ and identity politics without, as analysts, positing the existence of ‘identities’” (p. 5). Take into consideration their statement, a concrete definition of identity may not exist, as the concept itself is arguably constructed. Therefore, this study does not aim to defy identity concept either, but merely presents different post-modern theoretical approaches in viewing such a concept. Following from this angle, the findings also will discuss study participants’ identities as temporarily constructed in the emerging narratives, situated in their interactions with me, which cannot be taken for certainty beyond this study’s scope.

Our lives are on-going projects, we continuously change accordingly with our discourses, and our subjectivities correlating with different social interactions. How we identify includes both our own self recognition and others’ recognition about us. (see, for examples, Dervin & Risager, 2015; De Fina et al., 2006) However, this has not always been the way we look at the

concept of identity. According to Kim (2017, p. 1), “systematic inquiry in identity can be traced back to psychologist Erikson’s (1959,1980) groundbreaking work”. In Erikson’s (1959,1980) study, a person’s identity represents his or her “essence”, emerging during the formative years and continuously evolving throughout his or her life. A person’s identity development is “shaped” by both the individual’s personal experiences and social experiences with others. (Kim, 2017, p. 1.) This early conceptualization of identity considered our identity as a unitary psychological concept – a commonly recognized essentialist approach (see also, Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 7). Moreover, Burr (2015, p. 33) explained essentialism as “a way of understanding the world that sees things, including human beings, as having their own particular essence or nature, something which can be said to belong to them and which explains how they behave or what can be done with them”. While this essentialist approach towards identity has been somewhat considered as ‘common sense’ to many of us (see, for example, Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 6), it may be no longer sufficient, especially due to complex multi-cultural and inter-cultural flows resulted from globalization. Identity begin to be recognized as being vaster than an internal psychological entity, like how Schwart, Luyckx and Vignoles, (2011, p.4) described as following:

[...] The contents of a person’s identity can include not only her mind, body, friends, spouse, ancestors, and descendants, but also her clothes, house, car, and the contents of her bank account. In other words, people view and treat as part of their identities not only social entities beyond their individual selves, but also material artifacts (Belk 1998, Mittal 2006), as well as significant places (Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff 1983).

While their statements did not yet take into consideration the construction of identity and the role of others in this construction, they might have led us to start recognizing that our senses of identity could stretch beyond what we had generally known. Additionally, there have been more studies placing identity concept within intercultural contexts, which shifted our attention from seeing identity as center of an individual’s personhood, to “the individual’s association with, or membership in, a cultural or social group” (Kim, 2017, p. 2). In response to the increasing perception of differences within and across societies, we also began to speak up more about ourselves, mentioning our association with our own ethnicity and our own cultural background to highlight who we are. As Kim (2017) said, the interactions across cultural backgrounds have further brought other group-based terms such as ‘cultural identity’, ‘ethnic identity’, ‘ethnolinguistic identity’ and ‘racial identity’ (p. 2). On the other hand, the shift to ‘pluralistic terms of identity’ has somewhat created border-constrained discourses about identity. Who people are, at the same time, have recently got determined more often by their belongingness, and by their appearances perceived by others. More than a unitary psychological entity, identity has also become a matter between inclusion or exclusion to some

existing social categories, such as religions, races, genders and so on. As Kim (2017, p. 2) stated below, people find more situations, in which their identities get determined beyond their own control.

A person is commonly viewed to develop and belong to one and only one particular culture or ethnic group: If someone sees himself or herself or is seen by others as, say, a Mexican American, then this person's identity is assumed to exclude all other identities.

Daugherty and Jackson II (2017, p. 1) suggested a theoretical angle to look at identity in the perspectives of politics as identity politics theory. In according with this theory, they stated that “one's identity is often based on personal or group characteristics and serves as classification scheme”; and that one's identity may be categorized based upon “common identity categories”, which include, “but are not limited to, gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, citizenship status, and age” (ibid.). On the other hand, they pointed out that these categories did not exclusively determine a self-identity.

3.2 Identity Politics Theory

Daugherty and Jackson II (2017) presented two types of identity, avowed or ascribed identities. The former is “ones with which we identify and that we essentially join”, and the latter is “socially assigned to us by others, such as race” (Daugherty & Jackson II, 2017, p. 1). These two types of identities confirm to the complexity and multi-facetedness of identity concept. This means that a person's self-identification can be different from other's identification about oneself. For instance, I can identify as international student in Finland, who have lived abroad many years and who do not confirm to the pre-determined characteristics that I perceive as usually being applied in the general descriptions of a Vietnamese person, or of an Asian person on a broader level. However, others who have not yet known me, will still likely ascribe me as a female Vietnamese/Asian student in Finland, classifying me as belonging to the group of female Vietnamese/Asian students, and presuming that I confirm to the existing perceptions they may have had about this group. Daugherty and Jackson II (2017, p. 1) addressed this experience as “racial identity politics” and they put emphasis onto three main components in identity – “biological, social and individual”.

Biological components include “genotypical traits that are commonly associated with one's identity”, such as skin colors, our facial structures, or the association of genitalia in the case of gender identity (Daugherty & Jackson II, 2017, p. 2). Individual component refers to one's ability of self-recognition and power to self-identify, despite others' recognitions (ibid.). This means that an identification of a person is not completed by others classifying him or her based

on biological traits, as well as by the general assumptions existing in societies about those traits. A person should be able to self-identify. His or her self-description may appear as different from others' assumptions, but the person has the right to have their own statements about themselves, based upon their own understanding of themselves.

Individual component refers to the self-agency that has only become more widely highlighted and more pressured from society to individuals in post-modern time. Because of such an agency, identity politics exist. (Daugherty & Jackson II, 2017) In earlier decades, we might have not been given spaces to self-describe comfortably. We can notice this in the recent decades, regarding the social movements of LGBTQ communities and of feminism, which have grown stronger through the years. Daugherty and Jackson II (2017) also said, "a political movement's respect for an individual's self-identification allows the individuals to explore otherwise socially stigmatized identities in safety and allows the movement to build a broader base while practicing its emphasis on respect for all" (p. 2). Following from their statement, being given a safe space to use our discourses with agency in our self-representations can be considered as a very important transformation in our societies in current times, comparing to earlier times of human history.

The third component is social component. Unlike Erikson's (1980) conceptualization of identities hinting at essentialism, social components here lean more towards social constructionism approach, which is also among the key theoretical backgrounds for this thesis. According to Burr, "social constructionism insists that we take a critical stance toward our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world and ourselves" (2015, p. 2). This approach is particularly contrasting to the essentialist understanding of identity. In the perspectives of social constructionism, humans do not have existing "essences" within us, and concept such as one's nature, one's personality should be instead critically questioned (Burr, 2015, p. 34). This theoretical perspective views that we can only understand ourselves in the presence of other people (Burr, 2015, p. 36), within social environments. Social constructionism research challenges then our general interpretation of someone's behavior as results of who they are. The thesis will elaborate further about the connection between identity concept and social constructionism approach in the next chapter. Returning to Daugherty and Jackson II's (2017) description about social components, their point is that the identity categories used for classification of someone are socially constructed, stating that even "those identities with genotypical trait associations are not simply natural categories" (p. 2). Therefore, those identity

categories we see as common and may use to identify someone, or ourselves, can still change over time because social knowledge always change and evolve.

In present societies, people's identities are unavoidably political, similar to what Kramsch (2015) pointed out,

[...] identity is not just a psychological self-awareness but political consciousness. It is a realization of your rights and entitlements and of the opportunities and options afforded to you. (p. 213)

Torres and Wicks-Asbun (2014) has also highlighted, in their work, how the legal status of immigrants and undocumented immigrants can limit not only those immigrants but also their children. According to them, immigrants tend to find themselves constrained in a state of "permanent temporariness" (Bailey et al., 2002) or "legal limbo" (Mountz et al., 2002; Merjivar, 2006), which consequently possibly place their children in the "in-between" space of liminal citizenship (cited in Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014, p. 196). The most important point they made was that these children were "unavoidably involved" in their parents' migration, and yet they were still being affected by the federal immigration policy, regarding undocumented immigrant children (Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014, p. 196). In their study, the politic and legal sides of identity could be reflected, as the children's identities appeared to be already decided for them in the policy-making, providing them the rights to public education but also limiting their future opportunities and goals towards higher education. (Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014)

Because of the above mentioned components (biological, individual, and social components), the theory of identity politics is mentioned here, as it demonstrates how our identities should not be seen as merely the "essence" inside us. Based on the demonstration of those components, Daugherty and Jackson II defined their theory of identity politics as "a politics in which resources and rights distribution is seen to revolve around membership inclusion or exclusion to particularly identity categories" (2017, p. 2). Identity politics is then based on the assumption of shared alliance between individuals within same groups, regarding political, social and economic interests (Daugherty & Jackson II, 2017, p. 3). For instance, all women may have common interest about not being inferior to men; because of which, people may presume one form of reaching gender equality for women, such as providing work opportunities for women, may be a shared goal and benefits for all women. For such a reason, identity politics yet implies an essentialist view at identity concept. It established two reductive ways of thinking about identity: "people who share an identity have common political/social/economic interests" and "identity is somewhat stable and measurable construct" (Daugherty & Jackson II, 2017, p. 3)

– viewing specific characteristics belonging to one’s identity as stable over time, especially regarding the characteristics involving gender or race themes that are likely to be involved with political and social movements.

On the other hand, one can interpret the ascribed identities mentioned in identity politics as similar to social categories. It may be due to the act of placing an individual as in-member or out-member of social group based on their similarities in appearances, actions, intentions or behaviors (Deschamps & Devos, 1998, p. 4), that rings familiarity. Deschamps and Devos (1998, p. 4) explained social category as “principally a cognitive category, where individuals who are supposed to share one or several features are grouped together”, and due to this sense, categorization is meant to help individuals to “simplify the perception of physical and social worlds” in their perceptions. One of the most common phenomenon resulting from social categorization that aim at simplifying, is stereotyping. Perhaps, this definition of Deschamps and Devos (1998) also supports a possible distinction between social categories and ascribed identities. Ascribed identities belong to identity politics theory, which demonstrates how our identities are assigned by society in terms of political interpretations, for examples, with socially constructed concepts such as gender and/or race. Social category is more inclusive referring any social groups that an individual can be considered as in-member or out-member. Additionally, in identity politics theory, the individual component emphasizes involvement of a person in their own identification. With the ascribed identities that “are socially assigned to us by others” (Daugherty & Jackson II, 2017, p.1), the person has the agency to confirm, deny or argue with them, on the basis of his or her self-definition. With the avowed identities that “are ones which we identify and that we essentially join” (Daugherty & Jackson II, 2017, p. 1), they can still be changing in our lives, if we think about possibilities that the social categories we identify with earlier may not remain the same throughout the course of life, but may have adjusted to various extents due to our experiences, or changed completely.

In line with the thesis’s approach, I also leaned towards the term “identity” more than “category”, because post-modern thinking somewhat sees social categories as ‘naturalized’ knowledge over time that have been taken-for-granted in a reductive process of identifying an individual (i.e. Dervin & Risager, 2015, p. 8). Using the term “identity” would imply how inclusive, vague, and abstract this concept can be, which was among the objectives of this thesis. Additionally, it may be also relevant to mention Tajfel’s (1972a) conception of social identity – referring to identity that is connected to the individual’s knowledge of belonging to a certain social group, as well as to the emotional and evaluative signification resulting from

this group membership (cited in Worchel, Morales & Paez, 1998, p. 5). Membership to a social group can be important in one's identity, which can also be noticed in the data collected from the study participants. At certain times, people will speak for the ethnic or social groups they identify as belonging to, because that in-group memberships are part of who they are (Deschamps & Devos, 1998; see also Lee, 1994, 1996; Weedon, 2004, p. 7). From the data collected, it can be reflected that an individual at times switched the pronoun from "I" to "we" within and between sentences, in order to either confirm or deny their similarities to certain social groups possibly assigned to them, for example, sentences that start off as "*people/they usually do/don't, but I [...]*". By doing this, the study participants might also be able to construct the reality that they belonged to certain social groups, which could carry the emotional and evaluative signification they attached to these memberships (Worchel, Moraels & Paez, 1998, p. 5). According to Deschamps and Devos (1998, p. 5), through stating the belonging to a group, an individual "acquire a social identity defining their specific positions in society"; while the act of differentiating one self to the others of the same group is defined by Turner (1981a) as personal identity (cited in Worchel, Morales & Paez, 1998, p. 5). Deschamps and Devos (1998) further pointed out that these two concepts, personal identity and social identity, should not be studied as oppositions to each other, as "one must at least consider the possibility of simultaneity between similarity and difference" (p.11). This means that with various terms and areas we can study about identity, a person's identity is still understood in correlations with others.

3.3 Social Constructionist View of Identity

[...] social constructionist is not just saying that one's cultural surroundings have an impact upon one's psychology, or even that our nature is a product of environment, including social, rather than biological factors. Both of these views are essentialist, in that they see the person as having some definable and discoverable nature, whether given by biology or by the environment, and as such cannot be called social constructionist. (Burr, 2015, p. 6)

In the study of Wallace (2002), he elaborated the constructionist viewpoint based on how he perceived of Kenneth Gergen's work, stating that social constructionist viewed our world as not a mind-independent reality; but its meanings and attached values exist because of how social groups living in the world organize their data of experience, in terms of culturally embedded conceptual schemas (p. 99). Cerulo (1997) also said, "the social constructionist approach to identity rejects any category that sets forward essential or core features as the unique property [...]" (p. 387). In the spectrum of social constructionism, research are then encouraged to understand people's behavior not in terms of their 'nature' within themselves, for it assumes that a person cannot obtain self-perception without social interaction and without

it being in regard to the social contexts (Burr, 2015, p. 6). It also believes that “the ways in which we commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts we use, are historical and cultural specific” (Burr, 2015, p. 4). This way of thinking seems to fit more suitably in the current societies, where people’s conflicts can emerge from lack of awareness for the differences in historically and culturally bounded social norms. For instance, in terms of historical specific, Burr (2015) said that our views regarding what is acceptable for children to do were no longer the same as in earlier times (p. 4). Besides, social constructionism approach does bring forward the cultural factor in our frame of thinking and understanding, in order to highlight the point that our perspectives are neither the truth nor being any nearer to the “truth” than other ways (Burr, 2015, p. 4; see also Brubaker & Cooper, 2002, p. 99). In this sense, regarding the concept of identity, what we have come to know and treat as general knowledge have been further criticized for their problematic appliance as absolute truth (see further in Brubaker & Cooper, 2002, p. 10). Seeing identity as a psychological entity residing within us is merely one existing way towards this concept (Burr, 2015, p. 4); and social constructionist approach encourages exploring identity in different ways that do not demonstrate the tendency to “seek dispositional explanations for human behavior, and to look for causes of behavior in psychological states and structures [...]” (Burr, 2015, p. 7; see also Cerulo, 1997, p. 387). With this theoretical approach, the concept of identity gets more complex, because it is encouraged to be understood in terms of social processes, instead of being explained in hidden structural states of mind, such as in the way that a person’s certain behaviors can be explained based on his or her personality traits (Burr, 2015, p. 11). Identity is then not seen as an internal entity that people have or ought to search for, but it is a process of socialization involving us and others (Burr, 2015, p. 11-12; see also Brubaker & Cooper, 2002, p. 10).

Furthermore, social constructionists consider our languages as “one of the principle means by which we construct our social and psychological worlds” (Burr, 2015, p. 10), which implies that our understandings of selves, of others are correlated with how we have applied the using of languages to construct and attach the meanings to the world around us. Certain concepts existing are because of us continuously reproducing them in our daily practices of speaking languages. (Burr, 2015, p. 10) In this sense, as there exists a diversity in our uses of languages, there arguably cannot exist a universal structure in understanding and explaining people’s identities. Some terms, words, expressions in one language referring to identity concept may not find equivalent meanings in another language, as noted from the data collected, which will be discussed further in the study. On the other hand, even the term “identity” itself in English can be relatively ambivalent in its widespread appliance in scientific studies (Brubaker &

Cooper, 2002). According Brubaker and Cooper (2002), the overusing of the term “identity” might have led to its connotation being confused or lost in the analytical research that aimed to present identity as “multiple, unstable, in flux, contingent, fragmented, constructed, negotiated” (Brubaker & Cooper, 2002, p. 11). While identity might have gained more attention in non-essentialist sociological studies, the term “identity” could also generate higher ambiguity (Brubaker & Cooper, 2002, p. 1). Consequently, Brubaker and Cooper (2002) suggested studies to use other less congested terms, for instance, identification (p. 14). The term “identification” specifically can lean more towards the idea that identities are processes done by discourses, without the needs for specifying clearly the agents that do the identifying (p. 16). In our current era, it seemed then that, not only different approaches were invited for studying identity but the term itself was also debated for further reviewing. This can suitably showcase the relation between human’s social concepts, social knowledge, and our using of languages, which are all still evolving through times.

In social constructionist paradigm, people are not born with a determined core that they come to be aware of, but their identities are processes that are constructed in the social interactions with others, and through their engagements in social practices (Burr, 2015, p. 11). Additionally, in regard to personal agency and the self, Burr (2015) mentioned two ideologies as micro and macro versions of social constructionism (p. 27). She explained that the distinction between these ideologies lied in the idea of us having a sense of personal agency in constructing our selves. According to Burr (2015), micro version of social constructionism “implicitly affords us personal agency”, while macro version implies that “individual persons, either alone or collectively, have no capacity to bring about change” (p. 27). In both versions, the self is though explained not in terms of our internal “nature” that constitutes the basis of our action (ibid.) Furthermore, Burr (2015, p. 153) stated that the “imagined” stability (my own emphasis) and coherence of the self could be arguably due to people’s using of languages, such as the using of the psychological words as ‘I’ and ‘me’. I borrowed the term “imagined” here from the work of Anderson (2006) about *Imagined Communities*, where he argued about the imagined boundaries established around nations, states or communions. Returning to Burr’s (2015) point, she elaborated:

It is as if we non-consciously reason that since the words ‘I’ and ‘me’ exist, then specific entities referred to by those terms must also exist; there must be an ‘I’ and a ‘me’ in the same sense that there are lions and brown sauce. [...] The simple existence of the word ‘I’ allows us to foster the belief that we are autonomous individuals, that each of us is represented by a coherent, unified self, and furthermore that this self contains mechanism and processes, the subject matter of psychology, that are responsible for our actions. (p. 153)

Following from what she pointed out, one's identity may be more discursive performances of the speakers, rather than expressions of their internal essences; as social constructionism does not see people or the world with structures to discover, but its focus is on processes instead (Burr, 2015, p. 12). The word "I" itself merely created a unique position for the speakers, clarifying that "it is me, and no other" is committed to act on their discourses (Burr, 2015, p. 153). It should not be applied in the same ways with words having indexical functions (i.e. lion, brown sauce) that can be referred or pointed to as existing objects (ibid.) Furthermore, it was pointed out that there could also be many languages, which did not have pronoun "I" as in English (ibid.) Burr (2015) has also said, most "personality words would completely lose their meanings if the person described were living alone on a desert island" (p. 37). She stated that without others' involvement in our understanding in any social environment, how "can a person be said to be friendly, shy or caring?" (ibid.). Continuing from this argument, the existence of "I", "me" and this individual's identity is arguably not due to any objective evidences, but rather due to how the individual have understood these concepts and drawn upon them in making sense of themselves, in relations with others (Burr, 2015, p. 35)

The role of others has not only been highlighted in social constructionism, but also in phenomenology – the systematic study of experience and consciousness (Chawla, 2017, p. 1). We project self-representations to others, through which we also become more aware of our selves (Chawla, 2017, p. 2). When an individual interacts with others, his or her self may be considered as being actively performed (Chawla, 2017, p. 1-2). Moreover, we are not only "we" in subjective senses, but we are at the same time "us" in objective senses (Chawla, 2017, p. 2). In line with the explanation of Chawla (2017), the word "us" implies at our social selves taking on the attitude of others, which are resulted from our social interactions; while the word "we" can be seen as response of the individuals to "us", representing the attitude of others (p. 2). In this understanding, the selves are argued to be existed "as an intersubjective relationship and a social process" that comprises of both "we" and "us" (ibid.). Therefore, it may be necessary to recognize that one's self cannot be constructed as a self without the Other (ibid.).

On the contrasting note, there exists a common assumption that while a lot of matters about us are parts of us, they are not our essences that stay somewhat consistent throughout our lives. While research about identity that embraces social constructionist point of view seems to gain more attention and encouragement in recent decade, in responding to the highly-criticized essentialist view, the latter has not yet disappeared from our discussions regarding identity. As a matter of fact, essentialism still seems to be more comprehended and more widely applied in

the non-academic contexts. (Brubaker & Cooper, 2002, p. 6) According to Brubaker and Cooper (2002), these dual orientations cease to exist because identity is treated as both a category of practice - which people use in viewing and presenting their selves throughout ordinary daily lives - and as a category of analysis that are applied for scientific purposes (p. 4-5). Moreover, Hall and Du Gay (1996, p. 2) have said, identity is still in its own transformation, caught between the essentialist approaches that are almost common senses to us, and the new arising approaches that are theoretically more suitable to our post-modern societies. Taken those information into consideration, even though social constructionism, or on a broader level, non-essentialism theoretical approaches to identity are not yet familiar in everyday social discourses, they are still acknowledged as suitable shifts for scientific research about identity. In social constructionism theoretical spectrum, the 'essence' of human, the core of identity is questioned, as how we come to know such an essence and how we come to describe such a core, without languages, our discourses, and without the others. Hall and Du Gay (1996, p. 4) have further pointed out that, "identities are constructed through, not outside, difference". Identity, in this theoretical context, is thus not a natural internal entity born with us or residing within us, waiting to be discovered, but it is a result of our continuous meaning-making processes of the social world throughout our lives (see, for example, Burr, 2015; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000).

One of the key points made by social constructionism is that it places the taken-for-granted knowledges in human societies under critical lenses, and challenges the "natural" existence of social categories. If no concepts can be taken for granted in this paradigm, the existence of common sense – the social knowledge that have been 'naturalized' to people through generations of living – is also being challenged. How have certain understandings, certain social behaviors, manners and knowledge then come to be accepted as common sense? In addition to Garfinkel's (1967, p. 76) definition of common sense as "the accumulation of members' knowledge of the organization of social life" (quoted in Dervin & Risager, 2015, p. 127), post-modern theorists who approach to identity in terms of discourse and narrativity, such as De Fina (2003/2006/2015) and Baynham (2006/2015), have also answered this question by referring to Bourdieu's notion of habitus. They explained common sense as "the product of people's continuous and unconscious participation in discourse and other kinds of social practices that make social relations and roles and cultural constructs appear 'natural' to them, in the constitution of cultural and identity repertoires (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82)" (quoted in Dervin & Risager, 2015, p. 50). These theories emphasized the important role of human in constructing the "natural" appeals of our common senses. They do not exist separately from

human, similarly to how the world was argued earlier as not a mind-independent reality (Wallace, 2002, p. 99). Instead, human are the ones constructing the meanings of ‘common senses’, in enacting and reproducing through discourses people’s social knowledge that are accumulated over generations. Moreover, as I mentioned earlier, social constructionism stated that there should be no perspective that are the ‘truth’ or nearer to the ‘truth’ than any others (Burr, 2015, p. 4), which also meant that the knowledge that we perceive as ‘common sense’ are not necessarily perceived in the same way by others.

Moreover, in some way, our identities have also become parts of, as well as are impacted by, the larger social discourses surrounding us. In Burr’s (2015) work, she had addressed the phenomenon, in which individuals were conceptualized mainly in terms of discursive and societal structures, as macro social constructionism (p. 27). The macro level of social discourses can constrain an individual’s identification process, for example, in the case of immigrants and their new living environments. Immigrants may remain with the image of being immigrants, as ‘outsiders’ to their new home living environments, due to their immigrant statuses given by political and social institutions (i.e. Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014); or when immigrants are provided limited social benefits as they are described to be non-native in social discourses, while the concept ‘native’ itself can be challenged of its taken-for-granted practices (see, for example, Balf, Dutro, Kazemi & Lin, 2008 – their study revolved around the questions of “What Are you and Where Are You From?” in a diverse public school communities). Even when the immigrant person wants to represent his or herself differently, they may still be seen as merely immigrant by others. Examples like those can also reflect the relevance of identity politics theory, which in fact illustrates political factor of the concept of identity nowadays.

This chapter has generally presented how social constructionism approach viewed identity concept. Social constructionism is mentioned in this paper to highlight the role of social interaction, of social environment, and most of all, of others in a person’s identification. Social constructionism is also a suitable theoretical approach for challenging our common way of viewing identity as essence in daily lives. It provides us means to question the knowledge we have presumed to be common senses, as in how they have been accepted as common and shared knowledge by communities. Moreover, social constructionism emphasizes how language should be understood not as an expressing linguistic tool of human’s thoughts, but as the principle means in constructing our ‘reality’ (Burr, 2015). Our meanings do not pre-exists language, but language has instead somewhat established a framework of meaning that human drew on in interpreting the social world around us. At the same time, human’s evolving using

of languages also continuously construct new meanings for social knowledge. (Burr, 2015, p. 10-11) In the next chapter, I will elaborate further into the fluidity of meanings that are describes in post-structuralist linguistic theory and its connection to viewing identity concept in post-modern era.

3.4 Post-structuralist View of Identity

First and foremost, it is worth noting here the interchangeable using of the terms “post-modernism” and “post-structuralism” that one can notice from several studies, for the fact that these two terms cannot be cleanly separated (Agger, 1991, p. 111). According to Agger (1991), because of the lack of clear definitions of these terms, as well as clear separation between them, many studies with the objectives as deconstructing definitions and categories are considered as post-structural and/or post-modern (p. 112). It was also pointed out that post-modernism referred mostly to the reaction to scientific effort aiming at explaining reality; and it is, in truth, “a general and vague term which is applied in many disciplines” (Parry & Siponkoski, 2017). However, in the context of this paper, the term “post-structuralism” was applied as another theoretical approach viewing identity concept, while the term “post-modernism” might refer to the non-essentialist theories regarding identity generally. The reason for this is because I wanted to discuss identity in terms of the conception of subjectivity, that was described as post-structuralist approach, on the basis of Drzewiecka’s (2017) work. In addition to that, in De Fina’s (2003) work, she also viewed that post-structuralist and social constructionist theories had contributed differently to the notion of identity (p. 15-16). She stated that while social constructionist theories underlined how social reality was constructed and what this meant for understanding identity, post-structuralist approach brought forward the idea of ‘the subject’ in language, “pointing to the irreducible link between the constitution of subjectivity itself and language” (p. 15).

Secondly, in line with Agger’s (1991) and Drzewiecka’s (2017) research papers, elaboration of post-structuralism here should also start with brief introduction about its leading post-structural author, Jacques Derrida, his work and its meanings to the field. In term of structuralist linguistic theory, linguist Ferdinand de Saussure defined a sign as having two-part model – a signifier and a signified (Baines, Crawford, O’Shaughnessy, Worcester & Mortimore, 2014)). For example, considering the concept of “tree”, signified part is the meaning behind concept of the tree, whilst signifier part is the speaking form that the sign takes. With de Saussure’s (1979) theory, a sign can only be understood when it is expressed through a spoken form humans can see, hear, touch and sense. The relationship between signifier and signified parts

of a sign is strongly interlinked, but it is also arbitrary. (Rellstab, 2017) Contrasting to Saussure's (1979) structuralist theory, Jacques Derrida (1976, 1978, 1981, 1987) pointed out that "the sign's meaning is shaped by relations with multiple other signs and the signified always changes into another signifier" (Drzewiecka, 2017, p. 1-2). In post-structuralist linguistic theory then, meanings can never be fixed and be present, since all signifiers "have their own multiple signified, which immediately change into signifiers and so on" (Drzewiecka, 2017, p. 1-2). Because of the contribution made by Derrida's (1976, 1978, 1981, 1987) work, an important case made in post-structuralism is that every definition can deconstruct itself (Agger, 1991, p. 112). Although it was reported that his work played a substantive role in literary text, providing an idea of deconstructive reading of texts, Agger (1991) underlined that his influence should be taken even beyond that. Most relevant to this study, Derrida's work reflected that language were not "simply a technical device for establishing singular, stable meaning", and drew our focus instead onto the deeply constitutional act of language (Agger, 1991, p. 114). Because any clarification and definition can be deconstructed, the ability to reach fixed or transparent meaning may not be plausible (Agger, 1991, p. 114). The meanings' production requires the references to other meanings "against which it takes its own significance" (ibid., p. 113). According to Drzewiecka (2017), this lies the connection between post-structuralism and identity concept. If meanings of language are not stable, the speaking subject itself and the reality constructed by language are not stable either. Identity is consequently always changing and not stable (Drzewiecka, 2017, p. 2), because being additionally in line with social constructionist theory, our identities are described to be constructed by our using of languages. Another scientific work describing this in-flux state of identity is of Hall and Du Gay's (1996) theoretical argument about race as *floating signifier*. Drzewiecka (2017) stated as following:

These post-structural notions were further developed by Stuart Hall, the founder of the Cultural Studies Centre in Birmingham, in his work on cultural identity and race. [...] Hall famously talked about race as a floating signifier. Since there is no biological basis for race, what "black" means changes depending on context and relations. [...] As the context, relations, and situation change, identity shifts accordingly. (p. 2)

Turning back to the concepts of subject and subjectivity, Kramersch (2015) defined subjectivity as a discursive product; and we ourselves become the subjects through "the symbols we create, the chains of signification we construct and the meanings we exchange with others" (p. 215). Weedon (2004) also saw subjectivity, which could consist of "an individual's conscious and unconscious sense of self, emotions and desires", as being constituted in language (p. 18). He further pointed out that through the speaking and thinking positions we occupy as subjects, in our process of using languages, senses of our identities could be reflected (ibid.). This

conception of subjectivity is a unique point of post-structuralist approach towards identity concept. Furthermore, Baynham (2015) suggested two concepts as identity brought about and identity brought along, in understanding the performance of identity in discursive forms. In his theoretical viewpoints, he defined identity brought along as similar to concept of habitus of Bourdieu (1977) – knowledge that were accumulated along the times. However, he pointed out that identity brought along should not be seen though as “essentialist pre-existing category but as discursively constituted, enabled and construed by the limits of language” (Baynham, 2015, p. 73). On the other hand, identity brought about is “the performance of identity” done through discourses, and the emergence of the speaking subject. As I mentioned earlier, in line with Derrida’s influence, the speaking subject itself is emergent, because it is made up of meanings that do not present his or her stable inner state or thoughts, but are constituted in languages (Drzewiecka, 2017, p. 4; see also Agger, 1991, p. 112-115). Therefore, identity should be considered then as “constellation of subject positions spoken by various discourses”, and may always be in becoming (Drzewiecka, 2017, p. 4).

One may question if identity is always in becoming, then why we still see our identities as being rather stable throughout our lives? Schwart, Luyckx and Vignoles (2011, p. 10-11) suggested a way to comprehend seemingly “stable” aspects of identity as “the outcome of successful processes of identity maintenance or defense”. This also implies at the identity work that I aimed to explore in this thesis. It is not because identity is a fixed psychological state for us to uncover throughout our lives, but its stability may merely reflect a cognitive process of us maintaining our perception of our own identity, so that it stays coherently throughout the courses of our lives. It may be also our cognitive process that uses such perceptions to defend, or to excuse ourselves for behaving or not behaving in certain ways, such as in the way that people construct narratives to reconcile inconsistencies in their senses of identities. (Schwart, Luyckx & Vignoles, 2011, p. 6, p. 10-11) There might have been other minor changes happening along our lives that influenced our senses of identities, but they may be overshadowed by major life events that could be perceived as more clearly affecting our identity shifts (Schwart, Luyckx & Vignoles, 2011, p. 10-11). In addition to this, it may be relevant to mention the process of articulation that was also elaborated by Drzewiecka (2017, p. 5). She described articulation as a continuous process assigning floating signifiers “to nodal points (i.e. signifiers whose meanings have been delimited by the larger discursive horizon in such a way that their meanings seem obvious and most do not question them) and partially stabilizes their meanings in a discursive formation” (Drzewiecka, 2017, p. 5). This implies that while meanings change continuously, our identities possibly appear to be stable throughout our

lives due to them being articulated by us, by our attempts in stabilizing their overall and evolving meanings in interlocking certain aspects in discursive forms (ibid.). Moreover, Drzewiecka (2017, p. 4) pointed out the work of contention in regard to identity positions, which were occupied by subjects. People accepting certain subject positions may not be merely because of their own willingness, but because of the impact of discourses established throughout a society (such as in political and legal systems, in education, public institutions, and mass communication); however, individuals can misrecognize themselves “as being the authors or sources of meanings rather than the effects of discourses that precede and shape them” (ibid., p. 4). Such a statement may also resemble to my earlier description that a person’s identification has become a part of and constructed by surrounding societal discourses. Individuals can become “the social subjects of particular discourses”, and consequently may interpret and construct social reality through the accepted identity positions provided to those subjects, as well as through the discourses relating with these positions. (Drzewiecka, 2017, p. 4)

Additionally, taking into consideration Butler’s (1993) work, the act of repetition was another phenomenon to consider what established the instability of the “I” that it also constituted (p. 311). Butler (1993) presented an example of her being a lesbian, questioning how she could both “be” one, and yet still stated as attempting to be one when she told her friends that “*I was off to Yale to be a lesbian*” (p. 311). In her argumentation, she then viewed the repeat “play” of her sexuality was precisely how the “I” (referring to herself) was insistently reconstituted as a lesbian “I” (ibid., p. 311). Following her notion of repetition, identity is seen as performativity, constructed not only through repetition in our discourses, but also through repetition manifested in the ways we dress or behave, as Weedon (2004) has said, “as individuals inserted within specific discourses, we repeatedly perform modes of subjectivity and identity until these are experienced as if they were second nature” (p. 7).

3.5 Narrative and Identity

Narrative – the telling of stories – is central to everyday communication between individuals. In narrating our experiences, we attribute meanings to them and in the process assume the position of knowing [...]. We learn the conventions of narrative from an early age from the stories that we hear, read and watch. (Weedon, 2004, p. 62)

According to De Fina (2003), the shift to social constructionist viewpoint in regard to identity has also generated new paradigms for narrative studies, which she pointed two main ones (p. 16). The first approach underlined how a self could be constituted when the individual narrated; since through the act of narrating, people were able to make sense of the experiences they had

had, and somewhat had a whole sense of who they were (De Fina, 2003, p. 12-13). In this paradigm, narrative was considered to be a central form for people to understand the world, of their experiences, of themselves and of others (ibid., p. 17). As post-structuralist theories also brought forward the views of seeing identity as an in-flux process, the concept of ‘positioning’ was also introduced in narrative studies, in order to highlight the dual involvement of both the storytellers and the audiences in constructing the identities (ibid., p. 17). The second approach also saw identity as a process and being “constituted in ‘performance’, negotiated and enacted, not internalized in any way, and with no substantial existence outside the local interactional context” (De Fina, 2003, p. 18). De Fina (2003) stated that because of this paradigm, studying narratives in terms of monologic stories were criticized, and focusing on the co-construction, as well as negotiation of identities as locally occasioned accomplishments, of all social actors involved in the interactions were suggested instead (p. 18). These points – the important of context in which the narratives were situated; the acknowledgement that a self could be comprehended because of its constitution in the narratives; the concept of positioning and the co-construction of identity of all interactants in narratives that were not produced in “naturally-occurring” way – were taken into consideration for this research that aimed to study identity construction through narratives (see further, De Fina, 2003).

Hatoss (2012) has said, narratives are most suitable for studying about identity work done in discourses (p. 48). In everyday lives, through the stories people tell others, they can shape their experiences in the form of discourses, which in turn assists them in making sense of their lives and attach meanings to the experiences (Berne, Svensson and Syed, 2018, p. 188). In order to tell a story with meaningful purposes, one may find oneself reflecting upon past experiences (De Fina, Georgakopoulou & Barkhuizen, 2015, p. 27). Moreover, De Fina, Schiffrin and Bamberg (2006) also pointed out in forming narratives, narrators had a tendency of having a plot line, presenting the story with high and low notes, complications and eventually a meaningful ending (p. 31). With this plot, people’s narratives appear to present a somewhat coherent reality than the actual life events. Because of this, narratives can be the sources to study how people have reflected and made sense of their life experiences, in order to form the narratives the ways they do. This is also what Geertz (1996) noticed upon human’s reflection:

What we can construct, if we keep noted and survive, are hindsight accounts of the connectedness of things that seem to have happened: pieced-together patternings, after the fact. [...] It calls for showing how particular events and unique occasions, an encounter here, a development there, can be woven together with a variety of facts and battery of interpretations to produce a sense of how things go, have been going, and are likely to go. (cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2-3.)

It is notable here the connection between reflection and narrative, which supports narrative as seemingly the perfect form people use to generate meaning of their life events, and at the same times, may get to understand their own selves more. As De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg (2006) suitably described about meanings of our experiences, “the past is not set in stone, but the meaning of events and experiences is constantly being reframed within the contexts of our current and on-going lives” (p. 36).

When people reflect, they are also the ones doing the negotiation of what (reflected through their uses of certain linguistic devices) and how (such as through the link they established between story-world and interactional world) in telling the stories, which in a way represent themselves in line with their self-perceptions. At the same time, they also somewhat formed negotiations with the surrounding social discourses, as well as with the other interactants involved, and consequently take up certain speaking positions, through which their identity performances may also be enacted. (De Fina, 2003; see also, De Fina et al., 2006) Narratives can give spaces for us to negotiate implicitly our stances within society, “through the use of performance devices such as alternation between dialogue and narration, pronoun switches, tempo, pitch, loudness, rhythm” (De Fina et al., 2006, p. 356). This suggests that our stories tend to indicate, to a certain extent, our relations to what social groups, what resistance and conflicts we might have faced and what implicit power relations to other groups we convey in our discourses (De Fina et al., 2006, p. 352). Besides, the interaction that narratives establish can include “intertextual connections” with other narratives about similar themes, such as the theme of immigration experience; and with other discourses, such as discourses revolving around “common images about immigrants circulated through institutions and media” (De Fina, 2003, p. 30). Additionally, it should be noted that the narratives they construct may contribute new meanings to the identification of their selves, as meanings have been described as being always elusive (Agger, 1991, p. 113).

Furthermore, De Fina (2003) has pointed out that the relationship between narrative and identity could be examined at different levels,

1. [...] identity can be related to narrators’ adherence to cultural ways of telling through the articulation of linguistic and rhetorical resources.
2. [...] identity can be related to the negotiation of social roles (both local and global) that conform or oppose the ones attributed to narrators by communities and individuals.
3. [...] the categorization of self and others and the negotiation of beliefs and stances that help narrators identify themselves as members of groups or distinguish themselves from members of other groups. (p. 19)

Considering these levels, people's life stories can reflect many different factors: social and ideologies that affect how one positions itself and others in the story; cultural and historical influences that result in how one tell the stories. Baker (2006, p. 101) has also stated, "our understanding of our own life and of what to do and how to do it to survive in society is a by-product of the stock of stories to which we are exposed from childhood onwards", which implies that our way of telling stories, our structuring of narratives may be shaped to a certain degree, by the cultural and societal environment we were most acquainted with while growing up. Besides, Baynham (2015, p. 75) further listed out four main characteristics that make narrative most suitable form of discourse in constructing the performance of identity: repeatability, involvement, distribution of evidential responsibility, pragmatic and meta-pragmatic explicitness. These narrative characteristics are related with the concepts of identity brought along and brought about that were mentioned above (see, further above, in sub-chapter 3.4).

"Identity brought along captures the accumulation and sedimentation of identity positions in habitus [...] as discursively constituted, enabled and construed by the limits of language" (Baynham, 2015, p. 73); to which the first characteristic of narrative – repeatability – responds to. Because narratives are repeatable, identity positions formulated through these narratives can be accumulated, so that they can be brought along our lives and appear to be seemingly stable through times, similarly to the concept of habitus acquired as gradual accumulation of social knowledge and Butler's (1993) concept of repetition presented earlier (Baynham, 2015, p. 71). The second unique characteristic of narrative is involvement (Baynham, 2015, p. 74). Certain features of narrative structures such as direct speech reporting clauses, or the using of pronouns, let narrators to be involved directly to their narratives, as well as involving others in a way that other discursive types cannot do. These features were alternatively described by De Fina (2003) as discursive mechanism, strategies and linguistic elements in the interactional level (p. 24). Thirdly, through the story-worlds, how narrators position themselves and others there can reflect the speaking positions they take in the interactional world, which is addressed as distribution the evidential responsibility (Baynham, 2015, p. 74). Baynham (2015) furtherly emphasized that "positioning is a key device in identity work" that are most likely done in narratives (p. 75). The final characteristic, pragmatic and meta-pragmatic highlighting, allow narratives to bring "then and there" moments in stories to what might happen "here and now" of current interactional world (Baynham, 2015, p. 74).

Lastly, another connection between our identity performances and our constructed narratives is because we do not merely tell the stories to report, but we do actions with our stories, to a

certain extent. We may open new directions of movement, new life lessons, new endings that could not be perceived by ourselves in the past, which now can lead to new different senses of ourselves and consequently affect the selves in future. (De Fina et al., 2006, p. 39-40) In addition to that, previous elaboration of post-structuralism has pointed out that identity is an in-flux process. When we construct narrative about our selves and lives, we may also perform the articulation of identity, attempting to interlock the ever-becoming meanings of our identities to nodal points and temporarily stabilizing our identities in the narratives. Therefore, narrating our life stories is seen as doing identity work. (Baynham, 2015, p. 80-82.)

3.6 Previous Research

It has been stated that the studies focusing on Vietnamese immigrants seemed to lean more towards the themes of their acculturation experiences and/or their psychological well-beings during their adaptation processes. Besides, it seemed that the few studies done on the topics of identity construction in narratives were not in regard to Vietnamese immigrants and/or refugees. (see further above, in chapter two; see also, for example, Hatoss, 2012; Baynham, 2006; De Fina, 2003) However, there have been though research exploring the identity development of Vietnamese adolescent in United States (see, for example, Dinh, McHale, Valsiner & Vo-Jutabha, 2009), or the identity construction of Vietnamese entrepreneurs in Poland (see, for example, Glinka & Brzozowska, 2015); however, these studies were not designed with narrative analysis methodology. In addition to that, there was the research of Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind and Solheim (2004) that placed their focus on Vietnamese immigrant adolescents in Finland, but their main aim was to research precisely about the determinants of these immigrants' school adjustments (including cultural identity), and not explore directly the theme of identity construction. Given these information, in order to reflect my study in terms of relevant previous findings, I will discuss the two following scientific studies. Firstly, I will elaborate my summary about the study of Hatoss (2012) that also applied the relationship between narrative and identity, in order to understand further the Sudanese refugees' identity construction and their experiences of 'othering', while living in Australia. The second study will be of Glinka and Brzozowska's (2015) for their similar focuses on identity construction and Vietnamese immigrants. However, to be more precise, these immigrants were also entrepreneur in Poland, which was another narrowed focus for their research.

Hatoss (2012) designed her research about the identification among the residents with Sudanese refugee-background in Australia, reflected through the narratives re-telling of their lived experiences. She also brought forward the theories viewing identity as being “constructed in social settings”, which can be “explored through discursive practices” (Hatoss, 2012, p. 49). However, she addressed these theories as constructivist identity theories. According to Young and Collin (2003), the terms “constructivism” and “social constructionism” can be at times “subsumed under an apparently generic and undifferentiated ‘constructivism’” (p. 374). They further pointed out, “the material that was labeled ‘constructivist’ in Brown and Brooks (1996) is renamed ‘social constructionist’ in Brown (2002)” (p. 375), which implied that these terms might still be in need of clarity for separate definitions and usage. In their paper, they stated a simple approach to distinct between constructivism and social constructionism as following, “the former focuses on meaning making and the constructing of the social and psychological worlds through individual, cognitive processes while the latter emphasizes that the social and psychological words are made real (constructed) through social processes and interaction” (ibid., p. 375). Taking their suggestion to consideration, while the paper adopted the term “social constructionism” from Burr’s (2015) work, the term “constructivist” applied in Hatoss (2012) did not though present an entirely different picture in regard to the construction of identity that had been elaborated here. In line with Young and Collin’s (2004) description, the term “constructivist” appeared then to underline stronger the process of construction from an individual’s perspectives. Therefore, even though the distinction between two terms were necessary to understand why they could be employed similarly and yet separately sometimes, they did not create much conflict with each other in the context of this study.

Returning to Hatoss’s (2012) study, she emphasized the suitability of studying identity development as an interactional process in discourses, and more precisely, in narratives (p. 49-53). She applied the theory of positioning in examining how individuals position their selves to themselves, and to others, in their discourses. Hatoss (2012) also stated that positioning was most relevant “to the context of narratives in dialogues, since through the enactment of past experiences, tellers can exhibit a complex array of identity work strategies” (p. 51). Her research collected life-story interviews of “ten males and four females between the ages of 22 and 48 from a community of approximately 400 Sudanese households”, who were described to be “born in Sudan and migrated to Australia between 2003 and 2007 as refugees or ‘sponsored’ humanitarian entrants” (ibid. p. 54). Hatoss (2012) designed her research analysis in two phase. The first phase paid attention to the identity labels (country of birth, nationality, ethnic group, resident in Australia, color, transition country, and continent of birth) used by

participants for their self-categorization and self-identification (p. 56). The second phase of analysis was said to further explore the study participants' narratives and their positioning in the stories (ibid., p. 58). In her discussion, Hatoss (2012) described how dynamic and complexity these refugees' identities were constructed, in correlations with how others identify them as well, as she said,

Narrators play with the dual positioning in the interactional world and the story world. On the one hand, they are downplaying the conflict with Australians, while on the other hand they are engaging in it through their positioning tactics. [...] Although Australia is generally known to be multicultural society where immigrants are accepted as equal, refugees with distinctive physiological features (such as dark skin colour) are highly visible and become easy target for being seen as 'foreigners' or 'strangers'. [...] Sudanese Australian have a strong ethnic pride, but they do not want to continue to be seen as outsiders. (p. 65)

The most relevant points from Hatoss (2012) study to my research is the similarities, to some extent, between our approaches in seeing narrative methodology as suitable way to study identity work of narrators, through which the contextualized construction of their identities could be reflected. Moreover, her study also brought out the role of "others". Hatoss (2012) demonstrated the tension between her study participants' complex self-identification and others' identification of them. While she did not explicitly elaborate further her role as another participant in these study participants' identity construction, she did acknowledge that their identity work done in the interview settings with "compassionate and trusted researchers" should not be taken the same as the identity they performed in real life contexts (Hatoss, 2012, p. 65).

In the study of Glinka and Brzozowska (2015), they established the lacking in consideration about entrepreneur dimension, in regard to research about immigrants' identities (p. 53), which was also their motivation to conduct the research. They addressed theory about identity construction processes in their literature review, underlining how they applied the ambiguous term "identity" as reference to the process of immigrants defining "their place and role in a host society, make sense of themselves and their actions" (p. 53-54). Although their study did not apply narrative inquiry, Glinka and Brzozowska (2015) mentioned the idea of narrative identity, circling around how individuals formed and maintained, constructed and reconstructed their senses of continuity and unity of selves through narratives (p. 55). In terms of immigrants' senses of identity, they stated that the immigrants often found themselves negotiating new "immigrant identity", since they had interacted with different cultures that were likely to have different frames of references (ibid., p. 55). According to Glinka and Brzozowska (2015), "immigrants construct their ethnic identity through constant ongoing interactions and dialogue with other individuals: from the host society, from other minority

groups, and from their own ethnic groups – living abroad and in a home country” (p. 55). They applied qualitative methods, collecting data by conducting semi-structured interviews (ibid., p.59); and designed a comparative analysis methodology to study about two different groups of study participants: immigrant entrepreneurs of Polish origin in the United States and of Vietnamese origin in Poland (ibid., p.57). They reported to use procedures of grounded theory in analyzing the collected data, in order to reach the final central categories – “being immigrant, being entrepreneur and the sense of nationality” (p. 60). In their conclusions, Glinka and Brzozowska (2015) stated that their research was compatible with the ideology that identity construction and re-construction process was complex and dynamic, as well as the assumption that immigrants had to adjust along having two different frames of reference (p. 71).

Although their research topic was also on the construction of identity, since Glinka and Brzozowska (2015) did not apply narrative inquiry as a methodology, there findings were not presenting how this construction could be reflected through the study participants’ discourses that were mentioned. My reason for discussing their study was because of their focus on the Vietnamese immigrants in regard to their senses of identities, which appeared to not be necessarily bounded to their profiles being adolescents growing up in a new environment than their parents’. The Vietnamese immigrants were described as always holding certain feelings for Vietnam, no matter the length of their time living in Poland (Glinka & Brzozowska, 2015, p. 63). The first generation were reported to have the strongest bond with Vietnam, while the second generation might still seek for answer to the question: “am I Vietnamese or am I Polish?” (ibid., p. 63). In my opinion, the authors explored the construction of the Vietnamese immigrants’ identities, as well as the Polish immigrants’ identities, in a collective way, even with the differences existing among these immigrants participating in the study. Their study illustrated how these immigrants sometimes found themselves in places of negotiating between their in-group memberships to the different societies they had resided in. Moreover, the author also pointed out the differences between Polish immigrants’ and Vietnamese immigrants’ attitudes towards entrepreneurship, which seemed to be partially in correlations to the differences in societal contexts that these immigrants lived in (Polish immigrants lived in the United States and Vietnamese immigrants lived in Poland). Although the illustrated themes provided readers a wide picture of these study participants’ experiences being immigrants and being entrepreneurs in new living environments, it can be argued that the study was not exploring the depth of these experiences, which led to the impression of them being generalized. The study might have also overlooked the individualistic diversity in the immigration experiences that were emphasized in De la Garza and Ono’s research (2015).

4 DATA & METHODS

4.1 Qualitative Research

As this thesis aimed at exploring how self's identity was constructed through narratives, it was sensible to apply qualitative methodological approach. Qualitative methodology allowed researchers to study their data in terms of depth, and provided researchers possibilities to understand the study participants' viewpoints through interacting with them. (Dang, 2016, p. 20) While quantitative methodology might reach a larger number of participants, qualitative fit more suitably with this thesis's research questions about identities and how they could be understood through individuals' life stories. Additionally, by aiming at approaching the data in-depth, I could uncover other deep-rooted cultural knowledge that may be reflected through participants' discourses. I also wished to interact with the study participants' physically, and observed the way they told their stories. As described earlier in the social constructionism theoretical spectrum, one could not look over the role of others in identity construction. Since identity was considered as always being in becoming and in changing, the data collected for this thesis did not aim at providing straightforward answers on neither the definition of identity, nor the definition of participants' identities. The data should reflect the complexity and fluidity of a self's identity; identifying a person based on preset categories was thus unsuitable. The data should instead support the points described in literature review, that identity was merely temporarily constructed through an individual's narratives telling about one's lived experiences, in relations with other involved interactants, at those specific moments. Moreover, as Denzin (1991, p. 68) also described in this following paragraph, studying about people's using of languages could be a challenging endeavor, but would respond suitably to the concept of identity illustrated so far in this study.

[...] language, which is our window into the subject's world (and our world), plays tricks. It displaces the very thing it is supposed to represent, so that what is always given is a trace of other things, not the thing – lived experience – itself. (cited in Silverman, 2004, p. 127)

With all these aspects in mind, it seemed rather sensible then to apply qualitative methodology.

4.2 Narrative Analysis

In line with below quoted paragraph, story-telling has always been a unique mode for complex human's lives to have an explicit form, with its ability to allow narrators to immerse their senses of selves to the stories.

[...] the storytelling that thrives for a long time in the milieu of work – the rural, the maritime, and the urban – is itself an artisan form of communication, as it were. It does not aim to convey the pure

essence of the thing, like information of a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. (Kim, 2016, p. 9)

It seems sensible then that studying about narratives to understand human's experience has become more popular in social sciences. "Narrative mode of thinking" focuses on the understanding of human's experiences through examining and understanding the experiences presented in their stories, as well as what emotion, perception, and thoughts that may be conveyed (Kim, 2016, p. 11). Narrative theory belongs to post-structuralist account, which has also "become integrated into other disciplines such as the psychoanalytic narrative approach, feminist narratology, and cultural studies – oriented narrative theory" (Kim, 2016, p. 7).

Using narratives as a research method is in fact not a new phenomenon. Atkinson and Delamont (2006, p. XXIV) said, "while life documents are not identical in form to narratives, as currently defined, the spirit of the early Chicago sociologists lives on in many approaches to life-histories and personal narratives in today's research climate". Narrative takes various forms such as informal everyday conversations, small or big stories, biographies and life histories. However, Bell (2009, p. 8), defined the difference between narrative and other discursive forms is that "narrative sequence is held together with a 'plot', and that the 'plot' is organized temporally and spatially [...]" (cited in Silverman, 2004, p. 366). On the one hand, it is undeniable that narrative is "an essential strategy of human expression" (Kim, 2016, p. 6). On the other hand, it is also warned that too much narrative can lead people to forget to live in real life versions. While human always return to the mean of telling stories in social interaction with others throughout our lives, whether in small or big stories, De Fina, Georgakopoulou and Barkhuizen (2015, p. 32) though pointed out the possibility of us becoming "entrapped by our own stories, imprisoned by their seemingly immovable hold upon us", which may result in us failing to be present in the moment. Moreover, many researchers criticize the credibility of using narratives and discourses in studying about human experiences, for they were believed to be insufficient of providing any concrete data. Discourses can be also created falsely by narrators to satisfy their needs in presenting a "plot", as it may be more convincing to tell a story in such a way. Besides, people who constantly want to make sense of their experiences, can highly depend on narratives in giving the meanings they seek for, and forget to simply experience their daily lives. (see, for example, Freeman, 2015) Despite those disadvantages from narrating too often, many other scholars have been embracing this method still, like Freeman (2015, p. 32) stated, "when it comes to understanding human lives, there is also no getting around narrative form such understanding assumes". Furthermore, in according with the elaboration about narrative and identity (see further above, in chapter 3.5), narratives seemed be the suitable exploratory

ground for studying about identity work and performance. Additionally, identities of the speaking subjects were elaborated here to be always in-flux, because any clarifications could be deconstructed; and identity could only be comprehended through it being constructed temporarily in discursive forms (see further above, in chapter 3.4). In this sense, because my research question was about how the Vietnamese immigrants, who lived in Finland, constructed their identities in their narratives, narrative analysis was chosen as a compatible methodology.

Narrative analysis does not merely focus on the type of discourse markers being used and what possible meanings lie behind them, but this method also takes into consideration a bigger picture of also how and why specific narratives are produced. With narrative analysis, researchers get to trace how narrators position themselves in relations with others in the story-world. From these positions, researchers may be able to explore how the narrators work with their own discourses to construct their identities in line with their perceptions, as well as what cultural knowledge the narrators drew on, or evoke. (see, for example, Baynham, 2006; Barkhuizen, De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2015) Additionally, Bamberg (1997a) proposed three levels to examine different positioning that narrators may present in their narratives: positioning of narrators in the story world vis-à-vis other characters, positioning of narrators vis-à-vis others in current ongoing social interaction, and positioning of narrators with regard to “cultural models of personhood that circulate in their environment, shaping what kind of person they represent themselves and are represented by others as being” (cited in Johnstone 2016, p. 552). Besides, the narratives being told do not remain fixed, but they may alter in according with different social situations, interacting with different social actors. Narrators may have changed their perspectives on their life experiences after each time they tell and retell their life stories (Barkhuizen, 2015, p. 99). Moreover, the audiences listening to narratives are realistically not passive as one would imagine; they can also co-construct the narratives, through interacting with narrators (De Fina, 2009, p. 246). Furthermore, “researchers’ interpretations of their narrative data may also change as they revisit and reflect further on their data” (Barkhuizen, 2015, p. 99). Hence, the findings and knowledge researchers get from narrative data is as flexible as narrative itself – a continuous meaning – making process. (Barkhuizen, 2015, p. 99)

While researches acknowledge the positivity of applying narrative analysis method, there has not been many papers providing detailed instruction of how to apply this method. According

to Johnstone (2016), one of the foundational work on narrative analysis though is of William Labov (1967/1972) on the structure of narrative.

Labovian narrative analysis quickly became a canonical part of the foundational literature of linguistic discourse analysis. In other fields, Labov's work on narrative offered legitimacy and methodological rigor to scholars interested in the qualitative analysis of human identities and experiences. (Johnstone, 2016, p. 543.)

Labov, together with Joshua Waletzky, aimed at developing a “systematic method” to analyze personal experience narrative, in their work on “*narrative analysis: oral versions of personal experience*” (1997 [1967]) (Johnstone, 2016, p. 543). One of the key points from their work is their highlight on two functions of a clause “in a personal experience narrative [...] – *referential* or *evaluative*” (ibid.) (my own emphasis). With the two presented functions of a clause in a person's narrative, Labov and Waletzky's (1997 [1967]) narrative analysis model provides a guidance for researchers to locate meanings conveyed behind the oral narratives. Referential clauses provide explanatory background for the story being told, while evaluative clauses explain “why the narrator is telling the story and why the audience should listen to it” (Johnstone, 2016, p. 543). Evaluative function in Labov and Waletzky's (1997 [1967]) approach particularly corresponds to an important characteristic of narrative – retrospective dimension, through which narrators reflect on their experiences, and construct the meanings of those experiences through their own evaluations about what they have learned, what role those experiences play to their current lives, and possibly play in future.

In his later work, Labov (1972) proposed a little more detailed look onto the structure of “a fully formed oral narrative” based on recurrent patterns that he has identified, which consisted of six parts:

- Abstracts – summaries of the whole narrative at its outset.
- Orientations – statements that provide the setting or context of a narrative.
- Complicating actions – specific events.
- Evaluations – statements that tell the listener what to think about a person, place, thing, event, or more globally, the entire experience described in a narrative.
- Resolution – what finally happened.
- Codas – formalized endings of a narrative. (cited in De Fina et al., 2015, p. 79)

On the other hand, this structure Labov (1972) proposed imply the generalization onto every narrative, and that these structural components are universal. Many researchers have debated on this aspect of Labov's (1972) model, commenting that the model reduced all narratives into a box of understanding, while human's conversational stories were in fact much more diverse, fluctuated and difficult to contextualize. Furthermore, Labov's (1972) model could be lacking consideration for the role of other interlocutors in a person's narratives, because it was based

on the analysis of monologue narratives (Johnstone, 2016, p. 550). However, Johnstone (2016) also pointed out that “the fact that stories arising in different contexts turn out to be different actually does more to support L’s claims about the connection between narrative form and contextual function than to debunk them” (p. 547). In addition to that, while narrators would attempt to tell narratives with a “plot”; or would purposely narrate in such a way for responding to pre-established purposes, the actual narratives sometimes appear to be more disorganized, due to their thoughts that may still be in becoming at the same time when they speak (Georgakopoulou, 2006, p. 84). In this sense, Kim (2016, p. 202) stated that Labov (1972)’s model might be useful then for understanding the narrative structure without being bounded to the distinction between literary and vernacular storytelling.

In this contextualized structure proposed, Labov (1972) brought out the structural component – coda, defined it as “formalized endings of a narrative” (Minami, 2015, p. 79). Because of this component, the narratives telling about past stories, in different timeline and location, “can return to the current time of telling” (Baynham, 2015, p. 82). It is due to the ability to return to present moment that a self’s identity work can be detected in the narration, for instances, through statement as “this is the sort of person I was and this is the sort of person I am now” (Baynham, 2015, p. 82). Additionally, it is only within the narrative, corresponding with the act of meaning-making in our cognitive processes, that those experiences are “temporalized, represented as a series of discrete events” (Johnstone, 2016, p. 555). Therefore, it is also within the narrative that identity work may be achieved, which was another reason motivating me to apply this methodology.

4.3 Narrative Account: Narratives in Interview

Because narrative is rather an inclusive term for different types of narratives, for instances, monologue narratives, oral narratives or living narratives, I will discuss in this chapter about a specific genre of oral narratives that was used for this research – narratives told in interviews. In according with earlier description about narrative analysis, there can exist a variety of ways to look at narratives if researchers wish to avoid the generalizations established upon narratives, which may not be applicable for all types of narratives, such as how Georgakopoulou (2006) did his study on small stories. More critics have also pointed out the unrealistic narratives obtained for research purposes, which did not entirely fit to the descriptions of narratives in theory (De Fina, 2009, p. 234); particularly, the narratives expressed in interview context. Since in this context, narrators’ stories are somewhat being guided by the interviewer’s questions, to

fulfill the goal of interviewer in seeking for specific orientation of narratives, these stories are being debated as artificial. De Fina (2009) has further pointed out that:

Narratives told in interview have become a central tool of data collection and analysis in a variety of disciplines within the social sciences. However, many researchers, particularly those who embrace a conversational analytic or ethnomethodological approach [...], regard them as artificial and oppose them to naturally occurring stories, which they see as much richer and interesting sources of data and analysis. (p. 233)

According to De Fina (2009), although there have been many authors highlighting the importance of interaction, and the role of interviewers in interviewees' narratives and positioning, there still has not been enough attention on narratives produced within interview context, which consequently leads to "treatment of the interview as a somewhat unnatural event, of an excessive focus on genres such as the canonical story or the life story within interview narratives, and of a tendency to look at narratives in interview as much more homogeneous than they really are" (p. 234-235). Furthermore, De Fina (2009) pointed out that the structure of narrative in Labov's (1967) contextual model might have shaped the ideal expectation towards all types of narratives to be similar to "canonical narrative"; whilst in fact, "canonical narrative is not very common in everyday talk" (p. 237). Instead, a lot of narratives are in fact not determined solely by one interlocutor, but they can be co-constructed based upon the interactions of interlocutors involved (De Fina, 2009, p. 238). Moreover, the narratives may be complication of small broken-down statements, which do not necessarily follow a chronological order. The emphasis here is that one organized structure of narrative, while being useful for analyzing, should not be treated as definition of narrative genre. (De Fina, 2009, p. 238) Hence, De Fina (2009) suggested as below, that research should focus more on the people's on-site interaction constructing the narratives, instead of them already concluding that these narratives were not plausible.

Whether interview contexts are deemed more or less interesting and worthwhile of analysis will depend on the kinds of questions that we ask about language and people and on the objectives of the research. [...] researchers should treat the status of interaction as defined by participants, not as something that can be judged in advance. (De Fina, 2009, p. 237)

Because of this, De Fina (2009, p. 237) also emphasized that interviews were not artificial social encounters; hence, stories being told and interacted with in this context should not be treated as artificial knowledge either. In her point of view, interview should merely be considered as a specific type of interactional context, with different interactional rules and social relationships, which affect to the narrative being produced, but should not determine those narratives as entirely fabricated, comparing to naturally-occurring daily talks. De Fina (2009) addressed the term for these narratives produced in interviews as narrative accounts,

despite the fact that the term “accounts” have not usually been considered as referrals to narratives (p. 239). However, it was pointed out though that all “accounts” have explanatory and dialogic components, because they “are produced as responses to an open or implied interlocutor’s evaluative inquiry” (De Fina, 2009, p. 240).

Researchers usually choose interviews as data collection method because it has conversational aspect, and it allows in-depth exploration into the questions asked, especially the questions of ‘how’ and ‘why’. No matter what the researches’ goals were, their purposes stepping into an interview is still to understand the layers in interviewees’ answers, and to expect the interviewees to explain about the answers as much as possible. (Silverman, 2004) Therefore, in terms of narratives analysis, De Fina (2009) viewed narratives produced within interviews, which include justification, excuses, explanations and are constructed due to “recapitulations of past events” (p. 240), as qualifying both assumptions towards ‘narrative’ and towards ‘account’. Furthermore, in this interactional context, interviewer plays an important role in directly influencing interviewee’s narratives, and may have “primary responsibility in evaluating the validity and adequacy of the narratives” (De Fina, 2009, p. 240). On the other hand, this involvement of the interviewer does not diminish though the flexibility of narratives being constructed, and the fluidity of narratives’ meaning.

In conclusion, De Fina (2009) described the characteristics of narrative accounts – narrative in interviews, as following:

- They are recapitulation of past experiences constructed to respond to interviewers’ evaluative questions.
- They have explanatory and dialogic component.
- They can be recipient designed.
- They tend to lean towards factuality.
- They are emergent production upon the interactional dynamic interviewer and interviewee, as well as a co-constructed production of both parties involved. (p. 253)

Based on this elaboration of narrative accounts – narratives produced in interview context, my collected data were eligible for a study with narrative analysis methodology. Although I aimed at establishing informal settings for my conversations with the study participants, my role as the researcher was still visible, because the participants had already expected to be asked questions by me, for orientations of what they should tell me. Those expectations might have already built up when I invited them to participate in my research, and when I told them what the motivations, as well as the objectives were. De Fina (2009) has also pointed out these

following factors when analyzing narrative accounts: who are the social actors involved? What is the context surrounding? What are the conditions from that contexts that affect the production of narratives? (p. 253). Therefore, even though I informed them at the beginning of each meeting that I did not want to limit the conversations to any specific direction, and that I hoped they also treated the interaction with me casually, the circumstances that I was, in truth, interacted with them because of my research, ought to be taken into consideration as the realistic context, in which our narrative were produced.

4.4 Data Collection

Since I wished to establish an environment where the study participants could become more relaxed building up conversations with me, I suggested for each person to meet up with me at least two times, presuming the first time would be for us getting acquainted with each other. Moreover, in line with this thesis's purpose, I wanted to explore the depth of study participants' narratives in order to understand at best the construction and performance of their identities through discourses, while also keeping in consideration that identity might be an in-flux concept and taken-for-granted social knowledge should be challenged of its 'naturalized' reality. Therefore, I reckoned one time meeting would not be sufficient. The number of times I actually met the study participants varied due to everyone's different availability. At the first meeting with each participant, I expressed that I conducted this research to understand deeper one's identity through one's life story, and I shared with them my justified reason for specifically approaching people with immigrant backgrounds. My expectations for what I was seeking for were mentioned at times whenever I found it necessary to remind myself and the study participants about them. I further asked each study participant to sign a consent form regarding their participation in the study. In this form, it was stated that the meetings would be recorded, transcribed and translated. These recordings were not to be shared with anyone and would be destroyed after completing the thesis research. In addition to that, any specific personal information that might be used in identifying the study participants were to be removed or altered suitably in the extracts presented in the thesis. Additionally, this consent form provided my study participants the right to interrupt or cancel their consent at any time and without explanation during the study, without any negative consequences.

Whilst naturally-occurring casual conversations were ideally the type of discussion I intended to have with the study participants, in reality, they were not able to be achieved. Therefore, I noted down at the beginning of my transcriptions, how I recounted the surrounding contexts for our conversations, the conditions of those contexts and my interpretation of how those

conditions would affect production of narratives. For instance, I noted down how their interaction seemed to me in the first meetings when we were not yet acquainted with each other. I described in my notes my evaluation that due to such a reason, some of the narratives might seem to be limited, or reflect that they were uncertain of what they could say. On the other hand, in the same settings, when observing the narrators to be further willing to tell about their lived experiences, I would also interpret that as part of their constructed identities, situated in their interactions with me.

It should also be acknowledged that my role as an interviewer was much involved in the participants' production of narratives (De Fina, 2009, p. 244). I mostly attempted to allow the conversations flow naturally, which meant many questions spontaneously occurred at the times talking with them. However, with a purpose in mind, I did find myself directing the conversations at times towards my thesis's aims, especially at times when study participants expected to be questioned by me. In this sense, I also co-constructed their narratives. In addition to that, I shared with them parts of my background, as well as my experiences living in Finland, whenever necessary to maintain at my best the casual and mutual style of doing conversations. I wanted the conversations to not be merely unidirectional. Hence, when I shared with them about myself, I somewhat generated new meanings, new subjectivities that could stimulate and influence the narratives they formed. These situations also correlated suitably with the essential role of others in a person's identity construction in discursive forms (see further above in chapter 3.2 and chapter 3.3.). At the same time, my identity was also constructed in these social interaction, at those specific times speaking with the study participants. Identification is a process of how a person comes to understand a sense of his or herself; but also, a process of how others comes to see him or her at any particular moment (see, for example, Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 14).

Before the first meetings with each study participant, I prepared a list of questions based upon my literature review to help me initiating the conversations and reminding me of the research goals. In later meetings, new questions were generated based upon their answers in previous meetings. I prepared these questions after each meeting when I transcribed the meetings and read through their answers again. Each time I prepared the questions, I re-examined the literature review, and re-checked the previous questions I prepared that I did not ask them during the meeting. The questions existed as guidance, but not as strict instructions for me to follow, similar to how one conducts a semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interview usually refers to interviews where interviewer and interviewee can agree beforehand certain

themes to cover. In addition to that, the interviewer may have a pre-scripted list of questions, which will be used only as guidance for interviewer. (Dang, 2016, p. 25)

I carried out the conversations in Vietnamese. The reason I chose to speak Vietnamese in the conversations was because I wanted explore the advantages of us speaking the same first language, as well as what meanings the concept of identity could generate in Vietnamese, in comparison with it being commonly used in daily talks in English. When I transcribed the data, I translated them into English, which was also a learning experience. While translating, I recognized the diversity and flexibility of meanings across languages. Most specifically, when it came to translating the term “identity” to Vietnamese, I myself found it rather challenging to find an equivalent word that could embrace ambiguity and individualistic factor as in the English term (see also, for preferences, Nguyen, 2017). Moreover, the study participants also had their own choices of words in Vietnamese language that they perceived as reference to ‘identity’. Consequently, in the chapter “*Analysis and Findings*”, I would elaborate further how language influenced the society’s framework of meanings, as a pre-condition for our thought; and that language and cultural backgrounds could be relevant in understanding how we perceived and made sense of things (Burr, 2015, p. 10). It should be also noted here that when conducting the conversations in Vietnamese, there were different pronouns used for me to address the study participants, and vice versa, in accordance with our age differences. In Vietnamese language, different pronouns are usually used between addressing an older and younger person. In addition to that, when speaking to someone older than us, we usually use specific words that shows respect.

There were four study participants for this thesis, whose names I would address as A, B, C and D in this thesis. They were the people who responded to my call, who were available and willing to assist me with this thesis. A had been living in Finland for about 12 years up to this point. She first came to Finland as an international student; then, she established her own business and stayed in the country until now. She was a mother and an entrepreneur. I got to meet up with P four times, and each meeting lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. The second study participant was B. She had been living in Finland for about 8,5 years. She also arrived at Finland first as an international student. At the time speaking with me, she had a family and a business of her own. Due to her limited availability, I met up with B two times. However, we kept each conversation lasting at least for an hour. Both A and B were in relationships with partners who were not from Vietnam. The third study participant was C. He had been living in Finland for about 12 years. He came to the country due to his work. After

getting married with C, his wife also relocated from Vietnam to Finland and they built their family in the country. I met up with C two times. Due to how I perceived the consistency in his ways of answering, and in his answers, as well as the fact that he was rather preoccupied with his family, I did not propose further follow-up meetings. The last study participant was D. She had been in Finland for three years up to that point, as an international student. At the time of the interview, she was at the end of her study, and was doing a part-time job at the same time. She was also in a relationship with a partner, who was not from Vietnam.

4.5 Methodology

As I have mentioned in the description of “*narrative analysis*” further above (see chapter 4.2), there appeared to be no direct and concrete instructions of how to apply this analysis method into research. However, according to Polkinghorne (1995), narrative inquiry has two approaches in doing analysis, one of which is analysis of narratives, while the other is narrative analysis. The former is based on pragmatic reasoning that corresponds to paradigmatic knowledge, and the latter is based on narrative reasoning that aimed at producing emplotted stories (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 10-11). From the point of view of the paradigmatic analysis of narratives, common themes or conceptual manifestations among a few stories collected for research can be explored (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 13). In this sense, in order to see what shared concepts and knowledge could be inductively derived from my collected data, I applied this paradigmatic viewpoint as my first focus for analyzing. The advantage of such an approach lied in its capacity to explore through many collected stories, presenting this study’s rich database with many primary data (see, for example, Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 14-15). On the other hand, because it could also minimize the uniqueness of each story and underestimate the diversity existing among the collected stories (ibid., p. 15), Polkinghorne (1995) mentioned another viewpoint that could fill in such a gap, as narrative analysis. According to him, in this perspective of analyzing, the researcher can present collected data in a way “that unites and gives meaning to the data as contributors to a goal or purpose” (ibid., p. 15). Following from that point, because my research question was about how the study participants’ identities were constructed in their narratives, I found it also necessary to look at each participant’s narrative separately, in terms of the viewpoint of narrative analysis. There were two goals I aimed at applying this viewpoint as my second focus for analyzing. The first goal was that I could reflect the individualistic diversity among each study participant’s narrative about their lived experiences. The second goal was to present each participant’s constructed identity coherently and independently from others’, so that readers could also find these findings as similar to reading storied episodes of each of their lives. Consequently, readers may have a clearer

understanding of the participants' identities that were comprehended in the scope and context of this study.

In terms of looking at the data with the viewpoint from analysis of narratives, I applied Labov's (1972) universal structure of narratives that consisted of six components (abstract, orientation, complicating actions/specific events, evaluations, resolutions, codas) (Minami, 2015, p. 79). The conversations with the study participants were compiled of numerous small stories as narrative units. I analyzed these small stories on the basis of Labov's (1972) model, and these small stories were categorized into themes, representing shared concepts derived from four study participants' narratives. I firstly explored patterns and occurrences of these themes throughout the conversations I had with each study participant. I then explored the patterns across all conversations. At the same time, I also evaluated the similarities and differences between the study participant's narratives under each theme, in correlation with their different backgrounds and life experiences. Such an evaluation assisted me in the next phase of analyzing.

In terms of looking at the data from the viewpoint of narrative analysis, I also took into account the suggestion of other studies about narrative analysis methodology (see, for example, Mishler (2006), De Fina et al. (2015); and see further above in chapter 4.2), to focus on 'how' and 'why' perspectives. This meant that the content of narratives was not as important here as how narrators structured their narratives, and why narrators told those stories. As Baynham (2015, p. 75) stated, "positioning is a key device in identity work", how narrators positioned themselves in real world and in the story-world should be kept in consideration then, while analyzing the narratives. Additionally, in accordance with the elaboration about narrative and identity (see further above, in chapter 3.5), the researcher should not forget either, how narrators might establish connections with other narratives about immigration experience, as well as the possible connections with other societal discourses about same topic (De Fina, 2003, p. 30). Through these connections, as the researcher, I might be able to explore the implicit stances narrators took corresponding to social assumptions of who they were (De Fina et al., 2006, p. 356). Furthermore, Georgakopoulou (2006) pointed out that, "analytically, the meeting point of narrative and identity was assumed to be found in the participants' storytelling roles" (p. 100). He highlighted the emphasis on "how identities come into being as local accomplishments in the course of telling stories" when studying the relationship between identity and narratives (Georgakopoulou, 2006, p. 100). These factors were also considered for narrative analysis phase of the data. Additionally, it is important to note here that each time I

met up with the study participants, our social interactions and contexts were different, in correlations with our previous interactions. Besides, my study participants' life situations could have also possibly changed since the previous times we met. Moreover, after speaking with me, due to new meanings they might have had comprehended during the conversations, they could be triggered to reflect more upon their life experiences outside of their conversations with me, which could then generate new or different meanings, impacting on how they narrated their stories when they met me again. This corresponded suitably to the post-structuralist theoretical approach towards identity that highlighted the emergence of subjects and their subjectivities, as well as the elusive characteristic of meanings (see further above, in chapter 3.4). Besides, because narratives presented here could be argued to be produced in interview contexts, I additionally took into account the following questions that was suggested for researchers to consider when studying narrative accounts:

- a. to what extent narrative contents were driven by the interviewer and to what extent they were proposed by the teller;
- b. how genres correlated with other aspects of the interview (for example, habitual narratives may be used by tellers in response to questions to depict experiences that for some reason they do not want to present as personal);
- c. what kinds of expectations were openly or implicit negotiated. (De Fina, 2009, p. 255)

5 ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

5.1 Analysis of Narratives

5.1.1 Circumstances of relocation to Finland

Every immigrant had different circumstances that led to, or motivated their decisions to relocate. By elaborating a little more here about the conditions of my study participants' relocation to Finland, the contexts of their lives, as well as their adaptation processes in the new living environment could be comprehended better (see further, for example, Kosonen, 2008, p. 21). These findings here would also be relevant when viewing the data later from narrative of analysis point of view.

Study participant – C

C moved to Finland as a part of a work program organized by his company. He stated that his study path was not good, and he did not go to University. Because of a family relative's recommendation and advise, C started the path of studying for a vocational degree and he later got accepted to work for that international company. C described that he grew up in a very hard-working family that did various types of physical jobs. He commented that when he was a kid, he mainly interacted with people from rural areas in Vietnam. While he did not expand further into details about his story of upbringing, the stories he shared about the environment he grew up at times somewhat implied possibly life hardships that he endured while growing up. Due to these circumstances, he also began to work at early years in his life, which he saw as a blessing currently, since those experiences appeared to toughen him up, shape his calmness talking about experiencing newness in the new living environment, to me. Perhaps, growing up in a family as such had enhanced the family values in his perception. Strong family values were often though described by many Vietnamese people as a shared characteristic in Vietnamese societies (see further, for example, Kosonen, 2008, p. 42), which readers could also notice in my questions and in other participants' narratives. This additionally connected with my earlier description about the social knowledge that had been accumulated over time in a society, enacted and maintained by the people living them, until they were treated as 'common senses', or as shared cultural traits (Stokoe & Attenborough, 2015, p. 89).

When he came to Finland, he stated his aim at completing the work study program that lasted for three years. He explained his clear focus on earning and saving financially, so that when he returned to work in the same company in Vietnam, he would have enough earnings to start a

family there. This demonstrated the clear expectations and purposes he had when he relocated, which affected on his experience living in the new environment that were somewhat conveyed in the conversations we had. C claimed that he focused mostly on doing his job well in the new environment, and then when he had family, his main focus was reported to be on them. He recalled the with excitement when he moved to Finland for the good opportunity, as how he described below:

(1)¹ I: *So, then, what did you feel when you first arrived? Besides the language.*

C: *I felt very happy. Because for me, the opportunity to go was very precious, so before going, I lost sleep because I was too excited.*

I: *[chuckles] Yes.*

C: *Ever since I knew that the company agreed to choose me to go, until the waiting time for visa, I had felt very excited. Mm. So I did not feel any sadness, but only happiness. Mm. It was like...the experience with first time flying, so then like, seeing how it could be, right (?)*

I: *Yes, right. Mm. But, when you came here then, you generally felt happy and excited as such, but, when you arrived here, what was your first impression about Finland?*

C: *Well, then when I came here, the date was 8/3. Erm, when I arrived, the weather, it was similar to today, almost spring, in the time when all snows melt. Mm. Then when I got off at airport, then there were really, mm, quite few people...Because I also already knew, partially, before I went, there had already been many generations of people who had gone here through company, so they did share the stories when they returned, so then I already could imagine a little. So I was not totally shocked. Everything was to focus mostly on work. Because to me, work was the most important thing. It was my whole future. That, so then, I tried to do it well.*

According to C, he also arrived at Finland with other employees from same company. One could notice that he expressed his preparedness for the new environment and new language. In his opinions, C pointed out that his circumstance was different comparing to a relocating situation of an international student from Vietnam, as in below extract. The implication behind him drawing on the experiences of international students from Vietnam would be elaborated further in the next phase of analyzing.

(2) I: *Then when you arrived in Finland, then everything, you had to search on your own, rely on...*

C: *Right, but because my case was a little better than students', because, like, when I went, I did not lose anything.*

I: *[chuckles] Right.*

¹ The original Vietnamese interview extracts are included in Appendix 2

C: When I left, it was thanks to the company, I still got salary. Arriving here then, the company still took care of my accommodation, my living expenses, as well as who picked me up to go to work and all that. Mm. Mm. The first day then, the language was pretty hard, the company did also hire a translator, who was also Vietnamese to help us understand better the works.

In a way, it could still be interpreted here though that he decided to mention the experience of international students because he was in the social interaction with me, who relocated to Finland for studying purposes. Therefore, in correlation with me, his position here could already be seen as a fellow Vietnamese person moving to live abroad with different types support at the beginning of his journey, in comparison to the positions of Vietnamese students in Finland.

Study participants – A, B and D

Unlike C, the other three study participants relocated to Finland as international students, during the time when Finland did not charge tuition fee for all students. However, each of them had their own specific circumstances prior to their departures.

B - According to B, she came to Finland after she graduated from University there. She stated that she had completed a Bachelor degree in Vietnam, and studied another degree with different major in Finland. She expressed that the way of studying in Finland was more practical compared to the courses' design in Vietnam. While B acknowledged the differences in education styles between Finland and Vietnam, she said that her shocks with the newness might had leaned more towards the culture, precisely towards the ways people made new friendships and lived daily, in the new environment, according to the below excerpt.

(3) I: Yes, then, when you had just graduated from University then, you went here and studied again, then like studying in the ways over here, did you experience...how to call it, a little bit of shock? Seeing a little change in the ways of teaching, the ways of studying?

B: No, there were no problems with studying, but with the culture and stuff, then I was more shocked, but studying then was generally, to me, it was rather easy. I adapted pretty well, but for example, in terms of culture and friends in the University and other things, then it, it was slightly different comparing with the situations in Vietnam, a little, so then the shock with that was more.

I: Do you have any examples? When you first got to Finland, were there any examples that...

B: For example, sometimes, Finnish people they were rather straightforward, so then there were sometimes when, for example, I did homework, we did homework, for

instances, then for example, I gave this opinion then they said, “no, no”. For example, in Vietnam, then I would say, “but I see this opinion sound better”, that, then it... Mm. But Finnish people were different, that, then there were those things like teamwork, we interacted more, then saw that their culture was different. Or then for example that, when I started going to school, sometimes I was late, I tended to be late 5-10 minutes, like that, then I, I saw that as normal, but Finnish people, then, they did not like that. That. Then, so then those things, then, later, slowly then I knew, but when I first came, I did not know.

Her examples located in the University context evoked her identity construction here as a student. They might additionally represent the social aspects of her adjustments then to the new living environment. Through the differences she described, B positioned herself as being different from other Finnish people she interacted with. B also pointed out that these differences in social interaction could not be recognised when an immigrant first arrived to new living environment, but only through times and higher exposure. According to this interview, the social practices might appear as not merely practices, but they could also be described to convey values embraced by people living in same country. Therefore, they were not the factors to be noticed on the surface level. They might require instead observation and reflection upon these past experiences, as what B stated. The part where B mentioned what would have been done in similar group work situation in Vietnam might further implicitly demonstrate her negotiation with her previous living environment, while experiencing new one, being conscious about why there existed the differences.

Furthermore, B was not the only participant applying the term “culture” as an umbrella term, or as an explanation for all the differences an immigrant might experience. As stated earlier in the chapter 4.4 – *Data Collection*, thinking of and speaking of our culture in an essentialist way seemed to be relatively common in daily lives. Essentialist approach, while may not be suitable in post-modern theory and research, has not yet disappeared from human’s daily discourses, which can also be reflected from how the study participants spoke about identity concept. Once again, as Hall and Du Gay (1996, p. 2) described, identity was still in its own transformation, caught between the essentialist approaches that were almost common senses to us, and the new arising approaches that were theoretically more suitable to our post-modern societies. Moreover, B described that there were not many Vietnamese people around when she arrived; she thus experienced sadness. These aspects would be taken into consideration when viewing her narrative coherently and comprehending how her identity was constructed. However, she recognized the positive aspect of small community of Vietnamese students in Finland as closedness within the community. This also presented similarity to what Valtonen (2019) described, “support in circles can bring security” (p. 40). She additionally described that in her

class then, everyone went along rather well with each other, and they organized many gatherings together, including other international students. Hence, she stated the below conclusion at the time speaking when being asked if there were any other aspects outside of the University that she might have also experienced shock with:

(3) B: [...] But my class, we go along rather well with each other, so then sometimes we organize many gathering eating together, in the class also, so then there was a group of Vietnamese students, group of foreign students. So, yea that was it, so then it was not that bad. Studying here is not that bad.

In my viewpoint, the last sentence B said brought her past stories back to the current reality speaking with me. I interpreted that this sentence could be classified as “coda” component, in terms of Labov’s (1972) model of narrative structure, reflecting her current formalized ending of the past experience, that could be constituted over years of living Finland, as “not that bad”. Besides, considering the word “foreign” that B used in referring to all other international students who were not Vietnamese, we could begin noticing how our using of discourses influenced our perception. By using these words, a membership was immediately established bounded to national boundaries; and in some ways, it was also bounded to race, which was in fact also socially constructed concept (Hall & Du Gay, 1996). Nationality and race considered as identity categories to classify people in this sense further referred to the involvement of politics in identity concept, as presented with identity politics theory (see chapter 3.2). A person’s identification cannot exclude how others identity us. In this sense, other foreign students were classified to share same in-group membership, not taking into consideration yet the differences among them. Similarly, I found myself addressing me and the study participant as “we”, referring to the in-group memberships we shared in terms of nationality and in terms of our immigrant statuses living in Finland. These uses of discursive forms somewhat constructed to our social identities – the different positions we perceived us occupying in societies (see, for example, Deschamps & Devos, 1998).

A - With the study participant A, although she also relocated to Finland as an international student, her circumstances were different because she left Vietnam after graduating high school. I additionally shared with her my background for relocating to Finland, perceiving that I and she shared similarity of both leaving Vietnam after high school. A said that she lived in a different city before moving to Northern Finland. In her opinions, that city was smaller than her current city, where there were not many Vietnamese people living; A thus did not find strong friend connections in this city. One could see here how she drew on the aspect of lacking companionships or friendship with other fellow Vietnamese people in a new living

environment. This might have enacted her identity performance here as someone who was searching for familiarity, for connection in the new environment, to possibly cope with its difference from her previous living environment. She described her impression of Finnish people then as being private and not talking much, based on her own perception. It might be among the first distinct differences she found in terms of communication and friendship between Vietnamese and Finnish society, justifying her choice to share below story:

(4) I: Did you have any shocks when you first came to Finland?

A: [...]It was so different than the situations in Vietnam, especially because I just got graduated from high school, I had a lot of friends from junior high school until high school then. Everyone was close. There were 10-11 people in my group of friends then. Like, we called each other all the times, then we went out together, hung out too often. When I came to Finland, especially in winter, it was dark, and then, everyone was like. Actually it was like, in class, when meeting, everyone did talk with each other. But. At that time...I was not...not like...not close enough with them to talk about (?)². At that time, it was always like, yes, “how are you doing today?”, and then, “today, it is so cold”, then, “this exercise/homework is too hard”, but not anything about deeper topics.

Often, with Finns, there has to be suitable occasions that make them more warming up talking with you, like we have to go out, go drinking or eating together or drinking tea at home, cooking, chatting. Usually, it can help building the relationship. But at that moment, being a University student, I did not like drinking [laugh], so then, everyday I finished school, I went home and did homeworks. So then, the conditions allowing me to be closed with them was also...difficult.

From this excerpt, the differences experienced in terms of making new friendships and in terms of communication styles was also mentioned, somewhat similar to B's. A expressed the drastic change from having a close group of friends for calling and hanging out with often, to not having such a closeness anymore in the new environment. This evoked the experience of immigrants finding the knowledge and practices they knew most of their lives being challenged. By mentioning the activities she and her close friends did together often in Vietnam, A somewhat constructed her identity here as immigrant from Vietnamese societal environment, that may embrace high community values (see further, for example, Kosonen, 2008; Valtonen, 2019). Along the way sharing with me the story, it could also be noted how she was possibly reflecting on the experiences at the same time. The pauses presented between sentences might be because of her reflection, and of the debating in her mind about the recounted extent of communication between her and other fellow classmates. Following from that, she included her current evaluation of herself in the situation back then. This evaluation

² Certain words and expressions from the study participants' narratives could not be clearly recognized through the audio records.

linked the present moments of “here and now” to the past moments of “then and there” described in the story-world.

Her next part describing what could have helped building the relationships better can be seen as “coda” component – formalized view upon the experience, which again connected the story of past events to the current interactional world. I argued that she could reach to such a description only because of the higher exposure to the new environment, and more observation of the general behaviors of Finnish people (see further, for example, Valtonen, 2019), as what study participant B also pointed out earlier. The second part particularly, in this story of A, represented “evaluation” component in Labov’s (1972) narrative structure, stating what A thought of this recounted experience.

Additionally, it can also be noted in the extracted excerpts of A’s and B’s narratives, how these study participants involved other characters in their narratives, through direct speech reporting clauses, such as “how are you doing today?”; “today, it is so cold”; “oh well, your idea was good but maybe the other one could fit better”; and so on. This demonstrated one of the described characteristic of a narrative – involvement – letting them and their classmates to be involved directly to their stories, “evoking the then-and-there of the story world and bringing it to the interactional here-and-now” (Baynham, 2015, 75). Furthermore, involvement is among the characteristics of narratives, that are described to enhance how individuals’ narratives can bring along the history of their identity constitution, while their identities are also being performatively brought about in the present interactional moments (Baynham, 2015, 75). In this sense, the identities of A and B in those recounted interactions with their classmates were brought along in their narratives; at the same time, their identities were also brought about in the interaction with me for them through them being performed in the narratives.

D - Similarly to A, the last study participant - D came to Finland as an international student, right after she graduated from high school. Among the study participants, D was the youngest study participant, whose length of time living in Finland was the shortest. Whilst B & A also came as international students, the fact that they both had stayed longer, had established businesses and had built their families in Finland, could lead to their different immigrant statuses at the time speaking with me, comparing to D’s status, in terms of Finnish institutional discourses about immigration. In accordance with the information provided by Finnish Immigration Services (2020), which establishes the temporary status assigned for international students in Finland, D’s particular background story could be argued to represent more an

international student's experience, rather than an immigrant's experience. It should be pointed out here that while there might have been studies studying about the differences in adaptation processes between immigrants and sojourners (i.e. international students, expats), due to their different life circumstances and conditions of relocation (see, for example, Sorrells, 2016), they may not be relevant in the context of this study, as each study participant's narrative were already considered separately, during the analysing phase, to highlight the individualistic diversity. Besides, no matter what immigrant statuses the study participants had, they were still people who voluntarily migrated to a different living environment, and resided there for a relatively long period of time. This was precisely relevant to this thesis research, because the study participants' senses of selves may be triggered due to how they made sense of themselves, of others and of their lives in the new home living environment (see also, for example, Dow, 2011, p. 212).

One can also argue that an immigrant status (i.e. expat, international student, refugee, asylum seeker) is constructed on the basis of institutional discourses, revolving around the political rights, the social rights, and the responsibilities established for different cases of people migrating. It helps countries to classify in the systems what profiles of people moving in to stay, due to which the process of applying for the legal rights to stay are categorized. Going through this process of applying for the legal rights to relocate and to prolong the stay in a new country should be acknowledged as part of an immigrant's experience. During our interactions, I and study participant D also discussed about the matters regarding about extended visa applications, which somewhat made references to our own lived experiences of going through those processes. Talking about this process evoked both her and my identity performance as of international residents in Finland, positioning us differently in comparison with the Finnish citizens living in the same country. Additionally, an immigrant is widely understood as someone who has come to stay permanently in a new country, which cannot absolutely be determined as irrelevant in D's situation, as her life is yet a journey to continue, and her temporary status living in Finland can become a permanent one in future, similar to the case of study participant C. When C moved to Finland, he said that he was planning to stay for three years until his program studying about his work ended; but then, he recounted to accept a longer work contract that was offered and prolonged his stay in Finland up to this point.

D had lived in Finland for about three to nearly four years. She was finishing her Bachelor degree at the time we spoke. According to D, one of the reason for her to relocate was due to conflict with her dad. She shared a little further to the reasons for her decision, stating that due to a psychic reading her mom went to, D should be distant from home to be successful. When

I asked if she believed in the readings, she said that she saw those readings as entertainments, and described herself as being logical. Here, she seemed to position herself as someone who was not superstitious, through her different attitude towards the practice, in comparison with her mom's. The logical term continued to be used for her self description in her narratives, that would be elaborated further when I described her constructed identity from the narrative analysis viewpoint.

D said that she used an agency center to have assistance throughout the process of applying for the legal rights to relocate. This agency center also helped other Vietnamese students in similar situation as D, who arrived in Finland with her at the same time. D stated that knowing others in similar situation then helped her adjusting in the beginning. However, when she faced some difficulties living in new place, she recounted that she felt more homesick. It is rather relatable that we find ourselves returning to familiarity of family or closed friendship, and seek for support facing hardships in life (see further, for example, Dow, 2011, p. 214). When I asked if she hung out often with Vietnamese friends or Finnish friends at the beginning, she stated:

(5) I: So then did you often hang out with friends, like you said...because you said, you described that you depended on the person you dated, in a period of time like that. But then, did you have a lot of Vietnamese friends? Or then Finnish friends, that you hang out with? Did you usually go to hang out with them?....well, you said that with Finnish friends, you said that it was a little hard to hang out because they went to bars, in the beginning time, right?

D: Mm.

I: But what about Vietnamese friends?

D: Yes, because, yes. Because... In that year, in my class, there were Vietnamese people. So then, friends of one boy I got to befriend with, like, the student group coming in the same year, we all knew each other. So we did go out. Well actually, going out was not as going out, but we ate at home, like cooking together and stuff. That time was quite nice, because like, I had people so then I did not have to be (?) so that was also a reason why I did not feel lonely or anything. (slight changes in this excerpt with details that I see rather personal)

In this excerpt, she positioned herself as belonging to the group of Vietnamese students arriving with her, and the ones in the same class. She enacted her identity performance here in terms of these in-group memberships. D also said that prior to her departure to Finland, she tried learning basic greeting sentences and words in Finnish, and she listened to Finnish songs daily to get acquainted. This demonstrated how D prepared for her relocation to new living environment. Having an opportunity to prepare both physical and mentally for such a disruptive move in a person's life meant that these immigrants expected differences and new knowledge.

In spite of that, it still appeared that they unavoidably looked back to previous times in their lives, negotiating between the familiarity of the past and the newness of the present, during their adjustment.

In general, all four study participants expressed their surprise with weather condition at the beginning, as well as their adjustment to it. Moreover, according to them, Vietnamese immigrants living in Finland sometimes described their experiences of feeling sadness or emptiness, due to the darkness during winter, as well as due to their own perceptions of how Finnish people seemed to appreciate more private spaces, comparing to Vietnamese society. Through this description, the study participants all evoked their identity performance as in-group members to the group of Vietnamese immigrants residing in Finland. In addition to that, the fact that there were much lower population in Finland in comparison with Vietnam also seemed to add up to the strangeness these Vietnamese immigrants found. Furthermore, all these four study participants shared similar general reflection upon their migrating experiences at the beginning. They stated that such feeling of sadness and emptiness depended on the immigrants themselves, rather than because of the environment. This emphasis on the immigrants' agency in blending in the new living environment was also underlined in Valtonen's (2019, p. 34) research, which might possibly also to the comment of president Halonen about Vietnamese immigrants as "one of the best integrated immigrant communities in Finland" (Kosonen, 2008, p. 15). In this sense, the immigrants might have also become social subject of this social discourse, accepting the identity positions provided by such discourses and reinforcing them in their daily lives, through generations (see also, Drzewiecka, 2017, p. 4). On the other hand, they did not describe their feeling of being pushed to adapt that way, but they all seemed to comprehend it as part of their immigrating journey, as following:

(6) D: Generally, I do hear some people saying that living here is boring. But, for me, being bored or not depends on ourselves. If we go somewhere, and we always have companions, then we never get bored.

(7) B: Well, actually, i think, being sad or not depends on you.[Laugh] Because like, well, the weather here is what it is, and so the important thing is that whether you create something else for yourself, work, or then create other relationships for yourself, because, well, the weather, the air, and the vibe remains the same [laugh]

(8) A: This is why I think that we are changing ourselves along the way. If we are more active in getting to know their way of socializing, making more effort to blend in then we can blend in [...]

5.1.2 Experiences of being an immigrant living in Finland

The role of Finnish language

Every communities, every societies have different languages, or different linguistic ways to communicate. Therefore, knowing the language used in the new living environment is undeniable relevant for shaping immigrant's experiences (Cheah, Karamelic-Muratovic, Matsuo & Poljarevic, 2011). It can also appear to be a rather controversial topic when there is a common tendency to use this factor in determining whether an immigrant can be considered as a member belonging to their new living environment, which is usually addressed as the host environment (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015). The controversy starts from the mixed opinions towards such a determination, since it ignores all other factors of an immigrant's complicated adaptation process, and maintains the image of immigrants as 'outsiders' without knowing the language. They are expected to know the language well to integrate, which is a unidirectional process demanding more from the immigrants. The lack of available and accessible language courses provided by the country immigrants relocating to, or its limited job market towards immigrants and/or refugees, as well as international students, solely due to the language barrier, may also create challenges for them to integrate (Isphording & Otten, 2014). The role of studying and knowing the language should certainly not be undermined after all; however, according to De La Garza & Ono (2015), "a theory of differential adaptation distinguishes between social pressures to assimilate and immigrant adaptation practices and processes" (p. 276), which underlined that immigrants should not be the only party pressured to integrate, when their processes of adaptation, in reality, also involved social actors and institutions from their new living environment.

A - A described herself as not being fluent in Finnish, even though she knew the basic Finnish expressions. On the other hand, she stated that she could speak better in Swedish, demonstrating her effort, in the position of an immigrant, in gaining new language skills in the new living environment. Since she said that there appeared to be the expectations of workers being able to speak Swedish and Finnish, by companies in where she lived, it was understandable why A mentioned this. Besides, officially, Finland is described as a country with two official language: Finnish and Swedish, because of the historical background. When I asked if she faced challenges living in Finland when not knowing Finnish fluently, she narrated as such:

(9) A: As a matter of fact, no, if you want to know, if you know Finnish fluently, it would help you much better, especially when, for example, when you went online looking for information and all that, then it would be easier, right? But because I, I said that,

because here people also know English, majority of them also know English, so then it's not like, encountering many difficulties. Or perhaps because I can also speak Swedish on the basic level too, so then here, because parallel there are Finnish and Swedish so it's okay.

In this extract, A positioned herself as non-Finnish speaking but English speaking immigrant. By stating that she did not have many difficulties without knowing Finnish fluently, A performed her identity distantly from the image posed on immigrants living in Finland that they were required to learn Finnish for integration. The language skill for her here appeared to be more of a choice, attributing the factor of diversity to discourses about immigrants' adaptation process.

C - C also stated that he was not fluent in Finnish; however, it did not affect his working life particularly, because Finnish language skills was not required in his job. He also positioned himself as non-Finnish speaking immigrant. Following from what C said that he mainly focused on work upon his move to Finland, it seemed sensible that he stated his opinion about the role of Finnish language, in living in Finland, as dependent on the type of jobs a person does. He appeared to continue performing his identity revolving about work purpose, maintaining his position as an immigrant moving to Finland based on work relations, distant from people relocating for studying goals. He did express his agreement on general expectation expressed throughout all the participants' narratives, that when you moved to live in Finland, you should know Finnish language. By saying such, he also conformed to the construction of expectation towards immigrants, regarding their acquisition of the language skills in their new living environments.

B - On the other hand, according to B, not knowing Finnish well could create limitations in immigrants' lives:

(10)B: Generally, if you are a student then it should not be a problem, because we use English, not knowing Finnish fluently then may be fine. But when you live in Finland, then it will be best if you know the language. There are many things, mm, for example, in general, once you actually decide to live here, then there would be more things you needed to be concerned about. For example, when my daughter went to school, then I had to register and all, and that information were all in Finnish. For instance, when the teacher, like that, interacted and talked with us, then we had to use Finnish. That, so then...Then for example, the laws, regulations, and so on, they were also only in Finnish, or Swedish, so then...When we were students, we did not have to deal with these things, but when we had already lived here, we had acknowledged that we would live here, then we should study Finnish.

Two things can be noticed from B's discourses. Firstly, in her point of view, she considered the experience being an international student being different from being an international person living permanently in Finland, even though she did not explicitly state it. However, the meaning she seemed to carry when using the word "live" showcased such an impression. The reason behind this might be due to how international students are staying in Finland on a temporary basis, in accordance with the status in Finnish Immigration Services (2020). Alternatively, the reason might be correlated with her reflection upon her own experience when she was a student. When mentioning that Finnish language skill would not be a problem for students, B evoked her current identity performance as a non-student, while constructing her identity as a student in the story-world referring to her past lived experiences. By giving examples about her daughter, she evoked her identity performance as a mother. Additionally, through stating further what situations B found Finnish language necessary, she also brought to our attention other social aspects that she did not perceive as parts of international students' lives, but they only seemed to exist due to her decision to "live" in Finland. This word "live" might have also constructed her identity as someone with more permanent status residing in Finland. Secondly, her last sentence acting as a "coda" component in this narrative unit could demonstrate how B had reached to this meaning at those current times speaking with me, by reflecting upon her past experiences being a student. B might not have had the same perspective then, but she had it now. Thirdly, considering the last sentence when the pronoun "we" was used in the translated version, the original pronoun used in Vietnamese could in fact be literally translated as either "I" or "we". However, depending on how the context appeared to be, and how I personally perceived the narratives of these study participants, I chose to translate the pronoun accordingly. From the conversations with my study participants, it appeared that in Vietnamese, there were pronouns that could constitute both the ideas of "I" and "we". In a sense, this connected with studies on the simultaneity between social identity and personal identity (Deschamps & Devos, 1998, p. 11). Moreover, by using these ambiguous pronouns in their narratives, the study participants constructed their identities based on the memberships to social groups. In the above extract narrative unit, B's membership to the social group of immigrants living in Finland was drawn on, illustrating the picture that her opinion might also be shared by others and bringing a sense of validity to her statement.

D – D had already begun studying Finnish before she left Vietnam. In her viewpoint, she described herself as an eager person to join in conversations and to understand what happens around her, enacting her identity performance as such through her discourses. Therefore, she was motivated more to study Finnish, as she found not knowing the language somewhat

excluded her from certain social interactions. She also explained about the necessity of speaking Finnish fluently that she reckoned in pursuing a career in her study major. Despite of that, D shared how her point of view about the importance of having Finnish skill had got more conformed throughout her time living in Finland:

(11) D: But I did not understand that when I first came, because I thought that, well here, it was a country, an international country, like that. But after coming here, then I knew that “no”, people actually didn’t use English much, they didn’t use English much but used Finnish more, so then I also remembered that... Well I heard somebody saying that, that, like people didn’t really like that, why everything had to be in English, they still wanted to preserve their language. There is like...an attitude not liking (?). So then I am also... And then, when I started going to work, in the first year I went to work, everyone asked me if I had any Finnish skills, then, then I said I didn’t have, and I did not get the jobs. I shared this with a Finnish friend, then my friend said that, “well, just to think like this now, if in Vietnam and not knowing Vietnamese skills, then how can you sell anything?”...Then I thought that, right...(slightly changes to personal details)

In D’s narratives, she implied the point similarly to B’s, that life beyond University environment might have higher demand for Finnish skills. The first few sentences evoked how her cultural knowledge was changed after her relocation. By describing what she perceived from “people” who expressed attitude of not liking to speak English constantly, D positioned herself as distant from “them”, whom she might have referred as Finnish people. Through stating her difficulties in not finding jobs due to language barrier, D’s discourses conformed to the situation that immigrants’ economic outcomes were correlated with their language proficiency (Isphording & Otten, 2014). At the same time, she positioned herself as belonging to the group of international people attempting to find work in Finland. She also enacted her identity performance here as an immigrant learning about what her new home living environment expected of her. The brief conversation she stated to had had with her friend, she applied indirect speech quoting that connected then-there moments in her story-world to here-now interactional moment with me, which also allowed direct involvement of her and her friend to her narrative. In addition to that, D’s observations of how Finnish society preferred their national language to be used rather than English – a language that had somewhat been considered as global language – somewhat meant that the immigrants’ adaptation process might not only be decided by immigrants, but was also affected by their new home environment. Once again, it is a two-partied relationship, in which the host society also reflect and negotiate upon newness brought by the immigrants, which led to their different reactions (De La Garza & Ono, 2015).

Sense of belonging

The feeling of being in-between places may usually be experienced by immigrants, especially after a long period of time living in new places that they have adapted to (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Moore & Barker, 2012; Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015). I have also described throughout this thesis that, it was due to these feelings that the immigrant were triggered to generate new meanings about their senses of identities, as they might find themselves negotiating between different social knowledge and practices. I would present here then few examples of situations where the study participants reported to learn new social knowledge, and recounted what reflections they had by looking back at previous social knowledge that they knew. At the same time, I would explore how their identities were constructed in these discourses.

A - Besides the factor about language proficiency, the feeling of belonging can be triggered at times when immigrants encounter different social perception and behaviors, which can even be found through ordinary daily activities, as in below example from A:

(12) A: [...] In Vietnam, if we are in a hurry or in “tight spots”, we can still call, beg and they may still solve the problem early for us. But here, if we have some urgent situations where we need solution faster a little bit, even when we call, they still say that everyone will be also in a hurry, like that, and then they will be like, “when it’s your turn, I will help you”, and not solving faster.

[...]

A: Or, then, another situation was, like, erm, in Vietnam, up to this point, we tend to think that emergency, if you are having emergency, you go to hospitals, you will meet the doctors immediately, there will be people taking care of you immediately. But here, even when you carry your child to the emergency room, you still have to take numbers, and wait in line. Maybe like 15-20 minutes before a doctor comes. Because I think, here, people consider that patients go to emergency room, if you are not in critical state yet [laugh], then it would still not be that urgent...

In terms of the structural components from Labov’s (1972) model, in the first extracted narrative unit, A shared with me, in between telling her story, her evaluation on how people approached towards the concepts of “urgency” and “emergency” in Vietnam, based on her observations. Therefore, this unit comprised of mainly evaluation structural component (referring to the statements that narrators directly state what they think about a person, place, thing, event or an experience described in the narrative (De Fina et al., 2015, p. 79)). In the second extracted narrative unit, A was constructing a background story to provide me as audience with further information, conveying referential viewpoint. At the end of this unit, she then stated how she has made sense of the different approach in Finland, conveying the evaluative viewpoint and showing me why she told earlier story. Examples like this further illustrate how immigrants’ experiences were made up of small daily social interactions that constantly generate new meanings and understandings throughout their lives living abroad.

With this particularly example, A expressed that she found herself preferring the approach in Vietnam to the one in Finland because it was more flexible, which implied at her negotiation between different knowledge behind these social practices. In this narrative unit, A evoked her identity performance as a mother by mentioning about her daughter, and positioned herself more as a Vietnamese person living abroad and finding differences of others, comparing to the ways things were approached in Vietnam.

As A was a mother, raising her children in Finland also drew her attention to the different approaches between two societies. Regarding this matter, when I asked whether her ways of raising kids would be different from her parent' assumptions, she expressed her preference for the approach she had experienced in Finland. Her first viewpoint was about what expectations was established for a mother who just gave birth:

(13) *A: Because firstly.... raising kids back home, then there was, I don't mean with every homes, but the majority, you had to start diets, at the start of pregnancy, then you had to start dieting, then you had to eat certain food with certain nutritions, that you could only eat this, but not that. It would be so strict that, like, it could make you stressed. Similarly with how you raise your kid, raising kid was then, you were not allowed to do this way, you had to hold the baby that way, and you should keep the feet in certain shapes, shaping the baby [laugh] to look beautiful.*

But here, people raised kids in a more relaxing mood, people also considered more both mom's and the baby's health, unlike back home, everything focused on the baby. But here, both moms and babies, so then...but... to say that focusing on moms did not mean that moms lied on one spot, and people brought food and water to you, but like, here, after giving birth, then about 2-3 days, unless you experienced anything unusual that required you to be in the hospital for further checking, you could go home after 2-3 days. And after 1 week, they recommended to have both moms and babies to be outside, to breath, because being at home all the time with closed air might not be so good. So like, if the kids were too small, then about 10-15 minutes, and then you increased the time later.

But like in Vietnam, you saw [chuckle], isolation for three months, no shower, no touching water, no this and no that, you thought...I thought, not because we were...we were tired, we were skinny because of giving birth, but we also felt so because we didn't get to shower. You think, without shower, then so dirty, so many bacterias, uncomfortable feelings, then how can you feel better mentally, how can your health gets better, right? [...]

Through the tone that A embedded in her narratives, one could see that she herself was challenging the social assumptions and practices done in Vietnam, concerning mothers who had just given birth, as she reported to know now another different way of approaching the matter. Through describing how she perceived the attitudes and expectations expressed towards pregnant women between Vietnam and Finland, A constructed her identity through being in the different position than the pregnant women in Vietnam portrayed in her story-world. It is important to note the words she used to refer to Vietnam as “back home”, while speaking about

Finland as “over here”. Because of those words, the spatial gap between the two societies appeared to be thin in this story world, where the movement back-and-forth between them in the story-world was rather simultaneously. Additionally, the terms she used could somewhat reflect the complexity in how A perceived her belongingness to Vietnam and Finland. Because even though one could interpret that she resonated more to the approach in Finland, the words “back home” constructed a stronger sense of belonging, while the words “over here” merely implied at closer distance. Her narrative continued:

(14) A: Over here, like, it's like, as long as you were not, like during pregnancy, if you didn't experience or had anything serious, then they still let you function normally, in daily lives. Like me, only until the last month that I rested at home. But before, I walked to work normally, worked normally. Nothing was wrong.

And then, while being pregnant, women us knew, knew about ourselves, like knew how our health were like, if we were tired, we could rest, but if we felt okay, then yea, we just work, we just walked and functioned normally. Right?

But at home [laugh] too many restrictions, too many diets, and then eat (?), ate whatever you wanted. And then, when I was pregnant, luckily I didn't have any morning sickness, so then I didn't feel any particular cravings. I just enjoyed eating vegetables, or anything that tastes lightly, and not with any sauces. Like I liked boiled vegetables with rice, or then with meat, maybe marinated and stewed with a little spices and salt, but yea that's all. I enjoyed food like that. Because then, that, the nutrition were pretty enough.

And over here, when you went to see doctors, they examined every month, and then until, if I remembered right, like until the second last or the last month, then you went to see the doctors more, maybe then every two weeks. Right, then they measured things carefully, and like took all tests, and they told me that I could eat anything I wanted, no necessarily any food diets, except for certain fish types, like having too much mercury, then avoided them. But like, other things were quite normal. Then like, the doctors also said, “if you had craving for sweetness, you could eat but be careful not to eat too much”, to be aware of the rise of sugar in your body, then it would not be good, but that was all. Even with my partner's mom, she was not anything like, being strict with me or told me to be this or that. Like you think, back home, being pregnant, it would not only involve your own mom but also your husband's mom, then aunts, uncles, relatives, everyone could have a comment, right?

But here, people respect you, if they see you feel healthy, then people would just ask, yea, if we wanted to share more then they would ask more, but if not, they would not ask much about that issue. So i felt that like [chuckles] over here, it was very comfortable and free.

When she recounted her experiences being pregnant in Finland, A also performed her identity as a woman relying on herself, and trusting her own instincts during pregnancy. When she described her ability to eat mostly what she wanted, and to continue going to work normally, A constructed her identity by drawing on the appreciation of freedom and space given to her. Furthermore, when she stated that her partner's mother was not as involved as how her family relatives would have been if she were living in Vietnam, A also positioned herself as more resonating with the Finnish approach, building up a distance in her sense of belonging to

Vietnamese society regarding this matter. Her last viewpoint mentioned about the involvement of others in a person's journey of raising their children:

(15) A: Then with the topic of raising children, everyone would have their own different way, right? Our kids, we raised them all our lives and like, family relatives, aunts, uncles or friends, they would not raise, so like, everyone with different opinions, this and that. Then over here, only when you had an issue you were not aware of, you asked then they would answer, they would not automatically, like...commenting this and that, then it was rather comfortable.

In A's narratives, the extent of involvement from family relatives or closed friends to how one raised his or her children in Vietnam somewhat provided us more context about the community factor in Vietnamese societal practices (see also, for example, Kosonen, 2008). Similarly, the embrace of private space and individual freedom could also be seen as what A interpreted of the Finnish environment, which she also described with favorism, implying that she currently embraced these factors in her own life too. In this narrative unit, a temporary "plot" was also established to present the continuous and shortened timeline of a mother being pregnant, then her giving birth and then her raising kid, even though the actual experiences might involve more complicated actions in between.

These narrative units comprise of many points where one could notice the sense of belonging to a particular group by identifying with its characteristics, was not stable or absolute either, and it should not be merely dependent on our nationality. When talking about the concept of urgency, A positioned herself with more resonance to Vietnamese ways of approaching; while speaking about topics regarding pregnant mother and raising children, her position reflected more her sense of belonging to Finnish societal environment. In these narratives, A constructed her identity through the comprehension of certain social practices done in both societies, and through the in-group memberships to both groups evoked in different ways.

C - Being himself a father, C also shared his viewpoint on the differences he perceived regarding the topic of raising children. C described how he learned to let his babies sleeping outside in Finland, so that they could be more acquainted to the nature, and be more healthy when they get older. Being healthy and active in sports were what C stated to hope for his children, as well as for himself. By highlighting those, C also enacted his identity performance in the discourses as someone interested in sports, and maintaining good health by additionally being exposed to outdoor environments. He evaluated the way of raising children in Vietnam could appear as being a little "soft" sometimes, because parents were doing extra work of taking care and protecting their children from any challenges. Through using the word "soft",

his identity continued to be performed as someone with enthusiasm for activeness in outdoor environment in order to be closer to his own perception of “strong”. His identity as a parent was also evoked in his statement of comparison, which also made references to how he approached his parenting outside the story-world. This reflected then his current self-identification. In the extract below, we discussed furthermore about his approaches in being a father. We also shared our own views about different educational styles for children between Vietnam and Finland.

(16) C: I let them play whatever they want. At schools now, they got to play many things, like swimming, skiing, skating.

[...]

C: And then, I let them play soccer, play badminton...At schools, they played. And in the evenings, after them doing homework, after feeding them, I let them go out playing in the yard, running, being active.

[...]

I: I have heard that the education in Finland, for kids, it was not so much heavy with homework, right?

C: Right, right.

[...]

I: Much different from VN, then?

C: Yea. Playing was the main thing.

I: Yea, yea. Like, in VN, kids were forced to study a lot, then even extra classes. But here, it seemed rather unnecessary. But I had the impression that the thinking over here, like not finding the needs to let children go to extra classes, not necessarily studying heavily, but the education was still rated as among the best ones in the world...so then, then, I saw...meaning like, because children from the young ages had more time to think ...

C: To explore, right. It encouraged more exploration, rather than forcing them to sit reading from books.

Notice how I also took part in constructing this narrative by stating my own evaluation, I did so to remind the study participant of my co-involvement in this mutual conversation, instead of me continuously questioning them. My narrative unit demonstrated my current viewpoint that could be considered as a formalized ending for my own studying experience – “coda” structural component in Labov’s (1972) model – because in “then and there” moment of the past, I would not have constructed the similar discourse without being exposed to different educating approaches and gaining new perspectives. In above extract, C performed his identity at first as a parent who encouraged his children to also be active in sports and being outdoor, similar to how he perceived of himself earlier. Afterwards, through interacting with my discourse, he and I co-constructed each other’s identity as Vietnamese people living abroad

who had gained different realization towards education style in Vietnam. C also said he gained new perspectives in the way he raises his children in another narrative unit, when we discussed about our perceptions of some Vietnamese households abroad teaching their children to be respectful of the order between elder and young people in families (see also, for example, Kosonen, 2008). His response was:

C: I keep feeling why life over here, people feel happy, because they don't have the viewpoint(?)... so then children with us, they are like friends, then they can talk, they don't have distance, or fear to talk to us. Then sometimes, when they want to do something, they would tell us, then yes, then I got to know, I can advise them.

In this extract, his identity as a parent was performed through his description of the way parents in Finland communicated with their children, which was also the way he said to want to maintain for himself. His position here was leaning towards the sense of belonging to Finnish societal environment, by expressing agreement to the approach in Finland. At the same time, having new perspectives also motivated him to look upon what values he was taught growing up in Vietnam. When I asked what the things done in Vietnamese way that he and his partner still kept for teaching their children, he answered:

(18) C: Like at the beginning of the story I told that, I told our kids that, they lived, they should know to be kind...to share...share, that...and to love and care about their siblings, and care about others a little. Mm.

[...]

C: [...] I don't really understand why in some Vietnamese families, their children cannot speak Vietnamese, how can be? Because, we, if we...that is why if we hang out with our children, talk to them, then their Vietnamese language skills would be better. Mm. Otherwise, if we just leave them at school in the mornings, pick them up in the evenings, then feed them, put them to bed, then clearly, we don't really communicate with them, then how can they understand Vietnamese?

[...]

C: [...] I, whenever there are opportunities, I let my kids return to Vietnam and hang out with their grandparents, so that I, my children hung out there and learned Vietnamese.

In the first narrative unit, by describing the values he told his children, he also constructed his identity through those values, to be kind and to care for others, especially for family members. Family values were once again brought up in C's discourse. In second narrative unit, as he pointed out the necessity for his children to be able to speak Vietnamese, he constructed his identity as a Vietnamese parent raising children abroad, placing emphasis on his children knowing how to speak his first language. He also positioned himself as a parent who valued communicating with his children, being distant from the Vietnamese parents that he perceived as not talking enough to their kids. In the third narrative unit, C continued to perform his identity as a Vietnamese parent raising children abroad, who would take good opportunities in

taking their children back to Vietnam and having them know about the society there, constructing their belonging to Vietnam. In this sense, he also constructed his sense of belonging to Vietnam.

B - Not only study participant C but B also said she considered it important for her children to know Vietnamese. Her life situation was different, as her partner also had a rather diverse background. They mostly spoke English at home with each other, but B reported that she tried to focus speaking Vietnamese with her children, positioning herself similarly to C, as a Vietnamese parent raising children abroad and having them to know her first language. Her identity was constructed here with the sense of belonging to Vietnam through maintaining its language in her household. On the other hand, B also recounted that she found many aspects of life in Vietnam that she did not resonate with anymore, such as noises, traffics, extra service businesses created in Vietnam to charge extra costs. Furthermore, B discussed with me how her communication with old friends had changed. B evaluated that because of the distance, their lives were said to be no longer juxtaposed, which made it harder for them to know each other's lives; hence, the friendships naturally evolved to different state. It was not just because of the distance, but also because of different life circumstances and phases in life that B described her perception was changed consequently.

(19) B: In general, sometimes like, we still exchanged texts back and forth, but usually, maybe not so much as how it was usual in the past. Because now everyone is busy, because each of us, for example when there is something happening or something else, then we text each other, that's all.

[...]

I: If you meet up with those friends in Vietnam, then do you share with them about your life over here?

B: If I share, I would just say in general, because it is quite hard for them to really understand the life over here, for example, if we lived in Vietnam, we could have understand their lives in Vietnam, but over here then it was quite hard. So then, well, for example if I share, I would just say in general level.

In this extract, B positioned herself as being distant from her old friends, and in a way, being distant from Vietnamese societal context. She also constructed herself as an immigrant living abroad through describing the gaps in their understandings about each other's lives.

D - The feeling of being in-between, as well as the dialogue processes reflecting how immigrants would negotiate between different social knowledge they came to know, could also be noticed from the below extract from D. I asked for her opinions about the assumptions that Vietnamese immigrants in Finland should definitely follow the Finnish ways. She answered

that if the Finnish way was better, the immigrants should; and further elaborated her answer as following:

D: Because I am the kind of person, to whom the importance is For example, because Vietnam is, so called, collective society, while Finnish is independent society. And I still see that there are good things about collective society and also good things about independence, in different ways. Like, like, children growing up over here, they all had their own rooms, so their parents didn't like, hug them, cuddle them, like they were not, in that kind of closeness. Then... I didn't like that. Because I want to be very closed with my children, then when I have kids of my own, I want to be closed with them. But partly, of course, I also want my kid to be independent. Then, like, when being collective then I see that like, people help each other more. Like, how to say... when we went outside we saw people, we helped, we helped, and we did not need, not need to ask if others needed help. For example we helped, in collective society they saw us needing help, then they helped without us asking for favors. But here, then we had to ask for favors, then they would help us. So I saw that collective and independent were good in their own different ways. That's why I see that... those things... how to say... I see, I think, kids growing up within a family, where there is a mixture of culture, then the kids will develop in the good sides of collective and the good sides of independence; and they won't be too much independent, and be too much collective. Because like, when I see, I, I feel that Finland is... how to say, because I grew up here, I have become an adult here, I feel that this society has taught me the independent characteristic of this society. But of course, I still have collective side, I still help others, still do that, like in Vietnam. But I also have my independent personality and other sides.

In this narrative unit, one could notice the different positions D took throughout the discourse. She described herself as resonating with the Vietnamese way, being a collective society, in helping others and wanting to be closed with her future children. She positioned here as distant from Finnish people. She also reported to see herself as resonating with Finnish society and its embrace of independency, underlining her evaluation of herself being a grown-up in Finland through learning this characteristic of the society. She then positioned herself here in the discourse as belonging to Finnish society. By describing that she felt identifying with both societies in different ways, D constructed her identity based on the in-between spaces among the different positions she took. Her identity was not constructed with only a sense of belonging to Vietnam or Finland, but to both. According to her narratives, it was the social environment that taught her the important characteristics that she currently embraced for herself. This way of thinking was also included in the essentialist approach, assuming that who we are was the product of the environment (Burr, 2015, p. 6). On the contrast, according to social constructionism presented in this thesis, there should not be any given, determined nature to the world or people (Burr, 2015, p. 6). It should be then worth questioning, whether or not the social environment determined those characteristics that D described for herself. Instead, perhaps, how she understood herself was due to her sense-making processes of her social experiences in relation with the social actors she had interacted with. Her description of herself

above might not be about what characteristics of the two societies she found in herself, but it might merely demonstrate how she made sense of herself was connected with how she made sense of others and the societal environments.

In general, in the narratives discussing about different social practices and knowledge they perceived of two societies, the study participants appeared to take different positions, reflecting their fluctuated senses of belongings to the two societal environments. This shows that although the in-between feeling may exist in reality to a certain extent, it is still a result of a continuous process where immigrant negotiate through complex layers social knowledge, practices and values throughout his or her experience journey living in a new environment.

5.1.3 Life milestones

To consider that a person's identity is not determined by the societal environment but rather is correlation with life experiences, I also discussed with the study participants about their most outstanding life experiences that can stimulate their different perspectives of self and others.

Study participant D

In D's life stories, besides her first relocation to Finland, her moving again to Estonia temporarily was another big step in her life. She described that she was completely by herself when moving to there. Therefore, she recounted that she had to push herself more to socialize and form new friendships. She described herself as being dependent on her partner at the beginning living in Estonia, to cope with the changes in life circumstances. Her mom then advised her to knitting so that she could focus her energy on something else. Her choice of mention about her mother here might connect with what she stated in earlier narrative that she turned to family relationship in difficult times. D constructed her identity here as Vietnamese immigrant in another new living environment. However, she still took the same position as when she first relocated to Finland through finding the familiarity in coping with newness. She furtherly stated that the experiences to learn relying on herself more in Tallinn encouraged her to be more independent nowadays, which was another reflection upon past experiences that drove D to her current understanding of self.

According to D, her first life experiences through which she felt her self as changing was actually when she moved from junior high school to high school, after going through a bullying time. In high school, she said that she joined clubs, events more actively and became braver. Throughout conversations with me, she also mentioned what organizations she became actively

involved outside Universities in Finland, which could be considered as her maintaining the identity she perceived of herself since that life experience. Moreover, D shared with me the ups and downs in her friendship with a closed friend, through which she also gained new understanding of herself. She recounted her realization that she could rely heavily on that friendship. After all the events, at this time that they were still involved in each other's life, D told me about the changes in her behavior towards this friendship, based on previous experiences. This event might somewhat influence her current thinking on the concept of friendship, and on herself in relationship with others, which could consequently affect to what types of friendships she wanted to have in her life at present, and in future. Therefore, the sense of her self that was communicated to me was different from the one presented through her own character in the story-world. This was the retrospective dimension of narratives encouraging narrators to entail on their lives in the past, through which they were likely seeing new meanings emerging at present. Furthermore, according to D's narratives, the experience with media was also mentioned as another space in which she gained new meanings and made sense of her self, as in below excerpt.

(21) I: I saw that you know yourself pretty well, meaning like, because you realized these things, through many experiences, then sometimes you started to think about yourself, then you come to these conclusions...?

D: Yes, right. And then, I saw, I watched things on social media, and watched TED talks, and watched videos talking, and then vlogs, Youtube. Then when people said things, I also reflected. Because I am a person who tends to think a lot. So then, my head, it is never empty. There is always something for me to think about.

In this excerpt, she pointed out how interaction with media could also stimulate new meanings for her, and consequently influence in her perceptions of others and self. She constructed her identity here through the description of herself. The role of others in a person's identification should be acknowledged in each of these life events D told me, as they all involved her social interactions with other social actors. One story she told me was about her being influenced by a friend she knew. As D reported to observe the confidence and the attitude towards life of that friend, she stated that they helped her thinking similarly, and reducing her negativity towards her physical appearance. According to her narrative, the friend also inspired her to be a feminist, which became a part of her identification now. Most importantly, with her current self-understanding, she could look back upon her past relationships and reached a new conclusion of what relationships might have added up to her feeling unconfident. She also mentioned her experiences working with disabled people and people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Through those important experiences, she said that she saw her ability to sympathize increase, and her perspectives towards discrimination seemed to have gained a new

aspect. She also claimed that she understood more of herself working in a team as someone being able to lead when necessary, and being flexible in accordance with who she worked with, which she seemed to maintain as part of her identification that was constructed in her narratives.

Study participant A

In A's narratives, relocating to a new place was put as similar to having a new start, which allowed more spaces for the changes to happen, most of which she described as happening naturally throughout her course of life in Finland. Somewhat similar to D's story, A shared that her second time relocating to Australia for a temporary period pushed her to be more open-minded with the newness.

(22) I: Then, mm, do you have any events in your life, 1, 2, or 3 most outstanding life events that you perceive changes in yourself?

A: Well, first was when I moved to Australia temporarily for a period of time. Because like, as I told you, in the first year I came to Finland like, I still kept the characteristic, how to say, I still held onto the life in Vietnam. When I came, that year in Finland was like a phase, mm, a bridge. Mm. I did not see many changes in me so much then. Because my mindset was still in Vietnam, then I still had friends in Vietnam, I was just 18 years old, I was still homesick. That.

[...]

A: Then like, until I moved to Australia, then I had to go to work, then I got busier with my present life more than having times to think about back home. Then like, in that working environment, it was also...like meeting this and that person, then it was easier for me to communicate with others. Other day I said that because in Australia, they used English, then I expressed myself easier than in Finland. Not to mention that Finnish people were like, at that time, it was right after leaving Vietnam to Finland, so it was like two contrasting opposite polar-ends, then it was too different, so then I was not having...

Her identity before moving to Australia was constructed as different from after her living in Australia. In the description of that first year, she took a position of young person finding difficulty in getting acquainted with new environment, and holding onto familiarity at first. In descriptions about her time in Australia, A drew on the shared language as easier factor for her to build communication with others. By doing that, she took a position as being distant from Finnish people, because of the language gap, as well as because of how she perceived them as behaving too contrastingly from what she was familiar with. Additionally, by stating that she had to work and be busier in Australia, she constructed her identity with more maturity, from the position of a working person, not student. Her description about her recalled experiences in the first year in Finland also reminded us that not all immigrants relocating, even when they expected to see differences, could adapt easily and welcome all new knowledge. In that specific

year, she might have not reached similar conclusion. However, at the time when she shared this story to me, A had already accepted what happened then was necessary in her journey, seeing the year as a “bridge”. When she described that the environment in Australia was less contrast to the one in Vietnam, which might have eased her path of blending in, such a knowledge would have not been able to exist either, without her experience in Finland first, so that she was aware of the differences and similarities across these societal environments.

The next life milestone A stated was when she became a mother, as she said that having children motivated her to sympathize of others more, and think about why people might behave in particular ways. In her retelling, co-parenting with her partner was reported to have encouraged A to learn about the equal roles between her and her partner. In the narrative discussing about this topic, she implied that her perception had changed due to how she saw the situation was in Finland. The third important life experience for A was reported as being an entrepreneur. What she recounted as most important from this experience was her ability to be financial independent and having an establishment of her own. In later conversations, the independence was brought up again as a characteristic she seemed to embrace. In her viewpoint, she viewed that the societal environment in Finland encouraged people to be rely more on themselves, especially at young ages; they thus seem to be more independent, in comparison with Vietnamese societal environment. Therefore, her image about woman in a relationship was also said to have been changed in terms of independency. Such a viewpoint somewhat demonstrated the self-presentation she wanted to communicate to me, as quoted below:

(23) I: [...] So then you agree, so then, because you, for example including myself also, then because of living here, then the thought about independency, and the thought that we can do everything by ourselves are higher? Or because...?

A: Uhm like, ourselves we have to, have to do and not depending on, and like...in my view, only depending on emotional and spiritual aspects then I need. That is why I said that, the image of my ideal man now was different. In the past, I think that I do not need to do anything, he would do everything for me. And now then I only needed, when I felt down and sad, I needed someone to share with, or then I had some problems, I had a person to talk to, to understand me, that was all. And like, the issue like with other matters then if they could help us, they would help, if not, I could still manage, do it by myself. For example, fixing car, changing car tires, if he could help then okay, because he (?) but if not, then I could still solve the problem on my own. And not like, oh if you could not, then you took care of it now on your own, I don't care, I have only that car (?)

I: Yes...Then but, do you think, if still in Vietnam, or then do you think women in Vietnam are independent?

A: No. Mm, that's why I think, that is one of the reasons why women's values in men's eyes are not as high as over here. Because, mm, clearly like, if we, our lives depend on someone else, then they won't value it as like. Like, with this thought... now like, if a man thinks that a woman keep depending on him then now that, one day I have to leave her, not being able to live, then he, do you see his attitude, can he respect us? [...]

In these narrative units, she constructed her identity as an independent woman that would be capable of doing things by herself when needed. The examples of fixing car and changing car tires that were mentioned by her, reflected which areas she perceived that women tended to need assistance, and the meanings of her ability to manage on her own with those tasks thus highlighted more her identity as an independent woman. She continued to perform that identity when she took a contrasting position to the other women she described in the story-world, referring to how she perceived Vietnamese women tended to behave.

Study participant C

Being also a parent, C described that living in Finland brought him a different way to perceive the role of partners in parenting. He acknowledged the differences in social perceptions towards male and female between the two societal environments. When I followed up asking for examples, he mentioned the term “paternalism”. In his viewpoint, he said that he saw paternalism in Vietnam might refer to husband not be willing to help your wife and your children, which was why he then stated to always communicate with his partner and his children. His identities as a husband and a father were constructed here as being contrast to how he understood the term “paternalism”.

In C's narratives, starting a family was also a big milestone in his life. His priority was stated then to change to just focusing on his family. He described that the experience was rather challenging and stressful at the beginning. Looking back upon it, he reviewed that it might be the timing that was not giving them much time to be fully prepared, and equipped to take care of the whole family. Moreover, being a parent was also reported to have motivated him to entail back at the time of himself as a kid. He said that he recognized what hardships his parents were facing with, but also what he wished for as the child. This reflection upon his childhood, in the present societal context, generated different meanings for himself as a parent. He told me that he wanted to provide them what he did not have then. He reported to try to spend as much time as possible with his children after works. Therefore, he described his life as not much complicated because he viewed that he had clear life focus.

Study participant B

B particularly said that she saw her self being impacted by different ordinary experiences along her life journey so far. Before moving to Finland, she recounted that she had already experienced first time working in Vietnam. According to B, thanks to them, she recognized what jobs she found most suitable for herself. When she studied a different degree in Finland, together with more experiences doing more part-time jobs here, she again recounted that she realized her interests drawn to restaurant field. Although experiences like these might not be considered as major milestones, they were the reasons for our direction changes in life, which indicated that our identity was not a stable entity, and that changes in living environments were not the solely factors for our adjusted self-understandings.

According to B, the living environment though could affect people quite much. For instances, to a certain extent, she viewed that living in Finland let her re-think on her life expectations, which was no longer about getting rich, reaching highest position at work or having a luxurious apartment. For her nowadays, she said that she wished for a simple life, where she had enough of what she needed. Additionally, being in an intercultural relationship also stimulated many situations where she reported to have learned that her ‘common sense’ was not shared by her partner. She shared the below small story during one of their visit to Vietnam together:

(24) B: [...] in Vietnam for example, like, mm, back when when we came to visit, a common thing happened was that, when we went out to eat with whole family, one person would pay. That, for example. Usually in Vietnam, people would then take turn, like this meal I paid, next meal you paid, that, like that style. Then there were...then with Westerners, then they didn't understand those things. Sometimes, they saw someone paying, then they thought...so then I also asked then, "oh, why I see you only eating but not offering to pay?", then thinking, then, then, then he thought that, mm, like...my parents paid, or then my parents gave me money to pay, or then my sister, mm, like, because they were all families, then my sister paid for them all, in family. Then if...then why...then if he demanded to pay, then it would be like, he felt being outsider, not being a part of the family, like that. Then I had to explain it was not like that. This is, because the culture was this. Like the previous time someone paid, then the next time, someone else paid, like that, so then it was different. For example, in his country, then for example, usually going out to eat then parents would pay, and not like, sister or then, that, not like younger sister or brother, paid. Then if it was different then I had to explain.

I: Generally, we should communicate and talk more, right?

B: Right. But also, until a situation happens, you cannot know. Like only after experiencing the situations, then you can. Sometimes that culture is mine, so then i am so acquainted with, then I, I don't understand that, that it can be very strange to my husband.

I: Did these things ever cause you any big arguments? Or then, you guys just communicated more?

B: Generally at the beginning, then we also argued about quite many things. But then later on, then we got to understand, oh well these were the differences between cultures, so then we took time to explain [...]

In the first narrative unit, she took a position with in-group membership to Vietnamese society, describing the common approach regarding paying for family meals, and stating that “because the culture is this”. She also took a distant position to her partner when using the word “Westerner” referring to him. She constructed her identity here as a Vietnamese person being in Vietnam, and taking the social practice there for granted, accepting it as ‘common’ knowledge understood by most of Vietnamese people in this scenario. Additionally, by describing what her partner seemed to make of the situation, she included ‘the other’ in her narrative, conforming to her constructed identity as someone thinking differently than her partner. At the same time, her partner’s identity performance was enacted through the differences described in how they perceived the situation. As Hall and Du Gay (1996, p. 4) has pointed out that, “identities are constructed through, not outside, difference”. One could also see from this narrative unit how culture was addressed in an essentialist way, which determines our behaviors accordingly.

5.2 Narrative Analysis

5.2.1 Study participant – C

Following from earlier findings, C constructed his identity as a person putting his family as priority, as he repeated the point multiple times throughout the conversations. When I explored how he negotiated through the differences in social knowledges and practices between Vietnam and Finland, he mostly presented the examples in the topic of raising his children. He explicitly expressed his life goals as finding a good and stable job that allowed him to take care of his family. These goals might have been somewhat shaped by the social expectations towards male role in a family, that he had perceived from his family and from surrounding environment, while growing up in Vietnam. On the other hand, he also reported that living in Finland had made him to acknowledge the normality in father staying at homes and taking care of children, which was followed with his statements that he and his wife shared equal roles in their household.

When he arrived at Finland, he said that he had a clear goal drawing his focus on – performing well in his job. Because of that, he stated that he was not influenced by any experiences of shock. C also appeared to be as someone not being embedded in these differences, since his

discourse did not reflect any conflicts he might have had. He seemed to accept the knowledge he had from growing up in Vietnam as always a part of who he is, whilst acknowledging that different societal environments entail different social perceptions that he had to learn for integration. In his opinions, he described:

(25) I: Generally, that...we come here to live, we have to respect.... You think that we should respect Finnish people's ways of living here, and should follow their way of living, right?

C: Let's have a perception like this. We are immigrants, we come to their homes, then if we want them to respect us, then we should consider their ways of living, so that we can blend in. Of course, as a person who has culture, we would know what is good, right? Clearly, inside ourselves, we know what is good about Vietnam and what is not right? So, it's the same for here. We will know what is good. So then, if we change, we can blend in with them, they would like us, of course. It's like your home, if your friend comes over, and they have good awareness, then of course, we would invite them for second time, third time. Yea. Mm.

When he implied that a person could know what was good and bad of a culture to adjust along with, he also hinted at the negotiation he had within his mind between different social knowledges he came across. Furthermore, in this narrative unit, he constructed his identity as a “guest” coming to live in the host country, seeing that it was almost logical that he had to know and learn about their ways of living, so that he could blend in better. When stating that he was a person with culture, knowing that his culture had its good and bad sides, he enacted the identity performance as an in-group member to Vietnamese culture. This membership provided him the knowledge and certainty to distinguish between the good and bad sides of Vietnam. When he emphasized in the narrative that he would be able to know what was good too about Finland, he also positioned himself here as an in-group member to Finnish society, to the extent that he had sufficient knowledge about Finland, in order to filter. Interestingly, in the next few sentences, C appeared to position himself again as guest coming to the host society, performing his identity as an immigrant who accepted to change and learn for better integration, as it seemed to be the most sensible scenario for him to be welcomed for staying in his new living environment. In a way, one could say that in the last few sentence in this narrative, C constructed his identity both as insider and outsider of the Finnish society, while also evoking his identity performance as someone with rooted culture, and that culture is Vietnam.

He explained to me with clear goals in his life, he did not experience much difficulties coping with newness, and he described himself as a rather opened person, which he believed to have helped him getting acquainted easier with living in a new place. Before having family, after

work, he spent much time playing sports. After having family, he still maintained the time doing sports as hobbies, in addition to times spent with his kids. In my opinion, based upon his choices of stories to share and to what extent, C appeared to have lived his life in a rather uncomplicated way. He said he accepted the things as they were and followed with it. This might be the reason why he also told me later, that he saw his life as stable and being somewhat the same throughout the last twelve years. As a person having had family, his discourses also implicated the maturity in his thoughts. C also repeated multiple times the important values in his life (family, work and being healthy), as well as how he viewed himself and his life. By doing that, it also indicated what he did with his narratives that led me to view his identity as such.

Furthermore, C established the connection with others' narratives about immigration experience, through interacting with my narratives telling about myself and my situation. From the finding presented above (see further above in sub-chapter 5.1.1), his narrative also interacted with the Vietnamese students' general narratives, whose circumstances coming to Finland was different than him. In these discourses, he took a different social position than me and other Vietnamese student, because his identity was constructed as an immigrant coming to Finland on the basis of employment. His position was portrayed with more certainty regarding the matter of having a job, and having support at the beginning, when he moved to Finland from his company. C also took an implicit stance as being distant from the social positions he perceived that international students would occupy. Through this distance, his identity was also constructed. In the interaction with me, the storytelling role that C portrayed was also of a respondent forming his answers according to what he presumed as sufficient for my questions. There appeared to be many pauses in our conversations, because I implicitly wanted him to take advantages of those breaks to be more comfortable in thinking and forming narratives. Additionally, I presumed they could provide him spaces to initiate asking me in return so that our conversations would not be one-way communication. However, the fact that some pauses were kept as pauses might have been because he did not want to share more personal experiences. This can also be noticed through the pauses he took before answering some questions, and can be considered as his moments to think of what content and to what extent he would share the stories to me.

5.2.2 Study participant – A

Out of four study participants, A's narratives were the longest because I got to meet with her for four times. Considering how A initiated in sharing the depth of her thoughts on her life

experiences, she seemed to be rather opened; hence, it also motivated me to schedule more than two meetings that could fit her schedule, as I wanted to hear her elaborating more about her lived experiences. During our first meeting, while getting acquainted with each other, our positions were quite similar as we shared alike circumstances of relocating to Finland, to a certain extent. At the same time, she was also at the position of mature senior to me because she had longer time living in Finland, and more life experiences, due to our age differences.

She moved to Finland right after graduating high school, which brought a distinct contrast to her life, as she described. At the time speaking with me, A had acknowledged that the first year living in Finland as needed time for her to transitioning, which portrayed her maturity in accepting what happened as part of life growth. She also expressed a different view of women's independence in relationships, and of the concept of marriage. When she talked about how she used to assume that while being in love, a woman could depend everything on a man, P expressed her current disagreement, by comparing her past assumptions about how women showed their dependency on the partners, to a situation where a woman could manage on her own, with or without a partner. Through telling me such situation, she also implied at the new meaning that she had about the concept. With narrative units as this, by providing two contrast examples, and pointing out what example would appear to have her agreement or her resonance with, A's identification was constructed and comprehended. At the same time, I also expressed my agreement with those examples she leaned towards, co-constructing her identity, as well as constructing my own, in these narrative units.

Additionally, her identity as an entrepreneur reaffirmed her other identity of being an independent woman. It was stated earlier that having her own entrepreneurship had allowed her to be financially independent, which could be an important factor in her perspective about independency. During the last meeting, A shared with me more about the background story of the business, before it reached current state. She said that she had a year of learning through working experiences with a different entrepreneurship. When that business seemed not to be continued, she said she did look for jobs around; however, being used to working for herself and deciding matters in her own way, she recounted that she kept looking for ways to establish another business, which was also when she reported to meet with her current partner. In this small story, her past life events appeared then to generate the meanings for A to interpret regarding what type of career path she wished to pursue, motivating her to make a decision at that time as continuing with entrepreneurship. In this narrative unit, A also constructed her identity as a determined person in pursuing in having a business of her own, being able to

operate the business in her own ways. By telling about these phases she went through, and by saying that she currently saw the challenges she faced back then were necessary, A took the position of an experienced entrepreneur, who had reflected and seen the past difficulties in positive light.

In our last meeting, A talked about her thoughts on the concept of marriage. According to her narrative, getting married might be more about completing the partnership on a legal paper, as well as being able to celebrate with a wedding, rather than being about the feeling of certainty, in regard to your willingness or capability to spend the rest of your life with another person. Furthermore, she recounted that after relocating and being exposed with more information about the matter through a variety of media means, she viewed now that she appreciated higher the mutual feeling of wanting to be together rather than the act of getting married. A constructed her identity here through describing that viewpoint of her. She also acknowledged that this view could contradict with how many people look at marriage in Vietnam. Here she took a distinct position as being distant from the people in Vietnam, who have different views about marriage than hers.

Besides, I asked her directly how she would answer to the question, “who are you?”. In her own words, A described herself as following:

(26) A: Mm, like...okay, to answer the question “who are you?” right, okay...I am an independent woman. The I am an entrepreneur, I am a person loving the beauty [chuckles] I am a person enjoying new things, like travelling, eating, exploring new things. But like, i also like things, calling like, the silent moments, i also like feeling, the feeling to be comfortable at home, like being at home. Sometimes I just like being cozy at home and not going outside. Mm. Then...I also, like, how to say, I especially care about matters, like, humanitarian, or...like overtime i read an article, like this person helps another person, or an animal, one animal species helps another animal species, or like...usually they draw most of my attention. Then, I also like, like helping, but helping with a meaning, how to say, not helping every kinds of people, helping with selection [chuckles] helping the people who actually need help [...]

When being asked if those characteristics were what she had thought of at the time speaking, she answered that the first few things were what she knew about herself, referring to her being an independent woman, an entrepreneur and a person loving beauty. These are the characteristics A certainly embraced for her identification, which were implied throughout her narratives. She furtherly said other ones she mentioned might have belonged to the group of things about ourselves that we could only know by experiencing and reflecting. This was related with one of the aims of this thesis’s, as to portray how our identification happened at the same time when we told the stories of our lives, reflecting our sense-making processes and

our self-identification processes. At times, she also presented different viewpoints to me, and followed with rhetorical questions presuming my agreement with the more seemingly sensible answer, based on her own perception. Her choices of those viewpoints could also reflect what viewpoint she referred for herself. By forming these rhetorical questions, she also positioned herself with more maturity to me.

5.2.3 Study participant – B

I met up with B two times, due to her busy schedules. I noticed to myself how she appeared to be somewhat cautious towards me because our conversations were recorded, which meant that her narratives might have been impacted to a certain extent for her seeing our meetings as less casual conversations between friends. It should also be noted of my own changes in forming the questions, as well as in constructing my discourses, with each study participant, given what I realized after interacting with the others; and likewise for them. Comparing to me, as B had lived longer time in Finland and had had more years of living experiences, she first appeared to me as a mature senior. At the beginning when B came to Finland, she seemed to be missing the communities, which tended to be a described characteristic of Vietnamese society noticed in all the study participants' narratives. However, at present, B appeared to acknowledge the individualistic sense – expressing that “everything is up to you”. Her identity was constructed through her ways of narrating that most things could depend on how a person perceived it. B also stated that nowadays, when she visited Vietnam, she paid less attention in organizing time meeting up with all old friends, evaluating that she might have been influenced by the Finnish approach in concerning more about your own matters and your space. Essentialism was underlined here by stating how a person's behavior would be influenced by the environment. On the other hand, this might not have been merely how she got influenced by the living environment, but her different behaviors could be due to many life experiences she gained in different societal context, that somewhat created a gap in the old friendships in Vietnam. B also acknowledged this though, when talking about her communication with the friends she had before relocating. B recounted her realization that it was hard for others to understand her life here while being in Vietnam, and vice versa.

Similar to study participants A and C, B also formed discourses presenting different viewpoints she perceived from the two societal environments. Through expressing disagreement or agreement with certain viewpoint, her identity performance was enacted. Moreover, the realizations she had said about some social practices in Vietnam referred to the critical stance she took at present, when looking at the previous social knowledge that she had learned and

known. This might be a result derived from how immigrants' taken-for-granted knowledge was challenged, stimulating them to be more conscious and somewhat critical about the things they had learned in their upbringing environment.

In B's viewpoint, the changes she had noticed about herself and others' might have been more in terms of the changes in perspectives, rather than in personalities. Her viewpoint also presented the essentialism approach to look at identity with core and stable personalities. B further explained her view that, during the period of being teenagers to young adults, people would realize who they were, what they liked and what they did not, as well as understood more about their personalities, which should remain somewhat the same throughout a person's life. It still seemed then that in daily discourses, people were more comprehensible towards the idea that we each had certain personalities that were essences in our identities.

Being a mother and having a family herself in Finland, B also expressed similar viewpoint as A, regarding the involvement of family relatives. She described that in Finland, others tended to respect her family's space, and not interfering to the ways she raised her children. She positioned herself as distant from the parents living in Vietnam, who had more help from their families taking care of the children. In addition to that, B described that raising children in Finland required higher reliance on oneself than others. However, she recounted that the challenge was quite short, in comparison of how she perceived the situation in Vietnam would be; because according to A, Finnish societal environment established discourses and systems encouraging children to be more independent at young age, depending less on the parents. B constructed her identity here as a mother being self-reliant, implying that her position of living in Finnish environment might have also stimulated her to become so.

Reflected through her narratives, B appeared to me then as someone being careful with details that can affect her life's privacy. Alternatively, I predicted that she might have not thought in depth about her sense of identity following from the relocation. Simplicity, and happiness from enough fulfillment in life were what B described as her current life expectations, which also related with her described present focuses in life – revolving mainly around being with her family. In her opinions, B acknowledged the changes in her self-understanding as obvious, due to her adaptation to the new living environment. She further said that if she felt that about herself, it was also sensible for others to notice the same. She emphasized that how others saw and evaluated her would not matter as much as how she saw herself adjusting for better causes, which also draw on the individualistic sense of her self that I noticed earlier – when she said,

“everything is up to you”. This might also refer to the individual component described in the identity politics theory – the agency of each individual to self-identify in spite of others’. B additionally mentioned that there were also people finding it difficult to adapt, who were not ready for changes brought by the new culture in Finland. She thought this might have been the reason why some Vietnamese people enjoyed hanging out with their communities, so that they could still embrace the cultural ways that they were most acquainted with. Such a description from N again referred to how diverse immigrant’s adaptation process can be, varying among each individual. Besides, in this discussion, her narrative might have also interacted with others’ narratives about immigration experiences. From the tone and the ways she formed her discourse, B took an implicit stance as an immigrant who has learned to be more independent, not relying on the familiarity from Vietnamese culture, in adapting to a different living environment. During our conversations, she also positioned herself as a participant for a thesis research through how she formed her narratives accordingly to my questions.

5.2.4 Study participant – D

While explaining the circumstances of her relocation to Finland, D mentioned her initiative in contacting directly the University’s representatives regarding the final decision about whether she was accepted as a student. D said that in that year, she and other Vietnamese students in similar situation that she knew of, were waiting rather long for the decision. D then thought of being the one contacting the University, instead of waiting. Her decision to mention this small story enacted her identity performance then, allowing me to see her as different from other students in that same year. She said that when she received the answer from that representative, she shared the information to a communicative forum with other Vietnamese students, and they followed her way. Afterwards, D reported to send an email to the University’s representative saying thank-you and suggesting a formal coffee together if possible. She later acknowledged that the suggestion was before she comprehended the ways Finnish people usually were, and it was mostly following her perception of this situation in the Vietnamese societal context – as showing gratitude to someone for a favor. She recounted now to find it sensible that the University representative did not respond to the suggestion, in terms of her current view about Finnish societal context. Her retelling of what she did then, constructed her as someone who was not hesitant in taking initiative and establishing relationships. This identity of her was also performed through her narrative units stating that she tried to learn few Finnish phrases before relocating.

When being asked about the most outstanding shocks she came across when she first arrived in Finland, D shared the story of meeting the senior lady that motivated her to embrace woman's independency in her life. This aspect could be seen throughout her narratives. Later, D mentioned the time when she gave a public-speaking presentation, telling her different perspectives towards an independent person and an independent woman. That story reflected how she had placed high importance on being the latter for her identification. In her viewpoint, D saw an independent woman as being capable of doing tasks that were likely thought to be for men. According to her, feminism should not be seen as merely pushing down men, but the main point was being respectful of women, which she viewed as similarly important in regard to racial discrimination – being respectful of the differences. By forming discourses about this topic, D continued to perform her identity as an independent woman, and constructed another identity as someone supporting equality in spite of gender and racial differences. It should be noticed here that I also took part in this discussion, co-constructing D's subjectivities about feminism. Besides, D acknowledged how the Finnish living environment stimulated her current thinking about being an independent woman, following from her first encounter with the senior lady. She reported to begin observing more about how the image of Finnish women were generally portrayed, so that she could also practice being one in her relationship. The word "practice" she used here to describe the process she went through in reaching her current self-identification would also be mentioned in her self-description. D said she saw herself as someone following the good ways she noticed from others, practicing them and making them eventually her ways, with her own styles. She also shared with me quotes from the TED talk she saw that made her feel confirmed about this description of herself, "if you could not do it, then you would copy until you managed to do it and make it yours".

Since D was able to speak also Chinese, English and Finnish, we also discussed about how she might feel differently expressing in different languages. As her grandparents were immigrants in Vietnam from China, she said that she knew the language, but did not speak it often currently. With each description of herself speaking each language, one could also grasp how her identity was constructed differently. D said that her parent pushed her to study Chinese, and nowadays when she did not speak often with the parent, she was not much fluent anymore. In her narratives, this language represented the ethnic root of her, but at the same time, it related to other narrative units regarding her being a daughter, and her conflicted relationship with the parent. She said that she felt most comfortable in speaking English, because she was much acquainted with using it daily, while living in Finland. Therefore, she recounted that when she spoke Vietnamese, others might notice a little difference in her accent. Additionally, she told

me when she used Vietnamese communicating with few friends or with her family, she described it as quite interesting. Her identity as an international student living outside of Vietnam was performed in these descriptions. D also took a distant position to her friends and family relatives when they spoke Vietnamese together. When she switched to Finnish, D said she admitted feeling quite limited in expressing herself fully. She furtherly stated that because she was a person having many ideas while speaking, she could not communicate well and wholly in Finnish; however, D said that at present, she might have begun to use Finnish more that led to her forgetting certain Vietnamese words sometimes. By saying that she might have even forgot certain Vietnamese words sometimes, D positioned herself to be nearer to Finnish society. In this narrative unit, D constructed her identity as an immigrant living in Finland, who put effort into learning the language, so that she could blend in the society with less limitation in communication. This also related with her later narrative units retelling about her process of studying Finnish more, besides the official courses offered in the University. Through these stories, D expressed her perspectives that an immigrant should know the language as well as possible for better integration.

In D's narratives, one can also notice her self-understanding may not necessarily be the same as how others see her. For example, she said as following:

(27) I: [...] *Have you ever tried thinking about, or realized why you saw yourself too dependent?*

D: *Because...I think that, because back then, I thought of myself as an emotional person, but until...because I...I had been dating with a few people [laugh] then with each boyfriend then, I also hung out with a lot, being quite closed with them. Then...I lived, like, rather as an emotional person, I liked to be closed with them...but until, there was one time, in high school, my friend said that I was a logical person. Then I was like, "what are you saying? I don't understand, I saw that I was a very emotional person, living with feelings". Then the friend said, because I, I got sad one day only, the next day, I was over it. Mm. Then, later, my friend(s) also told me, even my thesis supervisor, she also said I did it very logically, then like...there were...then my friend(s) said that I was very realistic, because there were stories I told my friend(s), then, but my friend, that friend who lived very emotionally, I didn't hang out with that friend anymore...I find us not fitting, because the friend's thinking was very dreamy...*

In this excerpt, the involvement of others was presented as part of her current identification. After hearing her friends' and her teacher's comments, D recounted that she saw herself differently, which led her to reflect on the friendships she had had up to then. This reflection possibly affected what types of friends she wanted to befriend in future. Additionally, through how she described the friend she had not hung out with anymore, her identity was constructed as someone with contrasting position to the friend's. She furtherly shared about the

straightforward discussions she had with some friends following from this change in her self-understanding, which then constructed her identity here as being direct and straightforward. By presenting the differences of others in comparison with her own self-understanding, she expressed confirmation about herself in the discourses, constructing her identity through the difference as someone being more logical. Furthermore, D said that after hearing comments of others about her, she thought more about them and became more conscious about her actions, before stating it a part of who she is currently. This may refer to social constructionist approach towards identity concept – our identities are continuously evolving through socially interacting with others (see further above in chapter 3.3).

Since D moved to Finland, she said that she had also tried to form more friendships with non-Vietnamese people, so that she could expand more her knowledge and experiences interacting with people from diverse background. This description of her also established the intertextual interaction between her narrative of experiences living abroad, and others' narratives in the same topic. She implicitly took a stance as a student who also wanted to know more about other cultural backgrounds, and as an immigrant who wished to be out of her comfort zone. Additionally, she also stated that she did not usually see a person in terms of where they were from, which was her reason for wanting to study languages to communicate with people. This statement interacted with other different discourses revolving around immigrants and immigration experiences, which might have put D in a position of a cosmopolitan citizen. According to Van Hooft (2009, p. 6), “a cosmopolitan is one who takes a keen interest in the cultures and ways of life of other peoples as well as taking their interests to heart”. The person would also not just tolerate cultural differences, but acknowledges them and is prepared to enter into respectful dialogue with them (*ibid.*). Additionally, D shared with me the story when she was in relationship with same-sex person. In her description, she thought she was having some sickness for having these feelings, due to how it tended to be stigmatized in societal discourses. In this sense, she was also recognizing herself as the social subject of particular discourse and submit to the available subjectivity (Drzewiecka, 2017, p. 4) Through this experience, she recounted that she had also realized more about her sexuality, and the reason for her being attracted to the person. Besides this story, D mentioned other different life events and experiences, through which she learned more about herself and included that in the current self-description. Because of that, D appeared to me as someone willing to entailing back on her life experiences, so that she could understand more of herself, which was what D also stated as among her self-description. On the one hand, she sometimes described herself or others in terms of horoscope readings, or in personality label (i.e. extrovert, introvert), which made her

narratives then hinting at essentialism. On the other hand, D also viewed a person's characteristic or personality could not be built in one day, which could be changed or different along with different life goals, as well as different living contexts, throughout a person's life course. This might have showcased that identity concept was still in its transformation, and remained an ambiguous topic. Moreover, as I got to meet D for three times, I asked her at the end, if she had had other different thoughts or reflection of herself after having these conversations with me. She told me that there were other similar meetings at the same time, in which she had to tell about her life story and herself. Therefore, the narratives she told me could be partially habitual narratives, given that she also had other meetings to elaborate about similar topics.

6 DISCUSSION

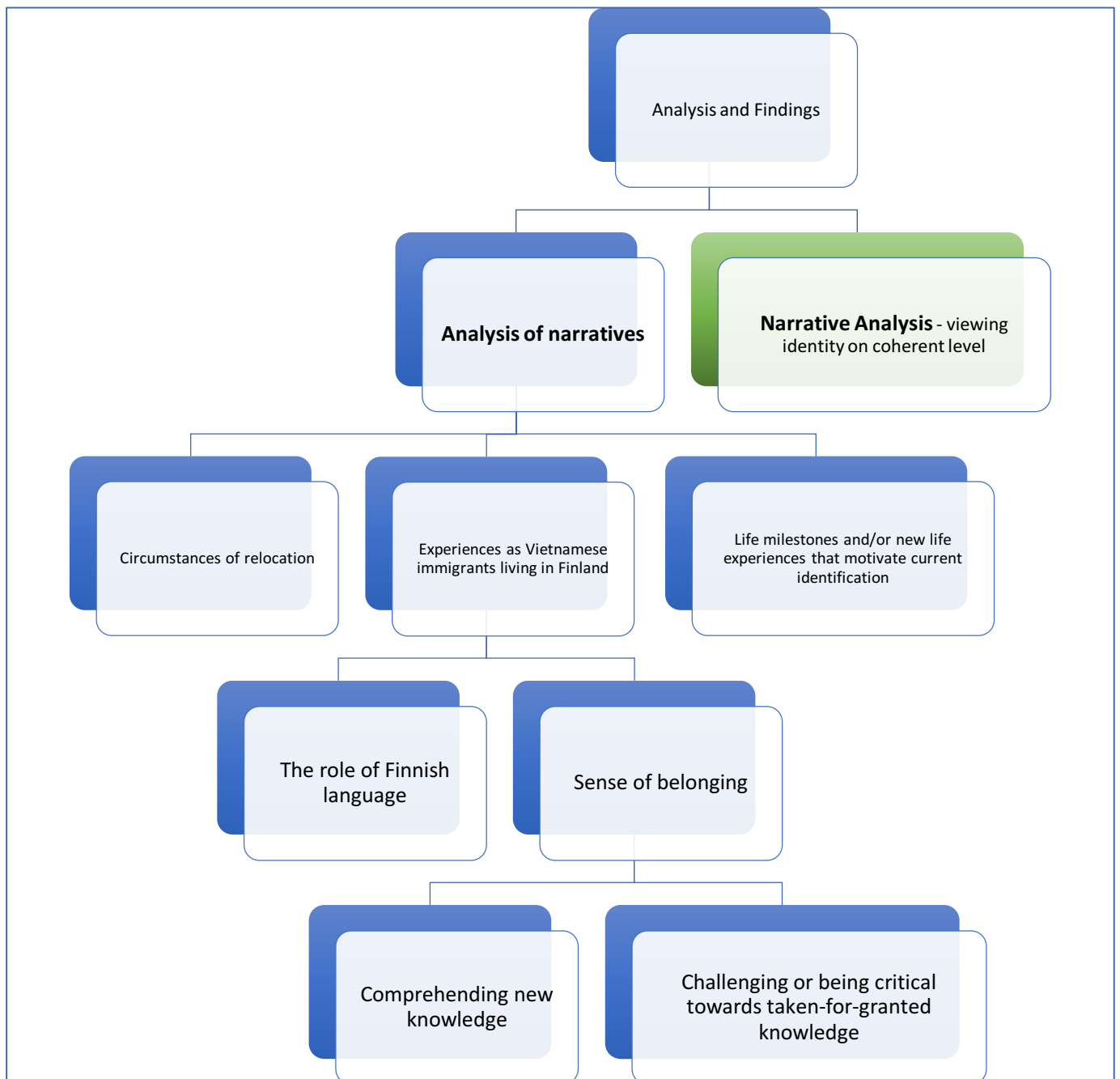


Figure 1. Dual focuses of analyzing.

The above graph summarized my analysis and findings. From this graph, one can see again the shared concepts derived from all four participants' narratives about their lived experiences in their new living environment. While elaborating these themes, I also explored how each study participant's identity was constructed in their discourses that were extracted and quoted. In terms of the second focus for analyzing, I explored how each participant's identity was constructed throughout their whole narratives, formed in the interactions with me. With these

dual focuses, I intended to have my research present the depth in its findings, in comparison with the studies mentioned in *Previous Research* (see further above, in chapter 3.6). Furthermore, with such an approach, the findings showcased the diversity in my study participants' life experiences in Finland, even when their stories might share some similarities.

Hatoss (2012) collected life-story interviews from a broader range of study participants, while I reached out to just four Vietnamese immigrants living in Finland for my research. On the other hand, I met though with each of my study participant for at least two times, and I kept each meeting lasting between 45-60 minutes, so that my collected data could be sufficient for exploration in depth. Moreover, in Hatoss's (2012) research, while she also had two phases of analyzing, she designed them differently than me. Unlike her, I did not want to explore my study participants' in terms of their identity labels (i.e. country of birth, nationality, ethnic group). I did not apply this term "identity labels" when discussing about my findings either, because I wanted to demonstrate my study participants' identities as constructive processes. In avoiding exploring their identities in terms of these labels, I also wanted to avoid the assumptions that can be drawn on from them. At the same time, my study participants' identities as Vietnamese immigrants were not ignored, but taken as a part of their identification, as their current self-understandings and self-representations were correlated with their lived experiences following from their relocation to Finland. It should also be noted that Hatoss (2012) established her focus differently than mine, since she aimed to study the identity construction and experiences of 'othering' in the narratives of Sudanese refugee-background Australians. In this sense, her objective was to see how these citizens' identities were constructed through their self-identification and self-categorization, in comparison with how they viewed others' identifications of them, which was precisely reflected through their narratives responding to the question "where are you from?" from mainstream Australians (p. 54). In my study, my objective was to have the readers understand the relationship between identity and narrative, and to comprehend that the study participants' identities merely existed because of their constructed narratives, in the interactions with me. Their comprehended identities, which were described in the study, were majorly based on these narratives and interactions. Therefore, beyond the context with this study, one could not determine for certainty these participants' identities. This could arguably be the gap noted from Hatoss's (2012) research; as she did not elaborate much about the instability in constructions of identity outside of her study, even though she did acknowledge the distinction between different contexts for the identity construction. This gap might have also responded with my inclusion of the post-structuralist approach towards identity in the literature review, while Hatoss's

(2012) theoretical angles were constructivist identity theory and positioning theory. In another study that applied narrative approach, Svensson, Berne and Syed (2017) were instead collecting data through paper-and-pen and online questionnaires (p. 189). In this sense, their study was also to reach out a wide range of participants at upper secondary education and universities in the West and South of Sweden (Berne, Svensson and Syed, 2017, p. 189). Furthermore, the narratives they aimed at appeared to be written forms of narratives, collected in the questionnaires, when the participants answered to open-ended questions (Berne, Svensson and Syed, 2017, p. 189). The collected data was then analyzed with a mixture of coding and thematic coding methodologies (*ibid.*). Their study demonstrated the diversity in applying narrative inquiry, as narratives do not necessarily be oral narratives, but they could also be textual narratives (see also, Fang, 2018, p. 72).

While establishing dual analysis focuses, I also filled a gap noticed from Glinka and Brzozowska's (2015) study (see further above, in chapter 3.6). It was noticed that their study, though responding to a broad range of study participants and considering two different ethnic groups of immigrants, was relatively concerning the collective sense of identity, instead of paying attention to each immigrant's life stories. This was another point I wished to avoid conducting my study, as I wanted to underline how each individual's identification was related with his or her unique lived experiences, through which my suggestion of us not quickly determining or assuming someone's identity could be highlighted. Furthermore, Glinka and Brozowska's (2015) study, in fact, did neither apply narrative analysis methodology nor exploring identity construction through narratives. They conducted semi-structured interviews and designed instead a comparative analysis methodology.

It was also pointed out in this thesis that there seemed to be not many studies applying narrative analysis methodology in studying about the construction of identity of Vietnamese immigrants, who lived in "new gateway" countries, with shorter tradition of immigration, comparing to "old gateway" countries as United States and Canada (Valtonen, 2019; see also, further above, in chapter 3.6). In addition to that, existing studies conducted about Vietnamese immigrants might have appeared to focus more on the ideas of ethnic identity and cultural identity formation (i.e. Liebkind, 1996a; Nguyen & Williams, 1989; Phinney & Ong, 2002; Vo-Jutabha, Dinh, McHale & Valsiner, 2009). For these reasons, I did not have my research focus on either of those concepts, but hoped to illustrate more the life stories of my study participants, which included but were not limited to only their ethnicity or cultural backgrounds. The findings were also responsive to the thesis's research question as following:

How are identities of the Vietnamese immigrants, who live in Finland, constructed in the narratives encompassing their life experiences?

It had been stated that, in the spaces where contact and communication between different cultural backgrounds, such as in the case of immigration, happened, the negotiation of identities might assume new dimensions (Ikas, 2009, p. 129). This highlighted the distinctiveness of immigrants' life situation that could trigger more different knowledge and different ways for them to understand themselves and others. Additionally, Baynham (2015, p. 79) had also described the experience of migrating as similar to "a young man going out into the world", which implied at the extent of experiences an immigrant might have upon their relocation. Because of these experiences, they might adopt different ways in their comprehension of selves through new social relationships, through learning a new language, and through interacting with new social behaviors (Kadianaki, O'Sullivan-Lao & Gillespie, 2015, p. 31). On the other hand, since I also stated this thesis' aim as presenting identity concept as a continuous process throughout a person's on-going life journey with various life experiences, which were not necessarily bounded to be derived from changes in living environments, it could be argued that a person did not have to be an immigrant for adjusting his or her self-perception. However, the life stories of immigrants that had a disruptive point of relocation could bring forward distinctly how diverse meanings could be, encouraging them to be critical towards 'naturalized' knowledge that had been treated as shared common senses (see also, for example, Burr, 2015).

While analyzing my data, I found that relocation to Finland did motivate my study participants to realize the differences existing between Vietnam and Finland. Through discussing about various situations where they noticed those differences, my study participants also recounted what social knowledge and practices they currently embraced in their lives, reflecting how they had made sense of themselves in encountering the newness. In that sense, their reported adjustment processes should be seen as dialogues of them reflecting and negotiating, between what they knew and what they may have newly learned. It portrayed immigration experience as not either following the host societies' ways of doing or refusing, but as a continuous conversation and interaction that an immigrant has with his or her different living environment (see also, De la Garza & Ono, 2015). This was particularly illustrated in the findings under the theme "*sense of belonging*".

Additionally, the findings there have shown that, when retelling about scenarios in which the study participants perceived how people living in Vietnam would behave differently comparing

to their observations of people's behaviors in Finland, they also reported to recognize that their common senses were only shared knowledge in Vietnamese culture, similar to what Garfinkel's (1967, p. 76) described, common sense is "the accumulation of members' knowledge of the organization of social life" (cited in Dervin & Risager, 2015, p. 127). Learning about different social knowledge also seemed to motivate them to be more aware of diversity in societies. Because of their exposures to two different societal environments, the study participants appeared to express critical views upon both Vietnamese and Finnish ways of doing things. In addition to that, the study participants also saw themselves being capable to distinguish between the good and bad sides of each social knowledge, so that they said they could learn to be better from the good sides. As a result, the ways they had approached things in their lives currently could be interpreted as products from the dialogues each of them had, while negotiating through the differences. As a result, they also adopted new perspectives, and constructed the narratives accordingly, through which their current adjusted identifications were reflected.

Moreover, as discussed further above (see chapter 3.4), post-structuralist approach towards identity concept established the connection between identity and subjectivity. Kramsch (2015) defined subjectivity as a discursive product, and we ourselves become the subjects through "the symbols we create, the chains of signification we construct and the meanings we exchange with others" (p. 215). In terms of the conception of subjectivity, the speaking subject itself is not stable, because the meanings can never be fixed, as a person can always find different meanings of everything. Hence, identity is also always changing. It does not pre-exist meanings and thoughts either. The identity positions we saw ourselves occupying, as well as the identity others saw us having, may merely be temporary attachments of our subjectivities emerging through discourses, to discursive forms. Following this sense, the findings demonstrated how their identities were constructed differently even within a narrative unit, in accordance with different speaking subject positions that the study participants took. Their seemingly consistent identity positions, such as being parents or being immigrants, could be explained in terms of articulation process – a continuous process assigning floating signifiers (parent, immigrant) to "nodal points and partially stabilizes their meanings in discursive formation" (Hall, 1996, cited in Drzewiecka, 2017, p. 5). Furthermore, in the lenses of post-structuralism, the seemingly stable identity positions in societies that we comprehend, may be a result of the work of contention and accumulation in human's social knowledge and behavior, as well as an effect of the power of discourses (Drzewiecka, 2017, p. 4). For example, their identity positions in societies as immigrants were also described as being impacted by institutional discourses

(Finnish Immigration Service – Migri, 2020). Through this identity position, the study participants also narrated their stories from the viewpoint of the social subjects of discourses surrounding immigration.

Additionally, when analyzing the data with narrative analysis point of view, I also kept into consideration the post-structuralist idea of deconstruction (Agger, 1991, p. 112). In this sense, other possible meanings that could be generated from their narratives were also explored and mentioned in the chapter 5.2. Their constructed identities that I described separately in this chapter, could also be understood in terms of “identity brought along” and “identity brought about” defined in Baynham’s (2015) work. The identities that were noticed as somewhat stable throughout their narratives, or somewhat linked with each other, could be due to the repeatability characteristic of narrative, allowing the accumulation and sedimentation of these identity positions to be enabled and constituted in discursive forms. For instance, A seemed to maintain her identity positions in terms of being a mother, an entrepreneur and a Vietnamese person living abroad by repeating them as such to me and to herself throughout her narratives. C’s identity constructed as a person with high family values could also be understood similarly. The other identities of my study participants that were comprehended in terms of “how” and “why” perspectives, were more emergent within their discourses, representing the identities brought about. For instance, when D spoke about her past relationship with same-sex person, she evoked an emergent identity performance that only existed in that narrative unit. It is also important to remember that their identities described here were also temporary, in line with my interpretation, which varied from the moments talking with them, to the moments transcribing and to the moments analyzing (which was more than one time). As stated earlier about narrative analysis (further above, see chapter 4.2), knowledge gained from narrative is tentative and flexible; hence, narrative researchers may go back and forth at the whole and at parts, so that they may have a more comprehensive understanding.

Besides, in accordance with how social constructionism views identity concept that I described further above (see chapter 3.3), our identities were not natural entities born with us, but they were results from our continuous meaning-making processes of our lives. Therefore, I asked my study participants what their life milestones or most outstanding life experiences they viewed as important in who they are now. Their choices of presenting what life milestones and experiences reflected how they wanted to present themselves to me. They also seemed to draw on these experiences, because they recounted them as distinct moments of when they were stimulated the most to adjust their self-understandings. In their narratives, one could also notice

how they drew on societal discourses and practices in constructing their identities. For instance, C drew on his recounted thought of how he was taught in his childhood to care for others in family, describing it as what he wanted to teach his children at present. B drew on the differences she perceived between her recollection of how mothers in Vietnam receiving more support and her recounted experiences being a mother in Finland, in order to construct her identity as being self-reliant mother. A formed a long narrative unit describing the differences she perceived regarding a mother's journey from when she was pregnant, to when she gave birth, and the involvement of other social actors in that journey. These differences were also put in relations with her own reported experience journey, through which she constructed her identity by positioning herself as resonating more with the Finnish approach. D drew on the socially constructed concept of personality, applying terms such as extrovert and introvert in describing the differences she perceived between her friend and her self, constructing her identity through the differences. In these expressed experiences of the study participants, the social interaction with others was also highlighted in explaining its role in generating different meanings for the study participants. This could be reflected from B's and A's narratives expressing when they and their partners approached differently in certain social situations, and how they had made sense of themselves and their partners in those moments.

Furthermore, it should also be noted that the study participants seemed to see their identity through an essentialist lenses. B viewed that a person's core characteristics were difficult to change. In this sense, she said she thought people with certain characteristics such as being ambitious in career path might not find living in Finland as suitable. On the other hand, in her opinions, thoughts and perceptions could be the factors that were able to change, which could affect our personalities eventually. Somewhat similarly, C also described a person's behavior was driven by that person's personality. He stated that Finnish living environment fitted him, because he felt like he already had the personalities of respecting other people's privacy. A said that her preference to live in Finland was because of how some sides of her got to be revealed in this environment. She viewed that each of us might have had certain personalities, which were adjusting accordingly with the surrounding environment and the social interactions. In D's narratives, although they reflected her self as being flexible due to various life experiences she has had and retold to me, at times she still described herself in terms of her assigned horoscope, as well as describing others in the terms such as "extrovert" or "introvert". Therefore, in terms of understanding identity, all the study participants seemed to think, in their different extents, that each individual had an essence and core personalities that a person will come to realize or discover throughout his or her life course.

In essentialist approach, identity is considered as a unitary psychological concept, explaining a person's behavior and thoughts with his or her particular essence or nature. It was acknowledged in the literature review that such a way of viewing identity might have been normalized as "common sense" to many of us; hence, viewing identity as a constructed and in-flux concept may still be new. However, throughout the findings, identity was found to correlate with social constructionist approach. In their narratives, the study participants could not straightforwardly indicate, or describe their identities, if they had not considered how they behaved, reacted, and thought in certain social situations, in relations with other social actors or surrounding societal discourses. The statements of them describing themselves were located in the examples presenting specific social situations, so that they could somewhat made sense of themselves and others, while constructing those self-descriptions. Besides, describing themselves in terms of their professions, their social roles, and their genders were still representing the identity categories they saw as part of their on-going identification, instead of presenting any fixed identities. These identity categories also belong to social knowledge that are constructed, enacted, and accumulated throughout times by human. Additionally, identity politics theory was also reflected in the findings. For instance, B used race as social component in grouping other international students in her class as "foreign" students. Furthermore, each study participant used their individual component – their agency to self-identify – in talking about their identity as a man and as a woman.

Gaining new understanding about themselves, immigrants also change their ways of living and interacting with others. For these study participants, when they talk with their family relatives in Vietnam and express different perception about certain matters, they also implicitly challenge the knowledge taken for granted there, and contribute different ones to Vietnamese societal environment. In addition to that, they may also attribute new meanings to Finnish societal environment through their daily discourses and social interactions. Societies and human's socialization are always changing, especially currently in the time of accelerated globalization. With more information brought to our attention on media, as well as easier access for us to speak with others despite the distances, the taken-for-granted knowledge will continuously be challenged.

7 CONCLUSION

Accelerated globalization has placed higher emphasis on diversity and differences existing across societies. As a result, people find more necessity and motivation in challenging the knowledge that have long been treated as ‘common sense’, in order for gaining an open-minded attitude towards new knowledge, new changes in societies around the world. (see, for example, Dervin & Risager, 2015) The essentialist approach in viewing identity concept may be among the previous taken-for-granted knowledge that calls for people’s critically revised viewpoint (i.e. Brubaker & Cooper, 2000).

Identity is likely to be perceived as a stable, fixed and as only a psychological entity that pre-exists within a person (Erikson, 1959, 1980). While an essentialist understanding of identity still exists, it may no longer be suitable as the only way to see our identities (Hall & Du Gay, 1996, p. 2). In our current era with accelerated globalization that has also generated more mobility across countries, more information about us and others communicated beyond the national borders, more cases of migration and immigration (Pieterse, 2000; see also, Boner & Kramsch, 2010, p. 497), a person’s identity has become a vaster concept than a psychological entity residing within oneself. It can involve political aspects, as described in identity politics theory (Daugherty & Jackson II, 2017) ; and it can involve the person’s in-group and out-group memberships to social groups (Deschamps & Devos, 1998). Moreover, non-essentialist approach, as social constructionist approach, views identity as not a pre-existing entity, but it is constructed because of a person’s social interactions with others in a social environment, that has provided the person a structure of meaning for comprehension. At the same time, social constructionism highlights that this structure of meaning, as well as other social knowledge in social environments, are constructed by human themselves in historically and culturally specific ways. (Burr, 2015) In this sense, there should be no pre-existing human nature providing explanations for people’s thoughts and behaviors, but the knowledge we use to identify ourselves, to understand ourselves, are socially constructed by human themselves, which are also enacted, maintained and accumulated throughout generations by human (see, for example, Stokoe & Attenborough, 2015, p. 89). Furthermore, post-structuralism describes the conceptions of subjectivity and speaking subjects that draws on the instability and flexibility of meanings (i.e. Drzewiecka, 2017; Agger, 1991, p. 111-115). Post-structuralist theory views a person’s identity as performances that are shaped by discursive practices (Baynham, 2015, p. 73), as Hall (2000, p. 6) also described: “identities are thus points of temporary attachments to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us [...]” (cited in Dervin & Risager, 2015, p. 70). Additionally, according to Kramsch (2015),

subjectivity is also inscribed in discourse, lying at the intersection of the individual and the social (p. 215). Identity here, in correlation with the subjectivity concept, is emphasized as being emergent and in-flux, as the meanings we use to make sense of self, others and social world surrounding are always emergent, in-flux and elusive.

These are theoretical viewpoints that this study established its literature review on, as its aim was to explore non-essentialist views of identity. One of the situation that was argued as most likely triggering a person's revised view on his or her self, is when the person relocates to a different living environment. By getting a distinct exposure to another societal environment, with different social knowledge and behavior, one's previous perception of self and others are likely being put into question (see also, for example, Bhabha, 1994). These individuals may sometimes report their experiences the feeling of being bounded to predetermined national or ethnic characteristics in their self-identification, as well as in how others identify them (see, for example, Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014). This study then wanted to build up a contrasting argumentation to any totalized way of looking at identity, pointing out that the knowledge about identification and identity categories are also socially constructed by human, instead of pre-existing naturally for a person to use. Additionally, the study also aimed at contributing to the understanding that identity is a complicated and ambiguous concept for a variety of studies to examine, from different theoretical angles. Therefore, to identify a person in terms of any specific identity categories with certainty, or to explain his or her behavior due to their 'human nature', should no longer be treated as 'common' knowledge. Dervin and Risager (2015) also pointed out, in the age of "crisis of belonging", the concept as national identity, even when not disappearing from our lives, "is imagined and communitarian – but not the 'truth'" (p. 8-9).

In conclusion, by establishing a research on the temporary construction process of an in-flux identity, in narrative forms, this study wanted to contribute to the non-essentialist understanding of identity. Most of all, the study wanted to draw people's attention to perceive a person's identity through their on-going life stories, through their continuous narratives, rather than being fixated on the presumptions based on predetermined social categories.

7.1 Limitations

I played a role of "the other", in co-constructing the study participants' identity as being involved in the forming of their narratives. I was not merely a passive interviewer, but I also co-constructed with them my own narratives about myself, to a certain extent, as well as taking part in the conversations by voicing my opinions, thoughts, agreements or disagreements to

their viewpoints. Because of that, the data was influenced by me, rather than being organically produced by the study participants. Additionally, as narrative analysis was interpretative and tentative, the findings presented were in accordance with my subjective interpretation, and my subjective choices of what excerpts from the data to present. Therefore, this study might be lacking of objectivity. Moreover, as it was my own comprehension of the data, there was always a possibility that other narrative researchers would understand the data and present the findings differently.

In addition to that, I wanted my data collection method to not be understood similarly with interviewing method. At the same time, the conflict was that I could not entirely be free from the interviewing context, as the study participants' narratives were directed by my questions as the interviewer – while I was also the audience of their narrative accounts (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006, p. 55). I provided a description about narrative account – narratives in interviews to justify the eligibility of the narratives collected for this study. However, one can yet point out the limitations in seeing the study's data as narratives about people's life stories, but rather as explanations answering to the interviewing questions. Alternatively, one can apply a different methodology for this kind of study, besides narrative analysis, such as critical discourse analysis, which studies the way that discourses construct people's experience by “deconstructing’ the texts, taking them apart and showing how they work to present people with a particular version of the world, and thus enabling people to challenge it” (Burr, 2015, p. 21).

Besides, I also prepared myself prior to the meetings with the study participants in a similar way a researcher prepares semi-structured interview. There were a few questions being developed on the basis of my literature review, which I kept as guidance for me during the meetings. I did not follow them strictly though, as described in the chapter “*Data and Methods*”, because I wanted to have the conversations happening as casually as possible. I also met the participants more than once, and in the later meetings I had with each of them, there were also questions being prepared to follow up from each study participant's previous narrative. Because of these reasons, the narratives collected varied, based on their own decisions of what to tell. Since we kept the conversations with flexibility, some study participants had longer narratives with further elaboration about their lives. However, to answer my first research question of how their identities were constructed through their life stories, I still aimed to present a somewhat coherent description of their identities, based upon various fractured parts of their actual narrative. I made a subject decision here in choosing what life

experiences of their narratives to present, that were mostly relevant for recognizing their constructed identities. This was described in Kim's (2016) work on narrative inquiry as the problematic way of narrative smoothing. Narrative smoothing was defined though with more negativity, as intentionally failing to produce original accounts told by study participants in providing a good and consistent story, which is not the case for this study. However, the idea behind narrative smoothing, providing a consistent story, can be considered as the influence for me, as narrative researcher, in analyzing the data and describing the findings. Consequently, the fictionalization of data may present limitations in its reliability.

7.2 Practical Implications

The findings of this study also showed what social expectations established for the study participants when they talked about their experiences in relocating to a new living place, which were not just done by the new society but also by the immigrants themselves. This did not only present immigration experience as highly diverse, but it also had us recognize the power and influence of societal discourses in our lives. These discourses exist in oral forms in people's daily communication that have been passed on for generations (see, for example, Kosonen, 2008), as well as in institutionalized forms such as in laws, regulations, bureaucracy systems, and so on (see, for example, Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014; De Fina, 2003, p. 30). They affect our thoughts and behaviors, while being continuously produced, reinforced and maintained by us through times. The participants of this study had expressed their acceptance of the social expectations on themselves in being successfully-integrated immigrants living in Finland, and accommodating the social norms in Finnish society. They had also expressed their opinions that if an immigrant refused to accommodate, he or she might not experience positive reception from the new society; or this particular societal environment may not fit for that person to live permanently (see also, Valtonen, 2019, p. 34). In a way, their discourses as such have also attributed in building up expectations for immigrant's adaptation as either being positive (i.e. assimilation or integration) or negative (i.e. separation). As a consequence, the continuous dialogical aspect of an immigrant living in new environment may be overlooked; plus, other possible variables in each immigrant's adaptation process, that does not necessarily have them at either end (positive or negative), may also not be considered.

Additionally, the diversity in the study participants' narratives and uniqueness of their identity construction based on each individual's life story should encourage people to shift away from generalizing or identifying themselves and others in essentialist notions. It should also be noted how the term "culture" is being mostly avoided to use in this study, because it also refers to

essentialist views of our culture – seeing the culture as the society ‘nature’, which may then be used to explain a person in terms of his or her culture. Although essentialism will not be vanishing from our lives and communication, it should not be forgotten that our world, our societies are always changing, and thus there will always be alternative or new knowledge to embrace at different timelines of societal development. This is mostly important for people working with immigrants, supporting them in their integration to new living environment. There would also be people and branching of works that dealt with immigration applications and procedures, exposing them further to the identity labels that may be used for defining individuals. In this sense, it would also be central for these workers to remember that everyone has a unique life story, and quick presumptions about someone based on pre-set categories, while not being avoidable, should be hold as absolute truth.

Moreover, presenting the life stories of my study participants as such, I also wanted to have readers realize the challenging and limited paths immigrants may encounter settling and integrating to their new home living environment. Therefore, establishing social pressures on people with immigrant or refugee backgrounds is not as effective as finding ways in helping them blend in, for better social harmony. Additionally, while there are still many of us feeling of threat of uncertainty, drawing the distances between us based on our differences, we should also remember that globalization, as well as immigration, has brought to our societies many positive aspects. It is also because of these phenomena that our societies are evolving positively, through better understanding about others in the world, and through learning from each other.

7.3 Recommendations for Future Research

One way to not be bounded by the interviewing context may be to not collect the study participants’ narratives through interviewing. I would suggest then that other researchers doing narrative analysis, if possible, should establish ways to change the dynamics in the social relationship between them and the study participants. In this way, the later conversations between the researchers and participants could happen with less constraints, allowing the participants to possibly be more open and active in telling their life stories.

Additionally, this study could be conducted applying another methodology in the same narrative research genres. For instance, autobiographical narrative, including autobiography and auto ethnography, inquiry can allow the researchers to put themselves also as the subjects of research (Kim, 2016, p. 121). As said, since I share country of origin with the participants,

my own life story, including my immigration experiences, can be included in the study. According to Kim (2016), autobiography refers to the recounted history of the author, while auto ethnography is a hybrid term “rooted in anthropological methodology, where the fieldwork as the researcher’s own life and the lives of others in which the researcher has an active part” (p. 123). Following such a sense, the data can be collected in different context, besides interviewing contexts. The study participants could be someone I have been acquainted with, creating more spaces of dialogue, debate and change for our co-constructed narratives (Kim, 2016, p. 125). Alternatively, future researchers could also apply discourse analysis methodology in studying identity construction (see, for example, De Fina et al., 2006). This methodology also considers “the circumstances (context) of what has been said, how it was said, and why it may have been said – contextually embedded at a particular point in time at a particular location” (De Fina et al., 2006, p. 180). Furthermore, the profiles of study participants could be different. Future researcher can also approach the people who have relocated and returned to live in their previous societal environment.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Prepared set of questions for guidance only

How do you perceive your relationship now with your home community and their values? Do you still feel as closed to the values, or the same as before you leave? And if not, what changes? Examples?

Do you think those changes affect to how you perceive who you are now? To what extent?

Are the changes for the better?

Why do you think changes in your perception and values happen?

Do they make you feel less belonging to your ethnic community? Why?

How often do you visit your home country? How do you feel when you were there during the first week? How were your (direct/indirect) encounter with your family, friends, members of same ethnicity, make you feel and/or realize?

Do they change over time your stay there? How do you perceive others looking at you then?

How often do you Skype/call home? What do you talk about? How do these activities make you feel? Do you reckon your perception changing over time through these indirect contacts?

Do you feel comfortable sharing with your family relative and friends in your home country about your life abroad? Do you think they'd understand? Why and why not?

Do you feel proud about yourself that you moved abroad? Do you agree with this possible admiration people might have had for you there?

How do you think Finnish people viewing your ethnicity? Do you think it's true? Why and why not?

How do you think media portray your ethnicity?

How do you think your ethnic community here represent your ethnic?

What images would you hope Finnish people to see about you, considering they know where you are from?

Do you think people in your home country have expectations for you?

What certain life events happened to you that change you the most? In your opinions.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in Finland?

If you can choose to share one or two or three outstanding stories about your life, what would that be?

How would you want your Vietnamese fellows to see you?

How would you describe yourself?

What challenges you have faced living in Finland? What challenges you faced being back in Vietnam?

How do you feel now that you don't share some of the ideologies Vietnamese people usually have, or your parents have?

Why do you think those ideologies came to exist? Would you say they still applied in current Vietnamese society?

How did you know about Finland and why did you decide to come here?

What parts of your life that contrast the most to your imagination before moving?

What did you learn about yourself and being a Vietnamese, after contacts with people from different nationalities?

Have you had any conflicts in yourself, or with others and/or close friends/family relatives from same ethnic group, as well as the ones from different ethnic group?

The things you have realized about yourself now, would you say the same if you had still lived in Vietnam? Do you agree that being in Finnish environment made you more independent?

If the difference between Vietnamese and Finnish societies are big in your opinion, how do you cope with these changes? How do that affect to who you are?

When you were in Vietnam, how would you describe yourself? Do you feel different from others?

How do you view women's and men's roles in societies?

What Vietnamese values do you want to hold onto no matter what?

What about you that you see as having changed?

Have you experienced any difficulties when changing your perspectives?

How do you feel about communicating with other fellow Vietnamese people living in Finland?

APPENDIX 2. Original Vietnamese extracts from study participants' narratives

(1) I: Có, giống như là, anh mới vừa tới Phần Lan, anh có cảm giác gì? Ngoại trừ cái ngôn ngữ ra là..

C: Anh rất vui, tại vì, đối với anh, cơ hội đi là cực kì hiếm có, cho nên là, trước khi đi, anh còn mất ngủ, tại vì anh kiểu rất vui ấy.

I: [cười nhẹ] Dạ.

C: Từ ngày mà biết mình được công ty cho đi, đến lúc chờ đợi làm visa, đến lúc được cấp ngày đi, rất là vui. Mm. Cho nên anh đi anh không có buồn, mà rất là vui. Mm. Trải nghiệm được lần đầu tiên được đi máy bay, cho nên là rất là, xem như thế nào đúng không (?)

I: Dạ, dạ [cười nhẹ]

C: Đó cũng là lần đầu tiên anh đi xa nhà nữa.

I: Dạ, vậy. Mm. Nhưng mà anh qua đây thì nói chung là vui và hào hứng là vậy đó, nhưng mà tới Phần Lan thì anh thấy sao? Cái ấn tượng đầu tiên của anh về Phần Lan?

C: Mm. Thì lúc mà anh đến. Cái ngày mà anh chân đến Phần Lan là mừng 8 tháng 3. Mm. Lúc anh đến, thời tiết nó cũng như hôm nay này, cũng tầm bắt đầu vào mùa xuân, mùa tan tuyết. Mm. Thì khi mà xuống sân bay thì nó rất là, mm, ít người. Tại vì anh cũng biết trước là, một phần là, trước khi anh đi thì là đã có rất nhiều thể hệ cùng công ty đã sang đây rồi, nên là mọi người về mọi người cũng kể, cho nên là anh cũng hình dung được chút. Anh cũng không ngỡ lắm. Mọi thứ là tập trung, là chủ yếu vào công việc thôi. Tại vì công việc đối với anh là quan trọng nhất. Đó là cả một tương lai của anh. Đó, cho nên là, anh phải cố gắng làm cho tốt.

(2) I: Vậy thì lúc mà anh tới Phần Lan, thì mọi thứ anh cũng tự kiểm, tự...

C: Uh đúng rồi, nhưng mà tại anh có thể khá hơn tụi sinh viên tụi em tí, vì anh đi thì anh không mất một cái gì cả.

I: [cười nhẹ] Dạ.

C: Lúc anh đi thì công ty cho đi, lương anh vẫn lãnh. Sang bên này thì công ty lo chỗ ăn chỗ ở có người đưa đón. Mm. Mm. Sang thì ngày đầu thì ngôn ngữ cũng khá là khó khăn, công ty cũng thuê ngôn dịch là người Việt, cho bọn anh hiểu rõ công việc hơn.

(3) I: Dạ rồi lúc mà chị vừa mới tốt nghiệp đại học xong rồi, chị qua đây học lại, thì giống như học theo cái cách bên đây chị có thấy...gọi là gì ta, một tí sốc không ạ? Một tí thay đổi trong cách dạy, cách học không ạ?

B: Không, học thì không có vấn đề, nhưng mà về văn hoá này nọ thì mình sốc hơn, chứ còn học thì nói chung so với mình thì nó cũng khá là dễ. Mình thích nghi thì cũng khá là tốt, nhưng mà ví dụ như là về văn hoá và bạn bè ở trong trường đồ này nọ thì nó, nó hơi khác so với ở Việt Nam mình một chút cho nên sốc về cái đó nhiều hơn.

I: Chị có những ví dụ nào không ạ? Vừa lúc mà chị mới qua ấy, chị có những ví dụ nào mà..

B: Ví dụ như là, có nhiều khi, người Phần Lan người ta khá là thẳng tính cho nên là có nhiều khi ví dụ như là, mình làm bài, mình làm bài nhóm đi chẳng hạn thì ví dụ như là, mình đưa ra ý kiến này thì tụi nó nói là, không, không được, kiểu như là nó, nó nói thẳng như vậy luôn thì mình cũng hơi bị sốc một chút. Đó. Ví dụ như ở Việt Nam thì mình sẽ nói, nhưng mà “tao thấy ý kiến này hay hơn”, vậy đó, thì nó...Mm. Nhưng mà người Phần Lan thì khác, đó, thì có những cái đó như là làm việc nhóm, mình đụng chạm nhiều thì mới thấy là văn hoá của nó khá là khác. Hoặc là ví dụ như là, hồi mới đi học, có nhiều khi mình đi trễ, mình hay đi trễ 5-10 phút, kiểu vậy đó, thì mình, mình thấy đó là chuyện bình thường nhưng mà người Phần Lan thì người ta không thích cái chuyện đó. Đó. Thì đó, nên là những cái đó, thì, sau, từ từ thì mình mới biết, còn lúc mới qua thì mình đâu biết đâu.

(3) B: [...] Rồi cái lớp của chị, thì cũng khá, chơi chung cũng khá là tốt, cho nên là lâu lâu cũng tổ chức ăn uống này nọ chung với nhau, trong lớp nữa, cho nên là có nhóm sinh viên Việt Nam, có nhóm sinh viên nước ngoài. Đó, thì vậy thôi, cho nên là nó cũng đỡ. Học bên đây nó cũng đỡ.

(4) I: Chị có những cú sốc nào khi vừa mới qua Phần Lan không ạ?

A: [...] Mình thì mới phổ thông mà, mới tốt nghiệp phổ thông mà, trong trường chơi với nguyên một đám bạn từ cấp hai qua, ai cũng thân. Xong rồi, nhóm của chị là khoảng 10-11 người. Đó, cái xong rồi kiểu lúc nào cũng gọi điện thoại, lúc nào cũng đi ra ngoài chơi, hang-out với nhau. Qua tới Phần thì, nhất là mùa đông thì nó tối, cái xong rồi, giống như ai cũng. Thật ra thì giống như trong lớp thì gặp thì ai cũng nói chuyện, nhưng mà. Tại lúc đó...mình cũng chưa...chưa có gọi là...đủ thân để mà nói về mấy cái chuyện (?). Lúc đó, thì lúc nào cũng kiểu, ừ, “hôm nay mây sao”, cái xong rồi, “hôm nay trời lạnh quá”, xong rồi, bài này khó quá”, chứ không có nói về mấy chủ đề sâu hơn.

Nhất là người Phần thì lúc nào gặp người ta cũng vậy, phải có, giống như là, phải có một bước ngoặt nào đó để mà thân với người ta, mình phải đi ra ngoài, đi uống hoặc về nhà, xong rồi uống trà, nấu ăn, trò chuyện, thường vậy thì sẽ, sẽ build đc cái relationship hơn. Nhưng mà lúc đó thì tại vì sinh viên, chị không thích đi ra ngoài, đi uống [laugh], cho nên là lúc nào cũng đi học xong, rồi về nhà, làm bài. Cho nên là, cái điều kiện để mà thân với người ta cũng...khó.

(5) I: Như vậy thì em có hay giao du với bạn, như em nói là... tại vì em nói là em, em diễn tả em hơi phụ thuộc vào người mà em hẹn hò, có một khoảng thời gian như vậy ấy. Nhưng mà rồi em có nhiều bạn bè Việt Nam không? Hay là có nhiều bạn bè người Phần Lan không? Em có hay đi hang out không?...well, em nói thì là bạn bè người Phần Lan em khó đi hang out tại vì tụi nói đi bar, ở thời điểm thời gian đâu, đúng không?

D: Mm.

I: Nhưng mà còn bạn Việt Nam?

D: Có, tại vì, có chị. Tại vì...Cái lúc mà em qua thì trong lớp em có người Việt. Xong rồi bạn của anh bạn mà em quen biết, giống như là, nhóm học sinh qua cùng năm, biết nhau, nên cũng đi chơi, gặp gỡ nhau ở nhà, chứ không có đi ra ngoài. Nhưng mà tụi em nấu nướng này kia. Lúc đó cũng vui ạ, tại vì mình không có phải (?) cho nên em nghĩ đó cũng là phần lý do em không cảm thấy cô đơn. (slight changes in this excerpt with details that I see rather personal)

(6) D: Nói chung là em có nghe nói mọi người thấy ở bên đây chán ấy, nhưng mà với em thì chán hay không là do mình thôi. Nếu mà mình đi đâu cũng có bạn thì không bao giờ chán hết.

(7) B: Ở đây thì thật ra là, buồn hay không là do mình. [laugh] Tại vì bây giờ, uh, không khí của nó đã vậy thôi thì, thì, quan trọng là do mình, mình tạo, tạo cái ấy cho mình thôi, công việc hay là tạo những mối quan hệ cho mình thôi, chứ còn không khí thì nó vẫn vậy à [laugh]

(8) A: Đó là lý do chị nói là tại vì, bản thân mình thay đổi, kiểu mình là vì vậy. Mình cố gắng, mình chủ động hoà nhập với người ta thì cũng có thể là sẽ hoà nhập được [...]

(9) A: Thật ra thì không, nếu mà em muốn biết, nếu mà em biết tiếng Phần ấy, thì nó sẽ dễ dàng cho em hơn, nhất là ví dụ em muốn lên mạng tìm kiếm thông tin này nọ thì dễ hơn đúng không? Nhưng mà tại vì, chị nói là, tại vì ở đây người ta cũng biết tiếng Anh ấy, phần lớn người ta cũng biết tiếng Anh thì nó cũng không, gặp quá nhiều vấn đề khó khăn gì cả. Hoặc là cũng có thể chị biết cơ bản tiếng Thụy Điển, cho nên là ở đây, vì song song có tiếng Phần và tiếng Thụy Điển nên cũng không sao.

(10) B: Nói chung là, nếu là sinh viên thì không thành vấn đề, tại vì mình sử dụng tiếng Anh, tiếng Phần không lưu loát cũng không sao, nhưng mà đã sống ở Phần thì tốt nhất là nên dùng tiếng Phần, nó có nhiều thứ, mm, ví dụ như là. Nói chung là khi mà sống ở Phần Lan rồi thì có nhiều thứ mình phải quan tâm. Ví dụ như bé đi học chẳng hạn thì mình phải đăng kí này nọ, và

những cái thông tin đó thì bằng tiếng Phần hết. Ví dụ như cô giáo này nọ, tiếp xúc nói chuyện thì mình đều dùng tiếng Phần hết. Đó, nên là... Rồi ví dụ như luật lệ đồ này nọ thì cũng chỉ có tiếng Phần hết, hoặc tiếng Thụy Điển, đó nên là... Lúc sinh viên thì mình không có dính dáng gì tới mấy cái đó, nhưng mà khi mà ở đây rồi thì, đã xác định ở đây rồi thì mình nên học tiếng Phần.

(11) D: Nhưng mà em không hiểu được điều đó lúc mà em mới sang, tại vì em cứ nghĩ là ở đây thì một nước ra là, quốc tế này nọ, nhưng mà qua thì mới biết là không, kiểu như người ta không dùng tiếng Anh nhiều ấy, người ta không có dùng tiếng Anh nhiều mà dùng tiếng Phần nhiều hơn, xong rồi em cũng nhớ là có, em có nghe nói ai, nghe ai nói đó là, là, kiểu người ta không có thích, đó là tại sao tất cả những cái gì cũng phải bằng tiếng Anh ấy, người ta vẫn thích giữ, bảo tồn ngôn ngữ của họ đấy. Giống như họ cũng có một cái gọi là... một cái thái độ không thích (?). Cho nên em cũng... Xong rồi cái, khi mà em đi làm ấy, năm đầu tiên em đi làm ấy, ai cũng hỏi em là em có biết tiếng Phần hay, thì, thì em nói không có, xong em không được nhận ấy. Em chia sẻ điều này với một người bạn Phần Lan của em, thì bạn em nói là, “giờ cứ nghĩ đi, nếu ở Việt Nam mà không biết được tiếng Việt Nam thì sao bán hàng được?”... Thì lúc đó em mới nghĩ là ở, thì đó... (slightly changes to personal details)

(12) A: [...] Ở Việt Nam á, mình mà gặp quá thì mình có thể gọi năn ni nhiều khi người ta cũng sẽ giải quyết sớm cho mình, còn ở bên đây mình có trường hợp đột xuất mà mình cần giải quyết nhanh hơn một chút xíu ấy, cho dù mình có gọi điện thoại cho người ta, người ta sẽ bảo là ai cũng sẽ gặp, hoặc là thế này thế kia, cho nên là sẽ như, “tới lượt mày thì tao sẽ giải quyết”, chứ không có giải quyết sớm hơn ấy.

[...]

A: Hoặc là có một trường hợp là, mm, trước giờ mình cứ nghĩ ở Việt Nam đi cấp cứu, cấp cứu có nghĩa là vào là sẽ được gặp bác sĩ ngay, là có người là người ta sẽ chữa trị ngay. Còn ở bên đây cho dù em có đưa con vào phòng cấp cứu, em vẫn lấy số em ngồi chờ. Chỉ là chùng, cũng ngồi chờ khoảng chùng 15-20 phút mới có bác sĩ xuống. Tại vì chị nghĩ là quan niệm ở bên đây của người ta, bệnh nhân mà đi cấp cứu và nếu mà em vẫn chưa quá nguy cấp sắp tử vong [laugh] thì chưa có tới mức nguy cấp...

(13) A: Tại vì thứ nhất là... nuôi con ở nhà, là nó có, chị không nói là tất cả nhà nào cũng vậy, nhưng mà hầu hết là em sẽ phải kiêng cử nè, từ cái lúc mà em mang thai là em phải kiêng, xong rồi em phải ăn một số chất mà em chỉ được ăn cái này không được ăn cái kia, nó gắt đến mức mà hả, nó làm cho em bị stressed luôn. Xong rồi nuôi con cũng vậy, nuôi con thì lại em không

được làm thế này, em phải bé như thế kia, em phải nắn chân làm sao mà phải, nặn ra [chuckles] cho con nó đẹp.

Còn ở bên đây người ta nuôi con theo kiểu relaxing hơn, người ta sẽ consider cả sức khoẻ của mẹ và của con. Ở nhà thì chỉ có con, mọi người đều tập trung vào con. Còn bên đây là hả, cả mẹ và con, cho nên là...mà...nói là tập trung vào mẹ không có nghĩa là mẹ nằm một chỗ, xong rồi người ta bung cơm bung nước rót cho mình, nhưng mà là ở đây, em sinh xong thì chỉ khoảng 2-3 ngày, trừ khi là em có biến chứng gì nặng thì em phải ở bệnh viện để theo dõi lâu hơn, chứ 2-3 ngày là em được về nhà rồi. Rồi xong thì một tuần sau là người ta khuyên là cho cả mẹ và con đi ra ngoài, để hít thở, chứ ở trong nhà bí, không có tốt ấy. Thì đó hả, nếu mà con còn nhỏ quá, thì cỡ khoảng 10-15 phút rồi sau đó em sẽ tăng lên.

Còn ở Việt Nam, em thấy đó [chuckles], ở cử ba tháng, không được tắm, không được nước, không được cái này không được cái kia, em nghĩ...chị nghĩ chứ, không phải vì mình à...mình mệt mình ốm vì đẻ con, mình thấy mình ốm vì mình không được đi tắm. Em nghĩ coi, không được đi tắm, rồi xong nó dơ, rồi bao nhiêu vi khuẩn ức bách khó chịu thì làm sao mà tinh thần em nó tốt lên, làm sao mà em khoẻ được, đúng không? [...]

(14) A: Ở bên đây đó, là giống như là, miễn sao mà em không có bị, lúc mà em mang thai mà em không có bị gì nghiêm trọng thì người ta vẫn cho em đi sinh hoạt như bình thường. Giống như là chị là, tới tháng cuối cùng chị mới ở cử, đi nghỉ ở nhà. Chứ bình thường thì chị vẫn đi bộ ra chỗ làm, làm bình thường. Như là không có sao hết.

Cái xong rồi, mang thai thì, phụ nữ mình là biết, biết là bản thân mình là, kiểu như là sức khoẻ của mình là sao, mệt thì nghỉ, còn ấy hả, nếu có cảm giác là okay thì vẫn làm, vẫn đi lại bình thường thôi, đúng không?

Còn ở nhà thì [cười] kiêng, kiêng quá trời kiêng luôn, cái xong rồi phải ăn (?) ăn muốn cái gì là ăn cái đó. Xong rồi hả, lúc mang thai thì cũng hên là chị không có bị nghén, xong rồi chị cũng không bị thèm gì hết, chỉ là thích ăn rau và thường là những đồ mà nhạt ấy, chứ chị không có thích những đồ chấm, sốt nhiều, ví dụ như là rau luộc và cơm trắng, hoặc là hả, thịt gì kho lên chút xíu thôi, chị thích ăn những kiểu đồ ăn như vậy. Tại vì đó hả, như vậy, thì á hả, nó cũng vừa đủ chất.

Còn á hả, ở bên đây đi bác sĩ khám, thì người ta khám hàng tháng, tới cái kì, nếu mà chị nhớ thì, hình như 2 hay là 1 tháng cuối thì em sẽ đi khám dồn dập hơn là hình như 2 tuần 1 lần. Đó thì, người ta vẫn cân đo rất là cẩn thận, test đồ đủ thứ hết, xong rồi người ta bảo là thèm cái gì thì ăn cái đó, không có phải kiêng cử gì hết chỉ trừ một số loại cá, ví dụ như là loại cá chứa nhiều thủy ngân ấy, tránh ăn vậy thôi. Chứ hả, còn mấy cái kia thì vẫn bình thường. Thì à, xong rồi bác sĩ cũng bảo là “có thèm ngọt thì ăn, nhưng mà ăn vừa vừa thôi tại vì sợ đường tăng, thì

cũng không có tốt”, vậy thôi. Kể cả, mẹ của anh cũng vậy, không có xét nét gì là con đừng thế này con đừng thế kia. Em nghĩ, chứ ở nhà mà có bầu thì là không những mẹ đẻ mà tới mẹ chồng, xong rồi đó hả, cô dì chú bác, ai cũng mỗi người một câu đúng không? Bên đây người ta tôn trọng mình, người ta thấy mình khoẻ thì người ta chỉ hỏi là uh, mình muốn chia sẻ thì người ta sẽ hỏi tiếp, còn nếu mà không thì người ta cũng không hỏi về mấy cái vấn đề đó quá, cho nên chị cảm giác là ở bên đây đó hả [cười nhẹ] rất là thoải mái và tự do.

(15) A: Xong rồi đến cả việc nuôi con nữa, tại vì mỗi người có một cái cách nuôi con khác nhau đúng không? Con mình thì mình nuôi cả đời chứ giống như là, con dì chú bác họ hàng hay là bạn bè đó có nuôi, kiểu là gì đâu mà, mỗi người cứ một ý, cứ phải thế này thế kia á. Thì ở bên đây chỉ khi nào mình có vấn đề gì không biết, mình hỏi thì người ta mới trả lời chứ, người ta không có tự động, người ta kiểu... ý thế này thế kia á, thì cũng thoải mái.

(16) C: Anh cho con anh thích chơi gì thì chơi. Ở trường bây giờ chúng nó chơi nhiều thứ lắm, như bơi lội, trượt tuyết, trượt băng.

[...]

C: Rồi anh cho chúng nó đi đá bóng, đi đánh cầu... Tại trường nó chơi, rồi về nhà buổi chiều, tụi nó học bài xong rồi ăn uống xong rồi anh lại cho chúng nó ra ngoài sân chơi, chạy nhảy, vận động.

[...]

I: Em nghe nói hình như là, chương trình học của trẻ em ở bên đây, ở bên Phần Lan không có nặng bài tập về nhà gì nhiều, phải không ạ?

C: Ừ đúng rồi.

[...]

I: Khác hẳn với Việt Nam..?

C: Đúng đúng. Chơi là chính à.

I: Dạ, dạ. Như, mm, tại vì ví dụ như ở Việt Nam, trẻ em phải đi học khá nhiều, và đi học thêm nữa. Rồi bên đây thì lại thấy không cần. Mà em có ấn tượng là suy nghĩ ở bên đây giống như là không có cho cần giống như đi học thêm, không cần đi học gì nhiều, nhưng mà giống như là vẫn được xếp là một trong các nước có chất lượng giáo dục cao nhất trên thế giới... cho nên, nên thấy là... có nghĩa là do tại vì trẻ em từ nhỏ có nhiều thời gian để suy nghĩ...

C: Để khám phá hơn, đúng rồi. Nó khám phá hơn là, hơn là bắt nó ngồi đọc trong, trong sách vở.

(17) C: Anh cứ cảm thấy tại sao cuộc sống ở bên này, người ta cảm thấy hạnh phúc, tại vì người ta không có quan điểm (?)...cho nên là con cái đối với mình, giống như là người bạn, thì nó mới trò chuyện với mình, nó không có khoảng cách, nó không có sợ sệt hơn. Thì đôi khi nó muốn làm gì thì nó kể cho mình nghe, thì đấy, thì mình mới hay, mình tư vấn được cho con mình.

(18) C: Cũng giống như lúc đầu câu chuyện anh vẫn kể, đó là, anh cũng nói con anh là, sống phải biết nhường,,biết chia sẻ...chia sẻ, đấy...và yêu thương anh em trong gia đình, và quan tâm đến người khác một chút. Mm.

[...]

C: [...] Anh không hiểu tại sao có những gia đình người Việt khác mà con lại không nói tiếng Việt, là tại sao được? Tại vì, mình, nếu mà mình thì...thì đó là lý do tại sao nếu mà mình chơi với con mình, trò chuyện với con mình, thì khả năng tiếng Việt con mình mới tốt lên được. Mm. Chứ còn nếu như mà mình chỉ có, sáng đưa con đến trường, chiều đón về ăn uống đi ngủ, thì rõ ràng nó không giao tiếp với mình thì sao nó hiểu được?

[...]

C: [...] Anh mà có cơ hội anh vẫn cho con anh về chơi với ông bà các thứ, ờ, để cho mình, con mình chơi, học hỏi tiếng Việt.

(19) B: Nói chung là, có nhiều khi thì cũng, thì cũng vẫn nhắn tin ấy qua lại thôi nhưng mà thường xuyên thì cũng không thường xuyên như ngày xưa nữa. Thì tại vì bây giờ đứa nào cũng bận, tại vì mỗi đứa, ví dụ như là có sự việc gì xảy ra hay là gì đó, thì sẽ nhắn tin, vậy thôi.

[...]

I: Nếu mà chị gặp mấy người bạn đó của chị ở Việt Nam, thì chị có kể cho họ nghe về cuộc sống của chị ở bên đây không ạ?

B: Kể thì cũng hơi hơi thôi, tại vì cũng khó cho họ có thể hiểu hết được cái cuộc sống ở bên đây, ví dụ như, mình ở Việt Nam thì mình có thể hiểu được cuộc sống của họ ở Việt Nam nhưng mà ở bên đây thì hơi khó. Nên là, thí dụ như mình chỉ kể, kể sơ sơ vậy thôi. [...]

(20) D: Tại vì em là người rất là quan trọng... ví dụ như là, tại vì Việt Nam mình là, nó gọi là, collective society, còn Phần Lan thì là independent society. Thì em thấy cái collective society nó có cái tốt và independent nó có cái tốt ở những mặt khác nhau. Thì giống như là, kiểu, con cái bên đây lớn lên, ở phòng riêng hết thì ba mẹ không có kiểu ôm ấp gì hết tron, không có kiểu giống như là, không có thân như thế. Thì...em lại không thích cái vấn đề đó. Em muốn là, muốn thân với con cái, thì sau này em có con cái em muốn thân với đứa con của mình. Nhưng

mà một phần là em vẫn muốn nó independent. Thì với lại ấy khi mà collective thì em thấy kiểu, mọi người giúp đỡ nhau nhiều hơn. Giống như, sao nhi...mình đi ra đường mình thấy ai là mình giúp, mình giúp, chứ mình không cần, không cần phải hỏi mình cần giúp. Ví dụ giống như mình giúp đi, thì người ta thấy mình, trong collective society thì người ta thấy mình cần giúp thì người ta giúp mà không cần phải hỏi, không cần phải nhờ. Nhưng mà ở đây thì mình phải nhờ người ta, người ta mới giúp mình. Thì em thấy collective and independent nó sẽ tốt về những mặt khác nhau. Bởi vậy em thấy ấy...những cái....sao nhi...em thấy, em nghĩ nha, con cái lớn lên trong một gia đình...mà có văn hoá trộn thì nó sẽ phát triển ở những mặt tốt của collective và những mặt tốt của independent, chứ nó không bị quá independent và không bị quá collective. Tại vì kiểu khi mà em thấy, em, em, em nghĩ nha, em cảm thấy Phần Lan, nó gọi là...tại vì em lớn lên là ở đây, em thành người lớn ở đây, em cảm thấy cái xã hội này nó dạy cho em cái tính independent của cái xã hội này dạy cho em. Thì đương nhiên là em vẫn còn có cái collective, và em vẫn giúp mọi người, vẫn làm việc đó, như là ở Việt Nam. Nhưng mà em vẫn có những cái tính independent của em ở những mặt khác.

(21) I: Chị thấy là em biết về bản thân khá rõ, có nghĩa là, do là em nhận ra như thế qua nhiều cái trải nghiệm, rồi em cứ lâu lâu ngồi suy nghĩ về bản thân nó ra thế này...?

D: Dạ đúng rồi. Với lại, em coi, em coi social media, xong rồi coi TED talk này, và những cái video nói, xong rồi coi vlogs, Youtube. Rồi khi mà người ta nói thì mình cũng reflect ấy. Tại vì em là đứa hay suy nghĩ. Cho nên là, cái đầu em, không bao giờ mà nó bị rỗng hết. Cho nên sẽ có một cái gì đó em suy nghĩ về.

(22) I: Vậy thì, mm, chị có những sự kiện nào trong cuộc sống, 1,2, hoặc 3 sự kiện đáng giá nhất mà chị nhận thấy bản thân thay đổi?

A: Well, đầu tiên là, khi chị qua bên Úc, ở một khoảng thời gian. Tại vì đó hả, chị nói với em là lúc mà, kể cả cái năm đầu tiên lúc chị qua Phần Lan thì đó hả, chị vẫn giữ cái tính không phải, gọi là sao ta, chị vẫn lưu luyến cuộc sống ở Việt Nam. Lúc mà qua, cái thời gian một năm ở Phần đó, nó giống như chỉ là một giai đoạn, mm, cầu nối. Mm. Chị chưa thấy bản thân chị thay đổi nhiều. Tại vì cái mindset của chị vẫn còn ở Việt Nam, lúc đó vẫn còn bạn bè, mình 18 tuổi mình vẫn nhớ nhà. Đó.

[...]

P: Thì đó hả, tới lúc qua Úc thì chị phải đi làm, thì lúc đó chị bận bịu với cuộc sống hiện tại nhiều hơn là thời gian để suy nghĩ về ở nhà. Thì đó hả, trong môi trường làm việc đó, nó cũng...kiểu gặp người này người kia cái xong rồi nó cũng dễ dàng hơn để cho mình communicate với mọi người. Hôm bữa chị nói là vì qua bên Úc, người ta dùng tiếng Anh, thì

chị dễ dàng express bản thân hơn là bên Phần Lan. Chưa kể là người Phần Lan, lúc đó là từ Việt Nam qua Phần Lan là hai thái cực khác nhau, là nó quá khác nhau cho nên mình cũng không có...

(23) I: [...] Vậy là chị đồng tình là, vậy thì, do chị, ví dụ là gồm cả em luôn, là vì mình sống ở đây, do như vậy nên cái suy nghĩ về độc lập, và cái suy nghĩ là mọi thứ mình tự làm nó cao hơn? Là do...?

A: Uhm, giống như là bản thân mình phải tự, phải ấy trước chứ không có phải dựa dẫm vào, còn ý là hả...theo chị ấy, chỉ cần dựa dẫm vào mặt tình cảm và tinh thần thì chị sẽ cần. Đó là lý do mà tại sao chị nói là đó hả, cái hình ảnh về người đàn ông lý tưởng bây giờ của chị nó khác ấy, ngày xưa là đó hả, mình không cần làm gì hết, anh có thể làm tất cả cho mình. Còn bây giờ thì mình chỉ cần là, những lúc mà mình buồn, mình có thể có người chia sẻ, hoặc là những lúc mà mình có vấn đề gì đó, thì mình có thể có người nói chuyện, hiểu mình vậy thôi, còn ấy hả, cái vấn đề giống như là mấy cái chuyện khác thì người ta giúp được thì giúp, còn không giúp được thì mình vẫn có thể, mm, tự thân tự làm. Ví dụ như là sửa xe đi, thay bánh xe, nếu mà anh giúp được thì okay, tại vì anh (?) nhưng mà nếu mà không được thì chị vẫn có thể tự bản thân tìm cách giải quyết. Chứ không phải như là, thôi nếu anh không được, thì giờ anh tự lo đi, em không cần biết, em có cái xe đó đó (?)

I: Dạ...Rồi nhưng mà, chị nghĩ là, nếu mà vẫn còn ở Việt Nam, hoặc là chị thấy như phụ nữ ở Việt Nam có độc lập không ạ?

A: Không. Mm, đó là lý do chị nghĩ, đó cũng là một trong những lý do tại sao chị nghĩ giá trị của người phụ nữ trong mắt người đàn ông nó không có cao bằng ở bên đây. Tại vì, mm, rất là rõ ràng là, nếu mà mình, cuộc sống của mình dựa vào một người khác ấy, thì người ta sẽ không có value bằng. Giống như là, cái suy nghĩ này đi...bây giờ đó hả, nếu mà một người đàn ông mà nghĩ là người phụ nữ đó cứ dựa dẫm vào mình cái xong bây giờ đó hả, tới một ngày mà mình bỏ là đó hả, không sống được đâu, thì người ta, em thấy có thái độ người ta có thể tôn trọng được mình không? [...]

(24) B: [...] ở Việt Nam chẳng hạn, như là, mm, hồi đó về, chuyện thường gặp nhất là mình ăn cả gia đình thì xong rồi một người sẽ trả tiền. Đó, chẳng hạn là vậy. Thì thường ở Việt Nam là cứ thay phiên nhau, bữa này chị trả, bữa kia em trả, rồi đó, kiểu vậy. Thì có những...thì đối với Tây thì người ta không hiểu những chuyện đó. Có nhiều khi thấy trả là cứ nghĩ như là...nên là chị cũng hỏi là “ủa, sao mà thấy toàn ăn không, không thấy trả tiền?”, thì nghĩ, thì, thì, thì chồng chị nghĩ là, mm, kiểu như là...ba mẹ chị trả, hoặc ba mẹ chị đưa tiền cho chị chị trả, hoặc là chị chị, mm, kiểu như là người trong nhà thì chị chị bao hết mọi người, trong nhà thì

nếu mà...mà tại sao lại...nếu mà đã đòi trả thì sẽ bị rơi ra ngoài, sẽ không phải là người trong gia đình ấy, kiểu vậy. Đó, thì chị phải giải thích là không phải. Cái này, văn hoá là vậy. Phải, bữa trước người này trả, thì bữa sau người kia trả, thì là vậy, đó, nên là nó khác. Ví dụ như ở bên nước của chồng chị, thì ví dụ như, thường đi ăn chung thì ba mẹ lại trả, chứ không phải là, chị hay là, đó, không phải em hay không phải anh, rồi trả. Nên là khác biệt thì chị phải giải thích thôi.

I: Nói chung là phải communicate, nói chuyện nhiều hơn ạ?

B: Đúng rồi. Với lại, mình phải đặng thì mới biết. Giống như là mới có thể. Có nhiều khi văn hoá đó là của mình, nên mình đã quá quen thuộc rồi, thì mình, mình không có hiểu được là, đối với chồng mình thì cái đó rất là lạ, lạ lắm.

I: Có bao giờ gây tranh cãi gì lớn không ạ? Hay chỉ là phải, chỉ nói chuyện nhiều hơn?

B: Nói chung là lúc đầu thì cũng tranh cãi đồ cũng nhiều đó chứ. Nhưng mà sau thì mình mới hiểu được, à cái này là khác biệt về văn hoá thì mình mới phải từ từ mình giải thích [...]

(25) I: Nói chung là, cái...Mình qua đây mình ở ấy, mình phải tôn trọng...Anh nghĩ là mình phải tôn trọng cách sống của người Phần Lan ở đây, và phải theo cách sống của người Phần Lan ở đây, phải không ạ?

C: Mình cứ quan điểm này đi. Mình là người nhập cư, mình đến nhà người ta, thì mình muốn, mm, tôn trọng mình, thì mình phải tìm hiểu cách sinh hoạt, cách sống của người ta, để mà hoà nhập vào lối sống của người ta. Còn đương nhiên là, là một người có văn hoá, thì đương nhiên mình sẽ biết được cái nào là cái tốt mà đúng không. Rõ ràng trong bản thân mình, mình biết cái gì Việt Nam tốt, cái gì Việt Nam không tốt mà đúng không. Ở bên này cũng vậy, mình biết được cái gì họ tốt, thì nếu như mà mình thay đổi, mình hoà nhập cùng với họ thì đương nhiên họ sẽ yêu quý mình thôi. Cũng giống như nhà của em vậy, khi mà em mời một người bạn đến chơi, và người bạn đó có ý thức, thì đương nhiên là có thể mình mời lần 1, lần 2, lần 3. Đó. Mm.

(26) A: Mm, thì hả...okay, trả lời câu hỏi “who are you?” phải không, okay...chị là một người phụ nữ độc lập. Xong rồi chị là một doanh nhân, chị là một người yêu cái đẹp [cười nhẹ] Chị là một người thích những điều mới lạ, kiểu thích đi du lịch, ăn uống, khám phá những thứ mới lạ. Nhưng mà hả, chị cũng thích những cái, gọi là, cái khoảng lặng, chị cũng thích cái cảm giác, kiểu cảm giác comfortable ở nhà, thích ở nhà. Nhiều khi cũng chỉ thích cozy up ở nhà thôi chứ cũng không muốn đi ra ngoài. Mm. Xong rồi...chị cũng, giống như là, sao ha, chị đặc biệt quan tâm tới vấn đề, gọi là, nhân đạo hả, hay là...giống như là mỗi lần đọc được article gì, kiểu như là người này giúp người kia, hoặc là một con vật, một loài vật này cứu sống một loài vật khác,

hoặc là kiểu...thì thường nó sẽ draw attention của chị nhiều. Cái xong rồi, chị cũng thích, kiểu giống như là giúp đỡ, nhưng mà giúp đỡ theo kiểu một cái ý nghĩa, gọi là sao ta, không phải ai cũng giúp, giúp đỡ có chọn lọc [cười nhẹ] giúp đỡ những người thật sự cần giúp [...]

(27) I: [...] Em có bao giờ suy nghĩ thử, hoặc là nhận ra tại sao em thấy mình quá phụ thuộc vậy không?

D: Tại...em nghĩ là do hồi đó em nghĩ mình là một con người sống tình cảm, nhưng mà cho tới...tại vì em...kinh nghiệm hẹn hò của em cũng có với nhiều người [laugh] xong rồi với bạn trai nào thì em cũng đi chơi chung khá là nhiều, dính dính kè kè nhau. Xong rồi...em kiểu sống khá là tình cảm ấy, cho nên là em cứ thích kè kè...nhưng mà cho tới, có một lần, năm cấp ba bạn em có nói là em là một đứa rất là lý trí. Xong em kiểu, “mày nói gì, tao không hiểu, tao thấy tao là một người sống rất là tình cảm”. Xong nó nói em là, tại vì em, em buồn một ngày thôi, ngày hôm sau là em hết buồn. Mm. Rồi, sau này, bạn em nó cũng nói em, kể cả cô em làm thesis, cô cũng nói là mày làm rất là logic ấy, xong rồi thì...có những...xong rồi bạn em mới nói là em rất là thực tế, tại vì có những chuyện em kể cho bạn em nghe xong rồi, bạn em thì, bạn đó sống tình cảm quá, em không chơi được với bạn đó nữa...em không có hợp, tại bạn ấy, cách suy nghĩ trên mây quá...